

Waterfall

YOUTH LEADER MANUAL



**RAINFOREST
FALLS**

Waterfall

Youth Leader Manual



Loveland, Colorado
group.com/vbs

Group resources really work!

This Group resource incorporates our R.E.A.L. approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it's:



Relational

Person-to-person interaction enhances spiritual growth and builds Christian friendships.

Experiential

What we experience through action and discussion sticks with us up to 9 times longer than what we simply hear or read.

Applicable

The aim of ministry is to equip people to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

Lifelong

Experiences transform the heart, moving faith beyond the walls of church and into everyday life for years to come.

Waterfall Youth Leader Manual

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Visit our websites:

group.com

group.com/RainforestFalls

Thanks to our amazing team, who love using their gifts to root kids in God's love!

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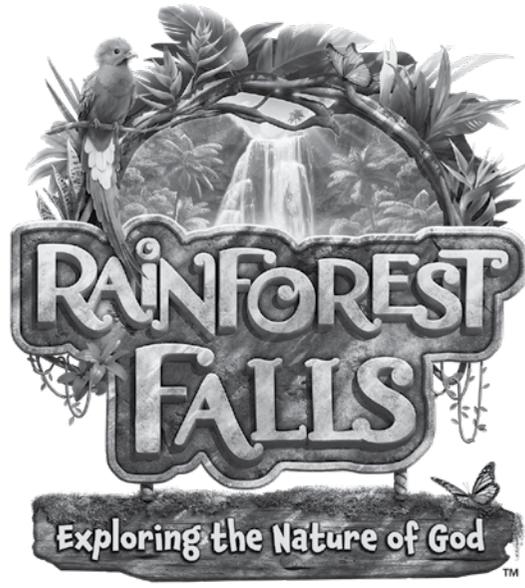
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Thanks for joining the team!

Step through the mist into a paradise overflowing with wild waterfalls, towering trees, and colorful creatures. But this is more than just a lush and lively setting!

God created rainforests to be our planet's powerhouse. Though rainforests occupy a tiny percentage of Earth's surface, *half* of the planet's terrestrial animals find shelter there.

Rainforest plants are a source of lifesaving medicine. And rainforests are often called "the lungs of the planet," purifying the air we breathe.

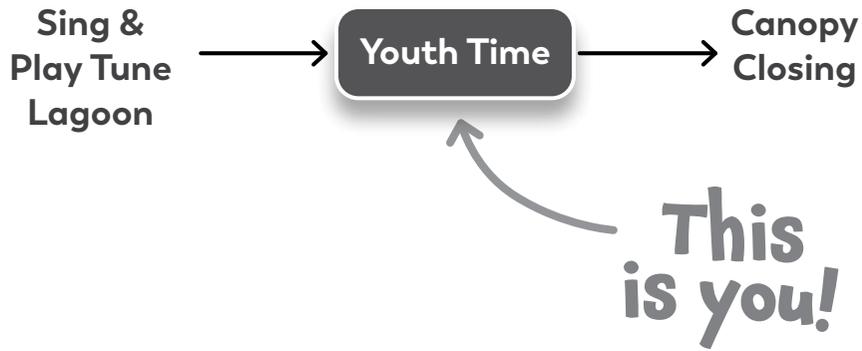
Rainforests are a refuge, rich and restorative. They're life-giving and lifesaving.

A bit like God.

Yet, for many teens today, God seems mysterious or made-up. He's just someone they've heard about—not someone they know. It's easier to believe in things on screens or rumors from friends.

That's why this is the perfect spot for teenagers to explore *who* God is. Faith takes root as teens discover God is their loving creator who knows everything about them. Wonder washes away doubt in the life-giving truth that God loves us deeply. Hope lives when young people explore the rich gift of Jesus and promise of a home forever.

Together, let's take teenagers on a life-changing adventure, exploring the nature of God.

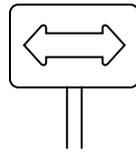


Before Rainforest Falls



Pray for everyone who will attend Rainforest Falls.

Ask God to prepare your heart and the hearts of the youth and leaders who will be part of your program.



Choose a room for teenagers to meet in.

Ideally, your room should be large and off by itself a little. You'll need access to an outdoor area for games.



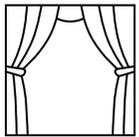
Recruit an assistant to help coordinate activities and transitions.

Having a teammate will make things go more smoothly for you!



Work with the VBS Director to collect necessary supplies.

Almost all the supplies are easy to find around the church, from church members, or from Group.



Create an exciting environment.

Keep decorations simple by taping the Bible Verse Posters to the wall. Or make your Waterfall area look like a tropical paradise! Find fun decorating ideas on the Decorating Places: Rainforest Falls downloadable video, or brainstorm with other leaders on [facebook.com/groupvbs](https://www.facebook.com/groupvbs) and on Pinterest.



Read this manual ahead of time.

Check the supply lists and note what preparations are needed for each activity. The snacks are the same ones the elementary and preschool kids are enjoying.

During Rainforest Falls



Warmly welcome teenagers at Sing & Play Tune Lagoon.

Teenagers participate in Sing & Play Tune Lagoon each day, where all ages worship, sing awesome songs, and learn the day's Bible Point and Bible verse.



Use an attention-getting signal.

Attention-getting signals let teenagers know when it's time to stop what they're doing and look at you. Use the Rainforest Rattle (available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier) or another signal of your choice.

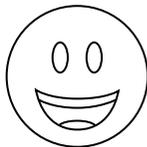


Rainforest Rattle



Repeat the daily Bible Point often.

Every activity focuses on one memorable Bible truth called the Bible Point. Repeating the Bible Point helps students remember it and apply it to their lives.



Call on teens' Crew roles.

Teenagers choose one of six jobs for the week: Reader, Prayer Person, Guide, Coach, Materials Manager, or Treetop Treats Coordinator. Teens love when those jobs get called on!



Encourage teenagers to participate in God Sightings[®].

All participants share God Sightings—everyday clues that God is present, passionate, and active in our world. (See page 6 for more information.)



Close each day at Canopy Closing.

Join everyone for this fun and exciting closing each day.

God Sightings®

God hasn't retired, you know. He's as busy now as he's ever been. But until you see that with your own eyes, it's tough to have a vibrant faith. God can seem distant or impersonal. We have to make it a habit to keep an eye out for the daily overwhelming evidence that God is doing great things all around us.

At Rainforest Falls, everyone learns to look for God Sightings—everyday clues that God is present, passionate, and active in our world. A God Sighting is simply an acknowledgment that God has done something. It's giving God credit where credit is due. It's developing a God-focused view and a grateful heart. Younger children, teenagers, and adults will discover that they can see God's hand in things like Scripture, people, circumstances, and nature.

As teenagers make God Sightings part of everyday life, their faith will grow because they'll actually see God at work. Not because he's suddenly shown up, but because they finally have eyes to see...and at last, they're looking.

- **Watch for God.** Ask your Rainforest Falls Director to get a Watch for God Wristband for each teenager. These adjustable wristbands remind participants to keep their eyes open for things God is doing around them.
- **Share God Sightings.** Everyone learns about God Sightings at Canopy Closing on Day 1. Then beginning on Day 2 at Sing & Play Tune Lagoon, Crews will share and document one way they have seen evidence of God.
- **Celebrate God Sightings with the world!** If you'd like, you can even encourage teenagers to share their God Sightings on social media with the hashtag #GodSighting. Let everyone hear the amazing things God is still doing in our world today!



Watch for God Wristband



God is our creator.

Bible Verse: “Praise the Lord, everything he has created, everything in all his kingdom.” (Psalm 103:22)

Bible Story: God creates the world. (Genesis 1)

Genesis 1 launches the ultimate origin story—no capes, no gadgets, just God’s unstoppable creative power! With just a command, he fills the emptiness with light, land, and life. Imagine—no tools, no materials, just God’s voice shaping the universe! Though the sun and moon don’t appear until day four, light already shines from day one, proving God doesn’t rely on the sun to illuminate his creation. And here’s something amazing: The Hebrew word *bara*, meaning “create,” describes only what *God* does. No one else creates from nothing! After forming the oceans, mountains, and every creature, God saves his most treasured work for last—people. God crafts them, unlike anything else, in his image, designed for a deep and personal connection with God. Every child reflects the artistry of the ultimate Creator!

Kids often hear they need to *make* something of themselves—be smarter, cooler, more successful. But Scripture flips that script. Before kids ever tried to prove their worth, God already designed them with purpose and love. That truth changes everything! Kids don’t need to chase approval or compete for value; they already matter because the Creator of the universe formed them intentionally, in his own image. Wow—imagine walking with confidence, knowing you belong, hold value, and have been created for something extraordinary! Plus, every day we get to enjoy reminders of God’s ongoing creative work through sunshine, trees, and even rain! Today, take joy in showing kids God’s creative nature! Remind kids that, as people, they’re God’s “very good” creation.



Why It Matters

Celebrate! God—the intentional, master Creator—lovingly made each part of creation...including us! Kids can find confidence in knowing they’re crafted by God’s ingenious design.

Day 1: God is our creator.

Supplies You'll Need Every Day:

-  Rainforest Rattle*
-  Bibles (1 per Crew)
- pens and markers
-  Sing & Play Tune Lagoon Music CD or download*
- media player

*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier

SING & PLAY TUNE LAGOON (25 minutes)

Welcome your group at Sing & Play Tune Lagoon. Everyone will enjoy singing the theme song and other upbeat music.

On the first day, when the elementary Crews start discussing Crew roles, take your group to the room you'll be meeting in for the week.

WELCOME AND FORMING CREWS (15 minutes)

Supplies:

- adhesive name tags (1 per person)
- markers or pens (1 per person)
- copies of the "Rainforest Falls Nature Tour" handout on p. 17 (1 per person)
- copies of the "Crew Roles" handout on p. 18 (1 for every 6 teens)

Hand out the name tags and markers.

Have everyone write his or her name on a tag and attach it near the collar of his or her shirt.

SAY All week at Rainforest Falls, we're exploring God's Word to unpack more about the nature of God.

TREE TIP

When teenagers join elementary kids for Sing & Play Tune Lagoon and Canopy Closing, they'll learn a response and motion to do every time they hear the Point. While this is a great reinforcement tool for children, we've left out the response from the Waterfall Youth Leader Manual.



SAY

There's so much to explore deep in the rainforest. But it's a lot more fun to journey with a buddy! Here at Rainforest Falls, we're all in this together. We'll grow in friendship with each other, wonder together, and make discoveries about God together.

And as we learn about this amazing, biodiverse place called the rainforest, we'll learn about the God who made it all. We'll learn that **God is our creator**.

To start our journey, let's spend time getting to know others right now!

Give each person a copy of the "Rainforest Falls Nature Tour" handout, and allow time for everyone to rate their top three picks of which animals they'd like to see on a tour of the rainforest.

Have teens share their picks and form groups based on their top picks.

If groups of "top picks" are larger than six people, help those groups divide into equal groups. Some smaller groups may need to combine. You'll want each group to have around six members but no more than six.

After groups are set, teenagers can take turns introducing themselves and sharing the reason they chose their top pick from the handout.

There's so much to explore this week. And as we go on this journey, you'll hang out with this Crew of people. You'll stick together for small-group discussions, team up in games, and get to know each other over the week.

You don't all have to be best friends now or even by the end of the week. But if you genuinely agree as a Crew to be a group of people who listen to each other, respect everyone's experiences and opinions—even if you can't relate or you disagree—and refuse to start or take part in making fun of each other, you'll be guaranteed to have an amazing adventure together.

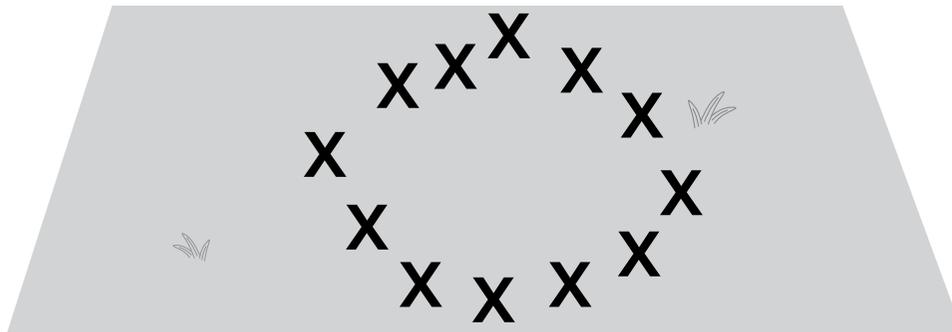
Give a copy of the "Crew Roles" handout to each Crew, and have a willing person in each Crew read the handout aloud.

Crew members write the name of each person next to a role on the handout to remember who's doing what through the week.

Put the handouts somewhere Crews can find them, if needed, later in the week.

Let's start our tropical adventure with a game that will help us dive deep into how much God created!

GAME: Name That Nature (15 minutes) MEDIUM ENERGY



Stand with teenagers in a wide circle. (Have more than three Crews? Form multiple circles.)

Demonstrate the sound of your Rainforest Rattle, and let Crews know you'll start and stop most games during the week with that sound, so they'll want to listen carefully for it.

SAY Perhaps when you were younger, you played **Hot Potato**. But that's a game for kids, so we're going to amp it up with a game of **Wet Potato**.

1. Grab a water balloon.
2. Teens will pass the water balloon around the circle, but they can pass it on only when they name something God created—no repeats allowed.
3. As teens play the game, play music from the Sing & Play Tune Lagoon Music, pausing it periodically.
4. Whoever has the water balloon when you pause the music gets a sponge ball tossed at them. (Between rounds, keep the sponge ball in a bucket of water so it stays wet.)
5. Water balloons may break during play—that's just part of the game! Grab a new balloon and keep going.



6. As the game goes on, add additional challenges. For example, narrow it down to only things that start with S or only red items. You could also do a category of only rainforest creation.
7. Turn off the music and sound your Rainforest Rattle when it's time to move on.

ASK At what point did it get difficult to keep coming up with things that hadn't been named?

When you think about how many different things God created, what does that show you about him?

SAY You named an impressive number of things in this game. But God created them all—and so much more! In the Amazon rainforest alone, God made 370 different types of reptiles, 400 species of mammals, 1,300 kinds of birds, more than 3,000 freshwater fish species in its rivers, and more than 40,000 species of plants. That doesn't even include all the bugs! God sure made a lot—and he finished by making people! **God is our creator.**

Allow about five minutes for teens to take a break before gathering back together for the Bible study.

BIBLE STUDY: The Nature of God (45 minutes)



Supplies:

— Bibles, bookmarked at Genesis 1 (1 per Crew)

- nature items (if not readily available on your church property)
- copies of the “Uniquely Created” handout on p. 19 (1 per Crew)



— Sing & Play Tune Lagoon Music CD or download*

- media player



— Rainforest Rattle*

*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier

Find Nature

SAY Since we're talking about what God created and what it reveals about the nature of God, I'd like you to do something. You'll choose one item from nature that stands out to you. As you look at it, prayerfully reflect on this question: What does that item show you about a quality of God?

Bring the item inside, or take a picture of it if you can't do so, and we'll share what we found.

Allow time for teens to go outside and prayerfully reflect on nature items. Take your time; this can be a meaningful experience that helps teens slow down and notice things around them. If you're in a more urban setting, consider bringing in a variety of nature items for teens to choose from instead of going outside.

When everyone is ready, have teens head back inside and gather in Crews with their items or pictures.

ASK Tell your Crew about what you selected. What quality of God does it reveal to you? Guides, remember to help lead this discussion.

SAY The Bible tells us in Romans 1:20 that God's invisible qualities have been seen since Creation. Creation points us to the Creator who made it all. And God is our creator. Let's look at the events of Creation.

Find Fun Facts

Have students remain in their Crews. Distribute Bibles and the "Uniquely Created" handouts.

SAY Open the Bible to Genesis 1. As you read through it with your Crew, follow the directions on the handout. You'll read a few verses at a time, read some unique facts related to God's creation for that day, and then share your insights. You'll have 20 minutes to go through the whole handout.

After 20 minutes, sound the Rainforest Rattle to regain everyone's attention.

After all that unique creation, God rested.

Invite someone to read aloud Genesis 2:1-3. Lead the whole group in this discussion.

ASK What facts about Creation surprised or amazed you?

- What was it like to consider all the details that went into the creation of the earth?
- In what ways does science help support Creation? In what ways does science contradict Creation?
- Explain what you believe about Creation versus scientific theories of how the world was made.

SAY God is our creator. Some scientists will say that the earth was formed when the conditions were right for an explosion to create the world as we see it. They may say humans evolved from other animals. But the unique intricacies of Creation that science has uncovered simply point to the fact that this world didn't happen by accident. Our loving creator God made it!



TREE TIP

Nervous to tackle the topic of evolution? Check out the downloadable lesson series Hmmm? by Kurt Johnson at group.com. You'll find information all about Creation and evolution that will help you know how to address this tough topic.

TREE TIP

When you invite insights from the whole group, repeat the answers as you hear them. This ensures everyone gets to hear and affirms to the speakers that you heard them.



TREE TIP

This Bible experience comes from FaithWeaver NOW Senior High. Check it out for a great weekly Sunday school curriculum for youth!



Pray

SAY Grab your nature item or photo from earlier. Having read through the Bible account of God creating the world, maybe you see things differently now. Hold on to that item and have a time of silent prayer, thanking God for all he has made and shown you through his creation. After a couple of minutes, I'll ask the Prayer People to close us in prayer.

After a couple of minutes, invite the Prayer People to close the Bible study time with their Crews in prayer, thanking God for his creation.

Allow a five-minute break, and then gather everyone together for a fun service project.

SERVICE PROJECT: Creation Cleanup (15 minutes)



Supplies:

- Bibles
- disposable gloves
- garbage bags



- gardening tools (optional)

— Rainforest Rattle*

*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier

Before Teens Arrive

Determine what cleanup needs there are on your church property. This could include trash cleanup, gardening, and weeding.

SAY **God is our creator! And after he created the world, he gave us a job to do!**

Read Genesis 1:28; 2:15.

God wants us to take care of his creation! We'll do that with a service project today.

Tell teens about your cleanup service project, and give them the necessary tools. Allow about 15 minutes for teens to work on the project, then go inside and get cleaned up.

God is our creator! And he didn't just make everything and then check out. God is actively involved in the world today, and he invites us to join with him in caring for all he has made.

Lead teens in prayer, encouraging the Prayer People to pray within their Crews.

Now let's get a snack!

Head to the kitchen to collect the Treetop Treats.



TREETOP TREATS (20 minutes)

Supplies:

- trays with snack from Treetop Treats Leader (1 per Crew)
- napkins (1 per person)
- cups of water (1 per person)

Ask the Treetop Treats kitchen staff to set out the snack ingredients designated for your group of teens.

If anyone in your group has food allergies, connect with the Treetop Treats Leader to see what snack alternative or variation he or she is providing and make sure the alternative goes to anyone who needs it.

Have the Treetop Treats Coordinator from each Crew take a tray for the Crew.

Then head back to your youth room and ask the Prayer Person from each Crew to pray.

When everyone is back in the youth room and Crews are gathered with their snack supplies, have them enjoy their snacks while chatting and getting to know each other. It's a relaxed befriending time that also allows everyone a break from all they've been processing throughout the day. If Crews need some conversation starters, offer simple get-to-know-you questions for Crews to answer, such as the following:

- **What was the best part of your weekend, and why?**
- **What's something you're looking forward to this year?**
- **What do you like to do for fun?**

When everyone's done eating, each Crew's Treetop Treats Coordinator can lead cleanup, throwing away any trash and quickly taking any leftover snacks back to the Treetop Treats kitchen staff. Once Crews have cleaned up from snack, gather them close for a quick discussion before Canopy Closing.



Cuppa Creation

OR



Creative Clementines

WATCHING FOR GOD (10 minutes)



Supplies:

- Watch for God Wristbands*
(1 per person)

*available from group.com
or your Group VBS supplier



SAY

Today we explored how **God is our creator!** We found out about the different things God made and how intricately he made everything. Plus, we admired his creation to reflect on what it shows us about the nature of God.

Give each person a Watch for God Wristband to wear throughout the week (and beyond) as a reminder to look for God in action.

This week at Rainforest Falls, we'll look for **God Sightings**—everyday clues that God is present and active in our world. Each day, you'll share a different **God Sighting**. A **God Sighting** is simply an acknowledgment that God has done something—giving God credit where credit is due. It's developing a God-focused view and a grateful heart. We can see God's work in Scripture, people, circumstances, and nature.

You are God Sightings to me! You've shown me how amazingly God created you by helping me get to know each of you a little bit better today.

You'll get to share your **God Sightings** starting in tomorrow's **Sing & Play Tune Lagoon**, so wear your wristbands throughout the week to help you remember to watch for and remember the ways you see God at work.

Thanks for being here today! I hope you'll join us again for tomorrow's journey!

Head to Canopy Closing.

CANOPY CLOSING (25 minutes)

Join the rest of the participants for an upbeat closing program.

Give thanks to God for an awesome first day at Rainforest Falls.

Rainforest Falls Nature Tour

Vote for your top three choices of the animals you'd want to see on a rainforest nature tour. Label your first choice with a 1, your second choice with a 2, and your third choice with a 3.



__ jaguar



__ pink river dolphin



__ sloth



__ toucan



__ spider monkey



__ iguana

Crew Roles

Jobs	Duties
Reader	reads Bible passages aloud
Prayer Person	leads or opens prayer times
Guide	keeps Crew members focused during discussions
Coach	makes sure people use kind words and actions
Materials Manager	distributes and collects supplies
Treetop Treats Coordinator	grabs any special snack ingredients for the Crew and leads cleanup

Uniquely Created

Read each Bible passage and its facts. Then discuss this question for each section:

- What do these facts demonstrate about God's plan in creating the earth?

Read Genesis 1:1-5.



- Light from the sun reaches earth in 8 minutes and 17 seconds. But energy in the sun is slower. Scientists say it takes millions of years to go from the center of the sun to its surface.
- Many insects can see ultraviolet light, which is invisible to humans.
- A hundred lightning bolts strike the earth each second.
- In complete darkness our eyes see objects as dark gray rather than black because there's no brightness contrasting it. Contrasts with brighter objects help our eyes see black.

Read Genesis 1:6-8.



- The earth's atmosphere acts as a protective barrier, burning up meteors in the layer.
- The lowest layer of the atmosphere is called the troposphere, and it's where most of our weather comes from. It's 11-12 miles high at the equator and lower at the earth's poles.
- The ice crystals or water droplets inside clouds are big enough to scatter all the wavelengths of light, which then interact and combine to appear white.
- It may not *really* rain cats and dogs, but sometimes animals actually do rain from the sky! The most common animals to get caught up in a rainstorm are fish and frogs.

Read Genesis 1:9-13.



- In one valley in Panama, some cottonwood trees have grown with square trunks—hard-right angles that are completely unique among trees!
- There's a plant called doll's eyes that actually looks like eyeballs hanging off a red stalk.
- Who needs pest control? Many plants can defend themselves by releasing chemicals that attract the natural predators of an insect that has decided to grab a snack.
- Carnivorous plants, like the Venus flytrap, can trap their prey (primarily insects). Some have leaves that fold into pools of digestive enzymes. Others are sticky, have hinged leaves that snap shut, suction in their prey, or have a corkscrew shape lined with hairs and glands.

Read Genesis 1:14-19.



- The Hubble telescope has demonstrated that there are several galaxies receding from ours at around the speed of light.
- The opposite of black holes are white holes, which spray out matter and light like fountains.
- Scientists think they've found a distant planet that's made up of diamond—and it's twice the size of the earth! Too bad it's way too hot for humans.
- There's a body of water surrounding a distant black hole, and it's estimated to hold about as much water as all of the earth's oceans combined...times 140 trillion!

Read Genesis 1:20-23.



- When a dolphin sleeps, half of its brain stays awake to keep the dolphin coming up for air.
- Flatfish are symmetrical when hatched, but soon their body mutates and one eyeball moves to the other side of the head so that both eyes end up on the same side.
- The Sri Lanka frogmouth is a bird whose face looks like a frog. When threatened by an approaching predator, this bird lifts up its head, making it look like a broken branch on a tree.
- Thirty percent of a hummingbird's weight is composed of muscles used for flight. They average 25-30 miles per hour in flight—and 60 miles per hour when they dive!

Read Genesis 1:24-25.



- Elephants walk on their tiptoes. The bone structure in their feet looks like that of a woman in high heels.
- A newborn giant panda is smaller than a mouse.
- A rat can fall five stories without being injured.
- Camels have three eyelids. Their third eyelid is transparent to see through. Their ears and nose are also equipped to keep sand out.

Read Genesis 1:26-31.



Write a fun fact about each person in your group! Coaches, take the lead on this one!

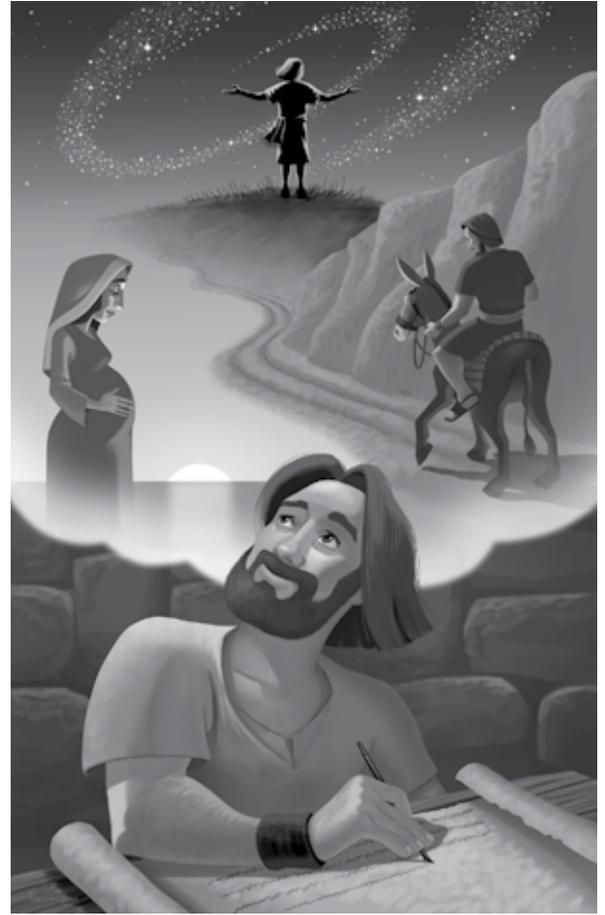
God knows everything.

Bible Verse: “O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me.”
(Psalm 139:1)

Bible Story: David celebrates all God knows.
(Psalm 139)

Psalm 139 gives us a front-row seat to David’s heart as he wrestles with the incredible truth that God knows everything about him—his thoughts, his actions, even the words he hasn’t spoken yet! As a young shepherd, David spent years alone in the fields, unseen by people but fully known by God. Later, as a fugitive running from King Saul, he hid in caves yet always stayed in God’s watchful care. Even as king, when David made terrible mistakes, God still saw and pursued him. David understood both the comfort and the weight of being fully known by a God who never loses sight of his people. He described God’s knowledge as both mind-blowing (“too great for me to understand”) and deeply personal (“You know my thoughts”). God doesn’t just see us; he intimately knows every detail of our hearts.

The kids coming to your program live in a world that constantly watches them—safety monitors, social media posts, school expectations, even AI-driven content telling them who they should be. In spite of all that attention, many kids still feel unseen, unknown, or misunderstood. Psalm 139 reassures kids that God doesn’t just watch them like an algorithm tracking clicks. God knows their hearts, like a loving Father. God sees their struggles, their dreams, their quiet worries...and God cares. For children wrestling with comparison or anxiety, this truth brings peace. Help kids find rest in discovering that no burden or worry is hidden from our faithful God.



Why It Matters

Be encouraged! Kids never have to feel unknown or unseen. God knows every detail of their lives and promises to always love them.

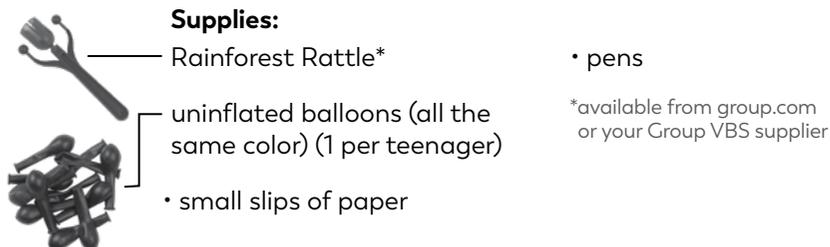
Day 2: God knows everything.

SING & PLAY TUNE LAGOON (25 minutes)

Welcome your group at Sing & Play Tune Lagoon to join with everyone for singing and learning today's Bible Point and Bible verse.

Then head to your Waterfall youth area for today's icebreaker.

WELCOME AND ICEBREAKER: Whose Balloon? (15 minutes) MEDIUM ENERGY



Give a quick, warm welcome back to Rainforest Falls.

Let everyone know you're glad to see them back for Day 2!

SAY Today we'll explore that **God knows everything. God made us and knows us inside and out. But let's see how well you know each other!**

- Give each teenager a balloon, a slip of paper, and a pen.
- Teens will each secretly write a personal fun fact they don't mind sharing with others, then roll up the paper and tuck it into the balloon.
- Teens will then inflate and tie off the balloons.
- When everyone's balloon is ready, have teens bat the balloons around for a bit.
- Sound the Rainforest Rattle, then have each teen catch a balloon and sit down.
- Choose a teenager to stomp on the balloon he or she is holding to pop it, then hand you the slip of paper. You may want to warn teens to cover their ears if they're sensitive to loud noises.



- Read the paper, and have teens point to the person they think the fun fact goes with. Then have the correct teen identify himself or herself.
- Continue until all the balloons have been popped.

Lead the whole group in this discussion.

ASK What clues or information did you use to make your guesses?

What do you think it would be like to know everything about every person you meet?

SAY We all have random fun facts that few people know about us. But **God knows everything!** He got every answer right in this game—because there’s not one little fact about you that’s a surprise to God! So let’s explore what the Bible has to say about that.

BIBLE STUDY: You Have Searched Me (45 minutes)



Supplies:

- Bibles, bookmarked to Psalm 139 (at least 8 total)
- copy of the “Station Instructions” on p. 33, cut apart
- paper
- pens or pencils
- copy of the “Step by Step” handout on p. 32, cut apart
- yarn in a variety of colors
- scissors
- inflated balloons
- school glue

- disposable tablecloth
- plastic spoons
- cups
- disposable gloves
- wet wipes
- paper plates
- play sand



— Sing & Play Tune Lagoon Music CD or download*

- media player



— Rainforest Rattle*

*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier

Before You Explore

- Hang signs in each corner of the room, labeling the corners A, B, C, and D.
- Set up Station A with a Bible, paper, and pens or pencils. You'll also need the Station A instructions.
- Set up Station B with a Bible and the Station B instructions. You'll also spread out the sections of the "Step by Step" handout on the floor in that corner, face down.
- Set up Station C with a Bible, inflated balloons, plastic spoons, wet wipes, disposable gloves, scissors, paper plates, and yarn. Everything should be placed on a disposable tablecloth to avoid a mess. You'll need to make a 50/50 mixture of water and school glue in several cups, filling them about $\frac{3}{4}$ full. You'll also need the Station C instructions.
- Set up Station D with paper plates and play sand. You'll also need the Station D instructions.

Play Whaddaya Know?

SAY

As we explore today's Bible story, we'll see how much God really knows. But I have one more challenge to test your knowledge. This one should be easier because it's multiple choice!

Point out the signs in the corners of the room.

I'll read a trivia question, and you pick a corner. Be sure to avoid any supplies in that corner.

Read the questions below, repeating the answers to help teens make their choices.

Pilâtre de Rozier was the first person to do what?

- A. Climb the Eiffel Tower
- B. Take a photograph
- C. Make a croissant
- D. Fly in a hot air balloon

(Answer: D)

Ruth Wakefield invented what?

- A. Chocolate chip cookies
- B. Oreo cookies
- C. Oatmeal raisin cookies
- D. Brownies

(Answer: A)



Ben Lecomte was the first person to accomplish which impressive feat?

- A. Visit every country in the world
- B. Run across the entire United States
- C. Climb Mount Everest
- D. Swim across the Atlantic Ocean

(Answer: D)

Walter Frederick Morrison helped invent which fun toy?

- A. Play-Doh
- B. The teddy bear
- C. The Frisbee
- D. Legos

(Answer: C)

Wilhelm Röntgen invented which medical breakthrough?

- A. Triple bypass surgery
- B. The X-ray machine
- C. The ability to identify blood types
- D. Antibiotics

(Answer: B)

SAY

So how'd you do? Once again, God would get a perfect score. Not only does he know all the answers, but he knew the answers before they happened! God knew when he created Wilhelm Röntgen, he would have the scientific ability to help countless people by creating X-rays.

He knew Ben Lecomte would be an amazing swimmer and Ruth Wakefield would delight people with delicious chocolate chip cookies. In fact, God put those abilities in them!

And God knows everything about you, too. Not just the things you know because they already happened. He knows what you'll do today, tomorrow, and for the rest of your life! God knows everything!

Prayer Stations



SAY

We're going to explore this a little differently today. Instead of working in your Crews, you'll have some time to go to different stations and prayerfully reflect on today's Bible verses.

I'll explain the four stations, and you can choose which one you want to start at. You can spend the whole time at one station or move between them; we'll have about 25 minutes for you to go at your own pace. Each station has printed instructions, so don't feel like you need to memorize what I say. Point to each corner of the room as you explain it.

Station A is a journaling station. You'll read the verses on the instructions, then journal.

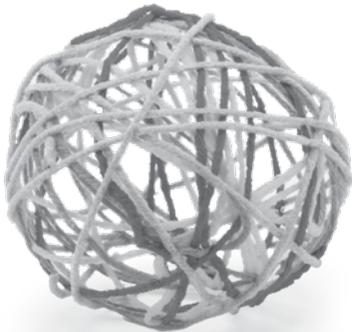
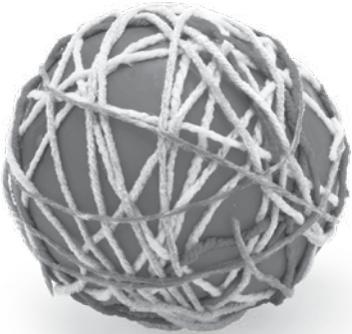
At Station B, you'll walk around in that corner of the room. When you get to a piece of paper, stop and pick it up. Read the paper, reflect on what it says, then put it back face down for others and continue on your journey.

Station C is a craft station. You'll follow the directions there to make some yarn art.

Station D has reflective sand art. You'll use your finger to draw in sand as you reflect.

Choose a station to start with or stay at.

As teenagers choose their stations and reflect, play quiet music. It's OK if teens don't get to all four stations—this is meant to be a time for them to connect with God in whatever way reaches their hearts.



Listen

Gather teens back together.

SAY

I'd love to hear about your time with God. I hope you felt a deep connection with him as you reflected on what he knows about you, about how he made you, and about your future.

But first, there's one more part of our Bible passage I'd like us to read. Close your eyes and listen as I read this.

Read Psalm 139:23-24.

Let's make this a prayer. I'll read it again, and as I do, make it your prayer to ask God to show you whatever he wants to show you about yourself. After I read it, I'll allow some silence for you to listen to God answer your prayer.

Read Psalm 139:23-24 again. Allow a couple of minutes of silence.

Have teens gather with their Crews, and have Guides lead this discussion.

ASK

Tell your Crew about something God revealed to you or you discovered during your time today. Allow a while for this discussion. You may want to sound the Rainforest Rattle every couple of minutes to signal Crews to switch who's talking so everyone gets a turn. Challenge Coaches to affirm the positive things people share about themselves.

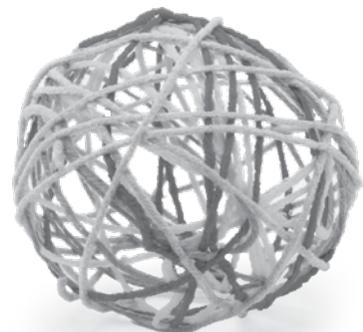
SAY

I hope you had a special time with the God who knows you today. You know, one of the great things about the fact that God knows everything is that you can tell him anything—and you'll never surprise him! He's a safe place for all your thoughts, all your worries, all the things you wouldn't want to share with anyone else.

And you can listen to him, too! Don't think of today as a one-time event. You can find ways to connect with God like this and listen to him on your own and ask him to keep revealing things to you.

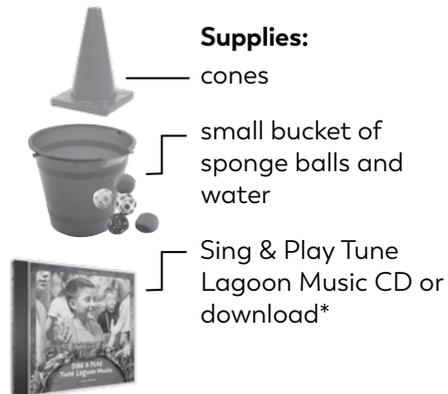
Prayer People, will you close this time with prayer for your Crew? Now that they've shared a bit of what God revealed to them, pray for them specifically about that. Allow time for Crew prayer.

Allow a five-minute break before gathering everyone back together. You'll want to set any yarn creations out to dry for at least 24 hours. They'll dry faster in the sun and should be flipped a few times. Tomorrow or on Day 4, when the yarn is dry, teens who created these can use the eraser end of a pencil to push the balloon away from the yarn so none is stuck to the balloon, then snip the end of the balloon and gradually let out the air to reveal a yarn ball.



GAME: Now You See Me (15 minutes)

LOW ENERGY



Supplies:

cones

small bucket of sponge balls and water

Sing & Play Tune Lagoon Music CD or download*

• media player

Rainforest Rattle*

*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier

Before Teens Arrive

Set up cones to mark the boundaries of your playing area.



Head outside to your playing area.

SAY

Today we learned about how **God knows everything**. Psalm 139:3 tells us that **God knows when we travel and when we rest at home**. Let's play a game where you'll try to figure out where people are. It's a game of Marco Polo!

1. Choose one teenager to be the first Finder.
2. The Finder will close his or her eyes while everyone else spreads out around the playing area.
3. The Finder will carry the bucket of sponge balls.
4. Whenever the Finder says, "You see me when I travel," everyone else must say (not whisper), "and when I rest at home!"
5. Teens can take slow-motion side steps during the game but may not move other than that.
6. The Finder will try to use his or her sense of hearing to find other teens. Then the Finder will attempt to throw a sponge ball and hit other teens.

7. If someone gets hit, he or she is out.
8. When the bucket is empty, the round ends and you can refill it and choose a new Finder.
9. Play the Sing & Play Tune Lagoon Music quietly in the background while Crews play.
10. Turn off the music and sound your Rainforest Rattle when it's time to move on.
11. Have teens help you collect the sponge balls and put them back in the bucket.

ASK What helped you know where others were when you were the Finder?

Sometimes the Finders weren't sure where people were. What's something you feel like you don't know a lot about?

SAY There's a lot we don't know. That includes what tomorrow holds—or where we'll be in five years. What we do know is that **God knows everything. And God is faithful, so we can trust him with all our uncertainties.**

Give teens a five-minute break, and have them meet you back in the Waterfall room.



SERVICE: All About Operation Kid-to-Kid™ (10 minutes)



Supplies:

— Rainforest Falls Ultimate Director Go-To Training DVD* (borrow this from your Director)

• TV and DVD player

*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier



— copies of the “Planting Hope” flyer (1 per person, plus 1 for you)—found on p. 34 or on the Rainforest Falls Resources, Forms, and Clip Art Collection



Before Teens Arrive

- Before everyone arrives, check with your Director to find out where the Operation Kid-to-Kid display is set up.
- Plan to take teenagers to the display, or just tell them where it is.



Compassion...or Competition?

You may be used to holding contests to persuade teenagers to participate in mission projects. We encourage you to consider the message you send when you use these methods. Infusing competition into service projects is unnecessary and detracts from the heart of missions. Instead, help teenagers discover the joy that comes from sharing with others and develop hearts of compassion that will stick with teenagers *long* after your program ends! Rewards like watching someone get a pie in the face don't have long-lasting impact. We've found that teenagers participate wholeheartedly without any extrinsic rewards.

- Make sure your TV and DVD player are working and connected correctly so they're ready for showing the Operation Kid-to-Kid video from the Ultimate Director Go-To Training DVD.
- Place a stack of copies of the "Planting Hope" flyer where everyone can easily take one on the way to Canopy Closing at the end of the day.

SAY

I want to tell you about this cool project we're a part of at Rainforest Falls. It's called Operation Kid-to-Kid. Everyone across North America attending a Rainforest Falls, like all of you, will get to bring donations to help buy fruit trees for families in Central America. Now, you may think Central America—where there are lots of rainforests—has *plenty* of fruit. But families still struggle to have enough food or income. Here's how we can help!

Families in need will receive the trees and even plants that provide them with food. And any fruit or vegetables left over can be sold to create additional income for the families! Families will even get help knowing how to plant and care for their trees. A fruit tree orchard can produce enough crops for vital income in just two to three years. Plus, this gift of a fruit tree is good for the environment because it provides training in agroforestry practices. Planting trees helps prevent soil erosion that leads to depleted farmlands and devastating floods.

All this happens because Rainforest Falls is partnering with World Vision to help families with these fruit trees! That's a *life-saving* mission!

Your \$9 can provide one fruit tree for a family in need. That means by skipping a meal out and putting the cash into our Operation Kid-to-Kid donation station, you can help save lives.

You can take home a copy of this letter (hold up a copy of the "Planting Hope" flyer) so your parents will know what the project is all about. They may want to get involved, too.

Let's watch a video that'll give us an even better look at the impact Operation Kid-to-Kid will have.



Play the Operation Kid-to-Kid segment from the Ultimate Director Go-To Training DVD.

After the video ends, allow teens some time to check out the Operation Kid-to-Kid Display.

Lead a time of prayer for kids in Central America who'll receive fruit trees. Prayer People can lead their Crews in prayer, and then you can close the prayer.

Head to the kitchen to collect the Treetop Treats.

TREETOP TREATS (20 minutes)

Supplies:

- trays with snack from Treetop Treats Leader (1 per Crew)
- napkins (1 per person)
- cups of water (1 per person)

Ask the Treetop Treats kitchen staff to set out the snack ingredients designated for your group of teens.

If you have any teens with food allergies, connect with the Treetop Treats Leader to see what snack alternative or variation he or she is providing and make sure the alternative goes to any teens who need it.

SAY

Each person in your Crew can take a cup of water. The Treetop Treats Coordinator can take a tray of snacks. Then head back to our room to sit together, have your Prayer Person pray, and we'll hang out.

When everyone is back in your room and Crews are gathered with their snack supplies, invite Crews to eat together and have open conversation. It's a relaxed befriending time that also allows everyone a break from all they've been processing throughout the day. If Crews need some conversation starters, offer simple get-to-know-you questions for Crews to answer, such as the following:

- **Tell about a place that makes you happy.**
- **What's the most interesting thing you've done in the last year?**
- **If you could go on a vacation anywhere in the world, where would you want to go, and why?**

When everyone's done eating, each Crew's Treetop Treats Coordinator can lead cleanup, throwing away any trash and cleaning up tables. When it's time to move on, head to Canopy Closing.

CANOPY CLOSING (25 minutes)

Join the rest of the participants for an upbeat closing program. Thank God for another awesome day at Rainforest Falls!



Sweet Face

OR



See More Seymour

Step by Step



“The Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor you and give you his peace” (Numbers 6:24-26).

“I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

“Then Jesus said, ‘Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest’” (Matthew 11:28).

“I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).

“This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

“Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you” (1 Peter 5:7).

“Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine” (Isaiah 43:1).

“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them” (Romans 8:28).

“My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

“So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

“But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

“See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1).



Station	Instructions
Station A	Read Psalm 139:1-2. God knows our thoughts, so journal about your thoughts—anything that’s been on your mind lately. Give those thoughts to God in prayer.
Station B	Read Psalm 139:3-5. God goes before us, so walk around this corner of the room. When you get to a piece of paper, pick it up, read it, and reflect on it. God knew you needed that word!
Station C	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read Psalm 139:13-15. God knit you together. Make a yarn craft.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cut a long piece of yarn.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Put on a pair of gloves.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dip the yarn into a cup with the glue mixture in. Spiral it in so it doesn’t get tangled.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Press the yarn down into the glue cup with a spoon.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pull the yarn out and wrap it around a balloon, pressing off excess glue as you go.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When you get to the end of the yarn, tuck it under a piece.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you want to add more yarn or a different color, repeat the process! The more yarn, the better it looks.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set it aside on a paper plate to dry overnight.
Station D	Read Psalm 139:16-18. God has written your book—and his thoughts are more precious than grains of sand. You may feel a lot of pressure or uncertainty about your future. Talk with God about that as you write or draw in a plate of sand.

Planting Hope

Kids Helping Kids

It's likely that when you visit the grocery store, you're met with piles of fresh fruits and vegetables. But access to adequate nutritious food isn't a reality for many. In some Central American villages, children go to bed without enough to eat, and parents struggle to provide healthy meals. Without key nutrients like vitamin C, kids face sickness, weakened immune systems, and even long-term health problems.

But there's a simple, powerful solution: fruit trees.

Fruit trees like oranges, bananas, mangoes, and papayas provide sweet, nutritious food kids love. These trees don't just feed a family—they also give parents a way to earn income and even bless their neighbors by sharing seedlings. Plus, planting trees protects the land from erosion and flooding! This helps communities during seasons of heavy rain.

A \$9 donation to our partners at World Vision provides a family in Central America with a fruit tree that will keep giving for years to come. Families even receive support in planting and caring for their trees! In just a few years, that little tree can become an orchard, offering food, income, and hope.

Because Operation Kid-to-Kid™ is part of every Group VBS, we have the opportunity to bless countless parents in Central American countries, helping *them* feed their children, provide financially for their families, and support their communities.



World Vision[®]
Ok2k.org; worldvision.org

God is our safe place.

Bible Verse: “Then I pray to you, O Lord. I say,
‘You are my place of refuge.’”
(Psalm 142:5)

Bible Story: David hides from Saul.
(1 Samuel 23–24)

David’s life reads like an action-packed survival story. After being anointed as the future king, he suddenly found himself running for his life from King Saul. Forced to flee, David hid in the caves of Adullam, a rugged, rocky refuge southwest of Bethlehem. These caves, naturally formed in limestone cliffs, provided shelter and secrecy for someone on the run. But David’s caves weren’t small, cramped holes in the ground—they were large, deep systems, often used by travelers, shepherds, and even armies. God provided not just a *physical* refuge but also a community—David’s family and a band of 400 outcasts joined him! While caves and strongholds provided temporary shelter, David daily found his safety in the presence and promises of God.

Kids may not be running from a king, but many face battles that leave them feeling overwhelmed or unsafe. Whether it’s the pressure of school, struggles at home, or the weight of anxiety, kids need a refuge just like David. The good news? God still provides a safe place—not a cave or a hiding spot, but his rock-solid presence. When everything around them feels uncertain, kids can trust that God understands, hears what’s spoken in their hearts, and stays with them. Just as God never abandoned David, God will never abandon us. While God never promises that we won’t face hardship, he *does* promise to be our shelter. Guide kids to find comfort when they turn to God as a refuge—a safe place for their hurting hearts.



Why It Matters

Find comfort. God provided a safe place for David to hide from King Saul. Today, God provides a refuge for us, where our doubts, worries, fears, and hearts are safe with him.

Day 3: God is our safe place.

SING & PLAY TUNE LAGOON (25 minutes)

Welcome your group at Sing & Play Tune Lagoon.

After Sing & Play Tune Lagoon, head to your youth room.

TREE TIP

If you have adult leaders, include them in the games and icebreakers. That way, teenagers can get to know their leaders, too. That includes you!

WELCOME AND ICEBREAKER GAME: Fear Factor (10 minutes) MEDIUM ENERGY



Supplies:

— Rainforest Rattle*

*available from group.com
or your Group VBS supplier

Give high-fives as everyone arrives at the youth area.

Welcome everyone back for another day at Rainforest Falls.

SAY Today we'll be talking about how **God is our safe place. But that doesn't mean scary things won't happen in life. In fact, let's play a game to see what might scare you.**

Designate two sides of your room. You'll point to one side for the first choice in each pairing and the other side for the second choice. Teens will run to their chosen side, and then a few students from each side can share why.

- **What's scarier: failing a test or losing your phone?**
- **What's scarier: wetting your pants in public or walking around with toilet paper stuck to your shoe?**
- **What's scarier: a flood or a wildfire?**
- **What's scarier: a snake or a scorpion?**
- **What's scarier: being the new kid in school or having a rumor being spread about you at school?**
- **What's scarier: heights or public speaking?**
- **What's scarier: learning to drive or applying to college?**
- **What's scarier: a barking dog or a hissing cat?**

Lead everyone in this large group discussion.

ASK Now it's time to pick the scariest thing of all. Of everything I named, what sounded the scariest to you? Why?

If scary things still happen, what do you think it means that **God is our safe place?**

SAY The Bible describes God as a refuge. That's another word for "safe place." Think of God as a shelter from a storm. If there was a tornado warning, you could go to a safe place to ride out the storm. It doesn't mean the storm isn't happening all around you, but it does mean you are sheltered from it. When we say **God is our safe place**, we're not saying nothing bad will ever happen to you. It just means that you have someone to turn to who will bring you peace and comfort in hard times. Let's find out more about safe places with a game.

GAME: Rainforest Treasure (15 minutes) **HIGH ENERGY**

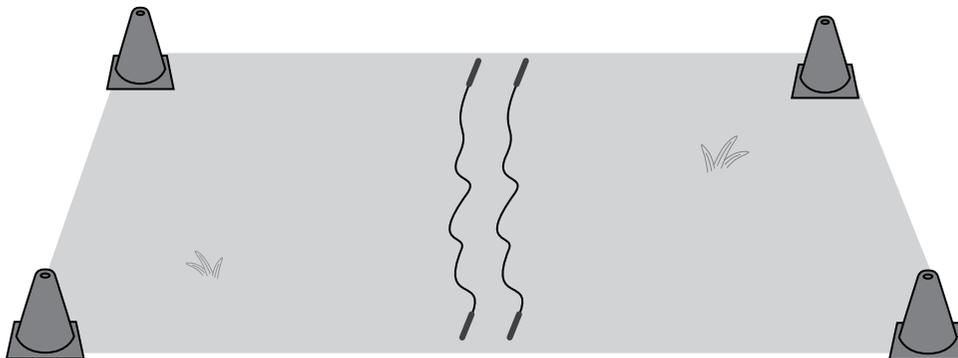
Supplies:

- cones
- rope
- 2 plastic golden coins
- Sing & Play Tune Lagoon Music CD or download*
- media player
- Rainforest Rattle*

*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier

Before Teens Arrive

Set up a playing area by coning off boundaries. Across the center of the playing area, there should be two ropes about 6 feet apart—this will be a safe zone where no one can get tagged.



SAY For this game, you're on a rainforest treasure hunt! You've heard rumors that deep in the undergrowth lies a secret cave full of treasures! But to find the treasure, you'll have to get past the people trying to guard it!

1. Play this game like Capture the Flag. Form two teams, and assign each team a side of the playing area. Each team will hide a golden coin instead of a flag.
2. The goal is for teens to run to the opposite side and get the other team's coin, then bring it back to their own side without getting tagged.
3. Anyone who gets tagged on the opponent's side is out of the game.
4. The middle space (between the two ropes) is a safe place—no one can get tagged here. Set a time limit of around 20 seconds for people to stay in the safe place.
5. Play the Sing & Play Tune Lagoon Music in the background while Crews play.
6. Turn off the music and sound your Rainforest Rattle when it's time to move on.

After the game, gather teenagers together.

SAY Wow! That was quite an adventure to find the rainforest treasure!

ASK How did you feel when you were on your own side or in the safe place in the middle?

How did you feel when you were on the opponent's side?

Compare that to your life. What places make you feel safe? unsafe?

SAY There are some places where we feel safe and secure. But we all have places where we feel on edge—maybe in a tough class, at the dentist's office, or when we have to go to a new place. No matter where we are physically, **God is our safe place. We can always turn to him!**

Take a five-minute break, and then gather teenagers back together for the Bible study.



BIBLE STUDY: A Safe Place (45 minutes)



Supplies:

— Bibles, bookmarked to 1 Samuel 23 (1 per Crew)



— Paper People*

- pencils
- markers
- yarn



- scissors
- glue
- adhesive googly eyes
- construction paper

— Rainforest Rattle*

*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier

Decorate a Person

SAY

Today's Bible story is about a man named David—who happens to be the same man who wrote Psalm 139, which we explored yesterday! Today we'll explore how God kept David safe. And you'll need to make your own little person to keep safe. It can be a miniature version of you or someone you love, or it can be a made-up person—whatever you want.

Distribute the Paper People and other craft supplies. Allow time for teens to decorate their people with construction paper clothes, yarn hair, googly eyes, and any other touches they'd like to make. Make sure teens write their names somewhere on the people that's visible.



Hide People

SAY

Now it's time to find the perfect hiding spots for your people—somewhere they'll be safe from an enemy.

Allow time for teens to hide their people.

Let's see how well you hid your people! I'm going to assign each of you the name of another person in our group. You'll try to find that person's paper person!

Assign each teen to another teen so they know who they're looking for, then set them loose to find the Paper People—and they may pick up only the Paper Person with their assigned person's name. Allow about three minutes for the search.

Have teens show off if they were successful.

ASK

So what do you think? How do you feel about how safe you kept your person?



ASK What was your thought process in picking a safe place?

If you'd known I was going to ask someone to look for your person, what would you have done differently?

SAY Not all of us kept our people safe. And maybe there are some things you would have done differently if you had known someone would be coming after your person. But we're about to see how God kept David safe as he hid from someone who was trying to find and hurt him. Let's dive into the Bible.

Set Up the Story

SAY First, we need a little background. David was the youngest of eight sons, and he was a shepherd. He'd grown up caring for sheep and protecting them from predators. One day, David went to the battlefield where his big brothers were. The army needed someone willing to face a giant on the enemy's side. David was just there to bring his brothers some lunch, but he volunteered and ended up defeating the giant.

That changed his life in a lot of ways. You see, he already worked at the palace, playing music for King Saul. So Saul might have recognized David that day on the battlefield. He definitely remembered him afterward! He made him a commander in the army, and David had a lot more success. People started singing songs about David's military success, like this one:

"Saul has killed his thousands,
and David his ten thousands!"

Now, Saul wasn't the most stable guy. He had a bit of a temper. So you can imagine how he felt about David when he heard that people were comparing their success—and they liked David better!

So Saul tried to kill David a couple of times by throwing a spear at him. But God kept David safe. Eventually, after Saul made more attempts on David's life, David had to run away.

And that's where we pick up today: David is running for his life, and Saul is hot on his heels, trying to find and kill him. David also has a group of about 600 men traveling with him. They're there to help him—but it's also probably harder to hide with that many people!

Read and Discuss

SAY Let's read a verse about this time in David's life.

Have a Reader read 1 Samuel 23:14. Have Guides lead their Crews in discussing these questions. After each question, sound the Rainforest Rattle and ask a few Coaches to share some highlights.

ASK What does this show you about God?

Consider the phrase “God didn’t let Saul find him.” What thoughts or questions do you have about that? What might that mean in your own life?

SAY David also had become best friends with Saul’s son Jonathan. Jonathan found David and gave him some encouragement.

Have a Reader read 1 Samuel 23:16-17. Then have Guides lead Crews in discussing this question.

ASK Tell about someone who encourages you when life gets rough.

SAY Well, Jonathan’s encouragement was just what David needed—because things were about to take a turn for the worse. Some men who knew where David was went to Saul and ratted him out! David found out about that and moved again, but Saul was closing in. Check this out.

Have a Reader read 1 Samuel 23:26-29. Have Guides lead Crews in discussing these questions, and then ask a few teens to share their answers with everyone.

ASK What does this show you about what God can do?

How does this event help you trust God more in your own life?

SAY God is our safe place. His timing was perfect to give Saul a reason to head back home just before he caught David. And David stayed safe for a little longer.

But once Saul dealt with the Philistines, he was back at it, chasing David. He got another tip and got very close to David—so close that he didn’t even know it! Let’s find out more.

Have a Reader read 1 Samuel 24:3-4.

ASK In this part of the story, it would have been easy for David to free himself from Saul once and for all. What does this show you about David’s trust in God as a safe place?

SAY David could have made all his problems disappear if he’d just killed Saul. He would have been permanently freed from danger! Instead, he trusted that God is our safe place. He trusted in God’s plan and didn’t feel like it was his place to end Saul’s reign as king.

ASK What circumstances in your own life have helped build your trust in God?

SAY When we look back and remember God’s faithfulness and how he’s helped us feel safe in difficult times in the past, it can help us trust his plan for the future. We learn to trust that God is our safe place. Difficult times will come and go, but God remains constant.



SAY Because of David's trust in God's plan, he spared Saul's life. He didn't try to take matters into his own hands; he knew God would come through.

And God did! David even found the courage to follow Saul and show him the piece of fabric he'd cut off his robe. Saul and David made a truce, and David was safe.

I wish I could tell you the story ends there. Unfortunately, Saul went back on his word, and David was on the run for the rest of Saul's life. But God *did* keep David safe through it all.

ASK What does it look like to be "safe" when we're in the midst of ongoing unsafe situations? How is God a safe place then?

Pray for Safety

SAY There are a lot of "Sauls" in our world today—the things that seem to relentlessly chase after us, not letting up.

They may not be murderous kings, but things like anxiety, bullying, sickness, feeling isolated or unliked, uncertainty, financial worries, a divided nation...sometimes it feels like these things just never let up! When will we catch a break?

Maybe we won't. Or maybe it will take a long, long time. But even in the midst of that, we can trust that **God is our safe place.**

Pick one thing you need refuge from. Maybe it's one of the things I just named. Get your Paper Person back from hiding or from the person who found it, and write your one thing on the back of it. Then spend some time in silent prayer, asking God to be your safe place even in the midst of that struggle.

Allow time for teens to reflect and pray.

Now put your person in a safe place where you'll remember to take it home. Maybe it's a purse or pocket or tucked inside your Bible. When you take it home, let it be a reminder of how God kept David safe from Saul and that **God is our safe place.**

Close your Bible study in prayer, having Prayer People pray for each person in their group. Teens may choose to share what they wrote and ask for prayer or just receive a more general prayer.

Allow a five-minute break, and then gather everyone back in your youth room.



TREE TIP

Today's Bible study may bring up some serious troubles and emotions teens are facing. While encouraging them to trust God as a safe place, don't minimize their feelings about what they're experiencing.

SERVICE PROJECT: Blessing Bags (15 minutes)

Supplies:

- toiletry samples such as soap, shampoo, conditioner, lotion, and toothpaste
- other essentials such as toothbrushes, socks, and feminine hygiene products
- paper bags
- markers

Before Teens Arrive

Find a safe house or shelter that helps domestic violence victims or unhoused people in your community. Find out what needs they have, and gather items to help them. This is a great opportunity to take donations from your congregation ahead of time.

SAY

God is our safe place. Some people in our community also need a physical safe place. Tell about the organization you chose.

People in places like these often lack the most basic necessities, so let's be part of their safe place by making Blessing Bags for them.

Set out the supplies, and let teenagers decorate bags. Then they can select items to fill each bag.

Finally, teens can pray in their Crews over the bags they assembled, asking God to keep their recipients safe.

It's great to help people in our community who are struggling to find a safe place. Your Blessing Bags can be the encouraging reminder that God is looking out for them even in the midst of a very trying time.

And that reminds me of our Operation Kid-to-Kid project, too! That's also geared to serving people who don't have their basic needs met. By contributing toward the fruit trees, you'll help families have food and an income to survive on.

Head to the kitchen to collect the Treetop Treats.





Rainforest Refuge

OR



Ocelot Spots

TREETOP TREATS (20 minutes)

Supplies:

- trays with snack from Treetop Treats Leader (1 per Crew)
- napkins (1 per person)
- cups of water (1 per person)

Ask the Treetop Treats kitchen staff to set out the snack portions designated for your group.

If anyone has food allergies, connect with the Treetop Treats Leader to see what snack alternative or variation he or she is providing and make sure the alternative goes to anyone who needs it.

SAY

Each person in your Crew can take a cup of water. Each Crew's Treetop Treats Coordinator can also take a tray for your Crew. Then head back to our room to sit together, have your Prayer Person pray, and enjoy your snack as you catch up.

When everyone is back in your room and Crews are gathered with their snack supplies, allow time for relaxed conversation as teens eat their snacks. If Crews need some conversation starters, offer simple get-to-know-you questions for Crews to answer, such as the following:

- **What music do you like to listen to?**
- **Tell about your favorite food.**
- **What's been the best part of the day, and why?**

When everyone's done eating, each Crew's Treetop Treats Coordinator can lead cleanup, throwing away any trash and cleaning up tables. When it's time to move on, head to Canopy Closing.

CANOPY CLOSING (25 minutes)

Join the rest of the participants for an upbeat closing program. Thank God for another awesome day at Rainforest Falls!

God is love.

Bible Verse: “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.” (Psalm 136:1)

Bible Story: Jesus dies and comes to life to show God’s love. (Luke 22:39–24:12)

God’s creativity and magnificent design didn’t end with creating the world. One might even say that God’s plan to reveal the greatest act of love began at the Garden of Eden. God’s Son, Jesus, came to earth—fulfilling a staggering 300 Old Testament prophecies! The passage begins in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus, fully aware of the pain ahead, chooses to follow God’s plan. Jesus’ love wasn’t just a feeling; it was a choice that cost him everything. Where betrayal and arrest might have stirred up emotions of anger, Jesus showed only love. Instead of fighting or fleeing, he carried the cross and gave his life, demonstrating the power of God’s love for humanity. Three days later, in the most astonishing moment of all, the tomb stood empty—Jesus conquered death! God showed that his love is more powerful than anything.

Kids hear mixed messages about love. Songs say it’s about feelings. Influencers claim that popularity equals love. And people may argue, “If you loved me, you’d...” But Jesus reveals a different kind of love—one that’s selfless, sacrificial, and unshakable. Jesus didn’t love based on who deserved it; he loved because *that’s who he is*. What a gift to know that we’re fully loved—not because we’re perfect, but simply because God is love. In a world that often defines love in shallow or conditional ways, the cross and the empty tomb remind kids what real love looks like—powerful, unstoppable, and forever! Today, help kids explore a God-focused definition of love that will change their lives for eternity.



Why It Matters

Be amazed! Jesus demonstrated that God’s love is selfless, unconditional, and powerful. Kids will gain a fresh perspective on what *true* love is, following God’s timeless definition.

Day 4: God is love.

SING & PLAY TUNE LAGOON (25 minutes)

Welcome your group at Sing & Play Tune Lagoon.

After Sing & Play Tune Lagoon, head to your youth room.

WELCOME & ICEBREAKER: Show, Not Tell (15 minutes) MEDIUM ENERGY



Supplies:

— Rainforest Rattle*

*available from group.com
or your Group VBS supplier



SAY

Here at Rainforest Falls, we've learned a lot about each other! But there's probably still a lot to learn. Let's see how well you can show your friends things about yourself—without using any words.

Have teens do this experience in their Crews. You'll call out a question, and the oldest teen in each Crew will act out his or her answer, Charades style. Everyone else will try to guess. For each subsequent question, teens will take turns clockwise around their circle.

- What's your favorite thing to have for dinner?
- What career do you hope to have as an adult?
- What's an extracurricular activity you're involved in?
- What's your favorite movie?
- What's the most interesting place you've ever been?
- If you could have any animal for a pet, what animal would you have?
- What's something you're planning to do in the next week?
- What's something you and your best friend love to do together?
- What do you think would be the coolest way to travel?
- What's your favorite subject in school?
- What's your favorite hobby?

• **Who's a celebrity you'd love to meet?**

Use the Rainforest Rattle to get everyone's attention.

Have Crews sit together and discuss these questions, led by the Guides.

ASK What was it like having to *show* your answers instead of just telling?

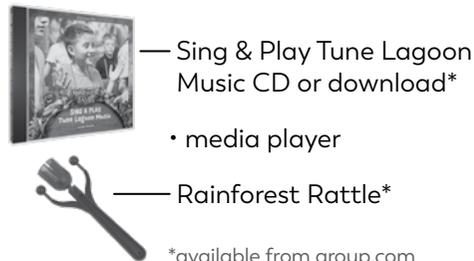
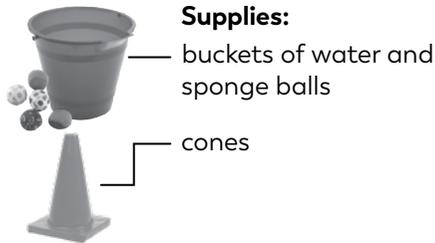
What are some things that are better conveyed by actions than words?

SAY It's probably easier to just *talk* about the most interesting place you've ever been, or maybe show with pictures. But here's something where actions mean more: love. It's easy to say you love someone. But when you really love someone, your actions show it. **God is love**, and today we'll explore how he showed us love with his actions.

Allow a five-minute break, then lead teens out to your games area.

GAME: Piranha-Infested Waters (15 minutes)

HIGH ENERGY



*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier

Before Teens Arrive

Mark a rectangular playing area with cones.



SAY

We've been enjoying our rainforest expedition this week. But today we'll encounter a dangerous creature. Your job will be to cross the river without getting attacked by a piranha! And be careful—the more this game goes on, the more piranhas you'll have to avoid!

And since you're crossing a river, you should expect to get wet!

1. Gather teens at one end of the playing area, and assign two of them to be Piranhas.
2. The Piranhas will stand in the middle of the playing area. They can run side-to-side but not forward or backward.
3. Everyone else will try to run from one end of the playing area to the other.
4. Meanwhile, your helpers will stand around your playing area with wet sponge balls and throw them at teens.
5. Anyone who gets tagged by a Piranha becomes an additional Piranha for the next round.
6. Play the Sing & Play Tune Lagoon Music in the background while teens play.
7. When everyone has become a Piranha, reset the game and start over.
8. Turn off the music and sound your Rainforest Rattle when it's time to move on.

After the game, gather teenagers together for a group discussion.

ASK

How hopeful did you feel about making it across the river when the game first started? What about when there were more piranhas?

Tell about a time you knew you were going to lose at something in life. What was that like?

SAY

No matter how hard you tried in this game, or how many rounds you successfully made it through, it was inevitable that you'd get caught eventually. There just got to be a point where there were too many piranhas chasing you! Sin is like that. The Bible says we've *all* sinned—none of us can escape it. But there is something that can bring us hope: Jesus! God sent Jesus to save us from sin, because **God is love**.

Allow a five-minute break, then gather teens for Bible study.



BIBLE STUDY: Forever Free (45 minutes)



Supplies:

— Bibles, bookmarked to Luke 22 (1 per Crew)

- uninflated balloons
- small slips of paper
- pencils
- curling ribbon
- scissors

- sharp pin
- construction paper
- markers
- tape



— Sing & Play Tune Lagoon Music CD or download*

- media player



— laundry basket
— wooden cross



— Rainforest Rattle*

*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier

Before Teens Arrive

- Set the wooden cross in the corner of the room. Place the pin near it.

Full of Sin

SAY

So far, we've seen that **God is love** and that he showed it to us by saving us from sin. Let's explore more.

Here's what you need to understand: When God made the world, he made people to have a perfect friendship with him. In fact, let's demonstrate that.

Have Materials Managers distribute a slip of paper to each person in their group, along with pencils. Have everyone write "perfect friendship with God" on a slip of paper.

Hold your slip between your palms. Pause. **Notice there's no separation between you and God right now. Your skin is directly touching that perfect friendship.**

But before long, the first humans sinned—they went against God's way. Sin entered our world and broke that perfect relationship. Have Materials Managers distribute uninflated balloons. Have teens place their paper slips inside the balloons.

Now hold the balloon. Notice that there's now a barrier between you and your perfect friendship with God.

And the problem is, sin keeps on growing in our lives. For example, we might lie (inflate your balloon a little bit), **say something mean** (inflate your balloon a little more), **or cheat** (inflate with one more breath).

TREE TIP

This experience will have some reflective parts but will also be loud as balloons are filled and popped. Prepare for noise!



SAY

I'd like you to think about the sin in your own life. You won't need to share with anyone, but I want to give you a quiet time to talk with God about what you've done wrong, or what you've failed to do right. For each thing you talk with God about, inflate your balloon a little bit.

Allow plenty of time for teens to reflect and inflate their balloons. While they do, play "God Loves Us So" from the Sing & Play Tune Lagoon Music.

When everyone has finished, continue.

Now, with a balloon, you could theoretically let the air out. But that's not how sin works. You can't undo it. That separation between you and God is something you can't get rid of. Have everyone tie off their balloons.

And we carry that sin with us everywhere we go. It weighs us down with guilt, shame, and the consequences of our bad choices; with a feeling of emptiness and incompleteness.

Have Materials Managers distribute scissors and curling ribbon, and have teens use the ribbon to tie their balloons to their ankles. They can make the ribbon as short or as long as they want.

I want you to walk around the room like that now. As you do, avoid stepping on other people's balloons. But have another time of silent prayer as you talk with God about the way sin has impacted your life.

Allow time for teens to walk around the room, playing more reflective music as they go.

After a few minutes, stop the music and have teens sit with their Crews.

Jesus' Balloon

SAY

There was one man who didn't have a balloon—he didn't have sin. That man was Jesus, God's own Son, sent to earth to save us.

Jesus lived for 33 years and never did anything wrong. He always followed God's plan.

Hold up a slip of paper.

Because he had no sin, Jesus was able to keep his perfect relationship with God.

Until one day when the world changed forever. Jesus got arrested and put on trial.

Have Readers read Luke 23:1-5 to their Crews.



ASK Why do you think there was a discrepancy between what the council said and what Pilate said?

SAY As the trial went on, the crowd continued to insist that Jesus had done something wrong.

Pilate disagreed. He kept insisting Jesus hadn't done anything wrong and tried to get the crowd to agree to release Jesus. But it didn't work.

Have Readers read Luke 23:20-24.

Place the slip of paper in a balloon.

Jesus was sentenced to death, even though he'd done nothing wrong. But what Pilate and the crowd of people didn't realize is that was God's plan all along. **God is love. God sent Jesus to die for the things I did wrong.** Inflate the balloon a little.

And the things you did wrong. Point to a teenager, then inflate the balloon. Continue in this manner, pointing to several teens until the balloon is full. Then tie it off.

It wasn't Jesus' sin that separated him from God. Jesus was still perfect. But he took on all our sin and took it to the cross where he died.

Set the balloon in a laundry basket by the cross. Then invite teenagers to cut their balloons off their ankles and leave them at the cross as well.

Set Free

SAY When Jesus died, he set us free from sin. Listen to this.

Read Luke 23:45.

The curtain in the Temple separated people from the most holy place. It represented the separation of sinful humanity from God's perfect holiness.

ASK Knowing that, what significance do you think it has that the curtain tore in half when Jesus died?

SAY Jesus' death restored our perfect friendship with God. And the best part is, Jesus didn't stay dead!

Have Readers read Luke 24:1-7.

ASK Think about everything we've explored about how the sin in our lives keeps growing and how it separates us from God. With all that in mind, why do you think it matters that Jesus came back to life?

Have Readers read Romans 5:10-11.

What does this help you understand about the purpose for Jesus' death and resurrection? What questions does it leave you with?



SAY Jesus beat death. Let me explain why that was so important. Back in the day, Jewish people used to sacrifice animals for their sins. The blood of the innocent animal paid the punishment for their sin.

But, of course, the animals didn't come back to life. And people kept sinning. So over and over, people had to make sacrifices.

When Jesus came back to life, he beat the power of death and sin once and for all! His perfect sacrifice for us was how he showed us that **God is love**. And it's what reunited us with God...permanently!

Use a sharp pin to pop all the balloons. This may send the papers flying, but have teens each track down a paper to hold on to.

Have readers read Romans 6:5-11.

ASK What do you think it looks like to be set free from the power of sin? If we're free from the power of sin, why do we keep sinning?

SAY Knowing Jesus died for us and becoming his followers doesn't mean we immediately become perfect. It *does* mean he's working on our hearts so his power wins out over sin more and more. God is changing our hearts because **God is love**, and God wants us to live his best way.

Share the Love

SAY All of this is really, *really* good news because there was nothing we could do to break the power of sin for ourselves, but we were *all* slaves to the power of sin.

ASK Tell about a time you had some exciting news you couldn't wait to share.

SAY God invites us to share his love with others and share the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection. He invites us to join with him in helping the whole world see that **God is love** and to be restored to that perfect friendship with him. So let's spread the news!

Think of someone you know who needs to hear this news. Make a card for that person, and tape your slip of paper somewhere in the card. Write a personal, heartfelt message sharing why this news matters to you!

Allow about 10 minutes for teenagers to make their cards using construction paper and markers. You can invite them to include some of the verses from Romans 5 and 6 that you read earlier. Teens will take their cards home to deliver to the people they had in mind.



SAY I hope as you continue through life, you help others see that **God is love**. I hope your actions show that even more than your words!

Allow a 10-minute break before beginning your service project. This is a longer break to allow time for teens who have questions about following Jesus.

TREE TIP

Make sure you and other adult leaders are available for one-on-one conversations about what it means to commit to following Jesus.

SERVICE PROJECT: Prayer Walk (20 minutes)



Supplies:

— Rainforest Rattle*

*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier

SAY We want everyone to know that **God is love**. One thing we can do is **pray for people to feel God's love in their lives**. Let's do that now.

Invite teens to join you on a prayer walk through the neighborhood where your church is, praying as they walk for the residents of the homes they pass. If your church is surrounded by businesses, they can pray for people who work in or are customers of those businesses.

If your church is more remotely located, or if you can't safely leave the property with teens, that's OK too! Bring some maps of your city, or have teens pull them up on their phones. Teens can touch various streets and pray for the people who live there. Prayer People can take the lead, but everyone can be involved in praying. And Coaches can share specific ideas for blessings for the recipients of your prayers.

Gather teens back in your Waterfall youth room and sound the Rainforest Rattle.

There's another group of people we can pray for: the families who are benefiting from Operation Kid-to-Kid. The fruit trees you raise money for could be a way they experience God's love. Let's pray for them to feel God's love surrounding them in all kinds of ways!

Lead a prayer for the Operation Kid-to-Kid recipients. You could also have a Prayer Person lead this prayer.

Head to the kitchen for Treetop Treats.

TREE TIP

Another option if you're concerned about safety is for teens to stay on the church property but walk around the perimeter, facing out and praying for the city in all directions.





Ants on a Branch

OR



Bonded Branches

TREETOP TREATS (20 minutes)

Supplies:

- trays with snack from Treetop Treats Leader (1 per Crew)
- napkins (1 per person)
- cups of water (1 per person)

Ask the Treetop Treats kitchen staff to set out the snack portions designated for your group.

If anyone has food allergies, connect with the Treetop Treats Leader to see what snack alternative or variation he or she is providing and make sure the alternative goes to anyone who needs it.

SAY

Each person in your Crew can get a cup of water. Each Crew's Treetop Treats Coordinator can also take a tray of goodies for your Crew. Then head back to our room to sit together, have your Prayer Person pray, and enjoy your snacks as you talk with each other.

When everyone is back in your room and Crews are gathered with their snack supplies, allow time for relaxed conversation. If Crews need some conversation starters, offer simple get-to-know-you questions for Crews to answer, such as the following:

- **When did you first hear about Jesus?**
- **What's your earliest memory?**
- **What shows are you currently bingeing, and why?**

When everyone's done eating, each Crew's Treetop Treats Coordinator can lead cleanup, throwing away any trash and cleaning up tables. When it's time to move on, head to Canopy Closing.

CANOPY CLOSING (25 minutes)

Join the rest of the participants for an upbeat closing program. Give thanks to God for another awesome day at Rainforest Falls.

God is forever.

Bible Verse: “But we can praise the Lord both now and forever! Praise the Lord!”
(Psalm 115:18)

Bible Story: God gives John a vision of heaven.
(Revelation 7:17; 21-22)

The book of Revelation pulls back the curtain on eternity, showing that God’s love, power, and presence are *forever*. These words came from a vision given to the Apostle John, one of Jesus’ closest friends, during exile on the island of Patmos. Imagine being alone on a rocky island, separated from everyone you love, when suddenly, heaven opens before you! Wow! God gave John a glimpse of the future, revealing a world completely restored, where there’s no more pain, sadness, or death. John recorded that God wipes away every tear, and Jesus, the Lamb, becomes our eternal Shepherd, leading us along streams of living water. Revelation 21:23 explains that heaven doesn’t even need the sun or moon because God’s glory shines so brightly! What a wonderful “full circle” picture of God’s glory shining during creation! God isn’t just powerful for a moment—he is forever. God’s Kingdom, love, and promises never end.

It’s often said that “all good things come to an end.” Kids understand that, as they live in a world where things *don’t* last. Favorite shoes wear out, friendships change, and even the latest trends fade in a flash. That can make life feel uncertain, even scary. But Scripture gives kids a life-changing truth: God never runs out, never changes, and never leaves. God’s love is permanent, his promises are unbreakable, and his home is waiting for all who trust in him. That means kids don’t need to be afraid of the future. When kids realize that God is forever, they can live with hope, confidence, and joy—because no matter what happens, their forever is safe in God’s hands!



Why It Matters

Hope! God’s vision to John means that the love of our all-knowing creator and refuge never ends! Kids can look to a bright future, celebrating all that God promises for those who trust in Jesus.

Day 5: God is forever.

SING & PLAY TUNE LAGOON (25 minutes)

Welcome your group at Sing & Play Tune Lagoon.

After Sing & Play Tune Lagoon, head to your playing area for a fun get-to-know-you game.

WELCOME AND ICEBREAKER GAME:

Perfect Paradise (10 minutes)

HIGH ENERGY

Supplies:

- folding chairs



— Rainforest Rattle*

*available from group.com
or your Group VBS supplier



Welcome everyone back for the last day at Rainforest Falls.

SAY

As we wrap up this week today, let's find out what the others in our group would consider part of an ideal paradise. We'll play a game like Fruit Basket Upset. Help me arrange chairs into a big circle.

Have teens help you. You'll need enough chairs for every teen, minus one.

Select one teen to stand in the middle of the circle while the others each take a seat.

The person in the middle will call out something they would want to have in their ideal paradise. Examples include sandy beaches, pizza, fast Wi-Fi, football, puppies, and naps.

Anyone who would also like that in their paradise must get up and find a new seat, while the person in the middle tries to steal a seat.

The new person in the middle will name something else, and so on as time allows.

Have Crews sit together for this discussion.

ASK

Think about something you chose in this game. Why would that be a part of your ideal paradise?

What's something you definitely would *not* want in your paradise—it would make it not paradise?

SAY Today we'll learn more about how the Bible describes our perfect paradise: heaven! Heaven is full of wonderful things beyond what we can imagine. And it *doesn't* include things like sadness, pain, and sickness! The best part is, when we believe in Jesus, we have the promise that this paradise is where we'll spend forever. It's not just a theoretical idea! And we'll get to live with God because **God is forever.**

Before we dive into that story, let's play a game.

GAME: Highway Through Heaven (15 minutes)

HIGH ENERGY



Supplies:



— hula hoops



— water balloons (enough to place in a 2x6-foot area per Crew, leaving little room to walk)

• ropes

• Gold Plastic Tablecloths*



— cones

• sprinklers



— Sing & Play Tune Lagoon Music CD or download*

• media player



— Rainforest Rattle*

*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier

Before Teens Arrive

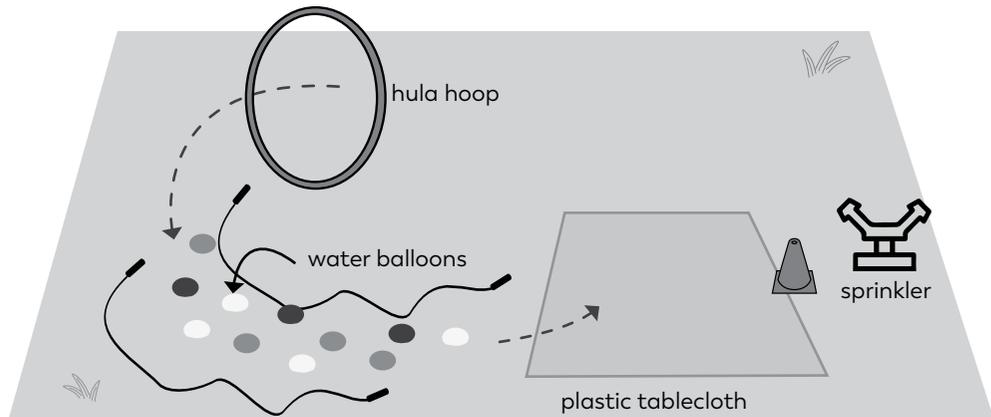
- Set up an obstacle course for each Crew. Each obstacle course will have the following challenges:
 - Walk through a hula hoop (pearly gate). You'll need a helper to hold this hoop upright.
 - Walk through the path of water-balloon jewels. You'll arrange two 6-foot ropes parallel to each other and a couple of feet apart, then fill that path with water balloons.
 - Slide down the golden streets. You'll put a Gold Plastic Tablecloth at the end of the water balloons. Teens will sit on it and use it to scoot to the next challenge. You'll need a leader to put the tablecloth back at the beginning of this section after each turn.
 - Run around the tree of life. You can use a cone to represent the tree, or set up your courses so there's a real tree in the middle!
 - Swim through the river. Set up a sprinkler so teens will have to run through it to complete the course.

TREE TIP

If you have too many Crews to set up enough stations for all of them, simply stagger start times so teens don't have to wait for the previous person to completely finish the course before beginning.

TREE TIP

If you're not able to set up enough sprinklers, station leaders with spray bottles of water to spray teens instead.



Lead teenagers to your playing area.

SAY

Today we're learning that God is forever. And God is preparing a special place for us in heaven. Let's get a little preview of some of the things that are in heaven.

Show teens the obstacle course, connecting each section to heaven.

Hold up the hula hoop.

Heaven has gates made of pearls, so you'll enter our obstacle course through this pearly gate.

Point to the water balloon path.

The Bible also talks about a variety of beautiful jewels in heaven. You'll walk down this path and try to avoid stepping on the jewels!

Sit on the Gold Plastic Tablecloth.

Heaven has streets of gold, so sit on this golden street and use it to scoot all the way to the tree of life.

Point to the cone (or tree).

Run around the tree five times. Then you can proceed down the river that runs through heaven. When you get to the end, celebrate!

1. Make sure teens remember what to do at each place, then begin the obstacle course.
2. Play the Sing & Play Tune Lagoon Music in the background while Crews play.
3. Turn off the music and sound your Rainforest Rattle to end the game.
4. Celebrate with teens for completing the course.

Lead the whole group in this discussion.



ASK What was the most fun part of our obstacle course?

What kinds of things about heaven have you heard that sound fun or exciting to you?

SAY That was a fun obstacle course, but I think we might need to dive into the Bible to get a better picture of what heaven will be like! Let's have a quick break, then head inside to discover what it will be like in heaven and why we can trust that **God is forever.**

Allow a five-minute break, and then have everyone come back to the room and sit with their Crews.

BIBLE STUDY: Hope of Heaven (45 minutes)



Supplies:

— Bibles, marked to Revelation 21 (1 per Crew)

- paper
- markers
- stopwatch or timer
- white bulletin board paper
- Gold Mylar Curtain*
- Gold Plastic Tablecloths*
- 2 potted trees
- blue fabric

- Gold Latex Balloons*
- colorful tissue paper
- scissors
- packing tape
- tissues
- adhesive bandages
- trash can



— Rainforest Rattle*

*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier

One-Minute Designer

SAY In a few minutes, we're going to redesign our room to look like heaven. But first, I want to sharpen your interior decorating skills with a one-minute decorator challenge.

Have Materials Managers help you distribute paper and markers.

There will be four different challenges, so divide your paper into four quadrants. Pause.

Now I'll call out a person, and you'll have one minute to design the perfect room in a house for that person. It could be a bedroom, kitchen, living room, or some kind of special bonus room—whatever you want to do. Draw your sketch in one minute.



SAY First up, design a room for a dog lover. Time one minute.

Next, design a room for an aspiring astronaut. Time one minute.

In a third quadrant, design a room for someone who loves nature and natural things. Time one minute.

And finally, design a room for someone who loves video games. Time one minute.

Now it's time to compare with your Crews! Compare your drawings and share why you included the elements you did in your design. Allow time for Crew discussion, led by the Guides.

ASK What thought goes into designing the perfect room for someone? Take answers from everyone.

SAY The Bible says God is preparing a place for us in heaven. And he's designed an absolutely amazing place! Let's explore more.



Decorate the Room

Have Readers open the Bible to Revelation 21. They'll read Revelation 21:10–22:5.

As teens read, set out the supplies. Then give teens about 15 minutes to transform your room into a glimpse of heaven. They can refer to the verses in Revelation as needed and use their creativity to make the supplies provided work well.

After about 15 minutes, sound the Rainforest Rattle.

SAY Our room is a beautiful glimpse of heaven! But we're not in heaven yet, so let's leave.

Lead kids to the hallway outside the room, bringing a Bible, adhesive bandages, tissues, and a trash can with you.

Throw Away Sadness

SAY Here on earth is not a perfect place like heaven. There's a lot of beauty in this world God made, but it's also broken. Our world can feel dark, cold, and empty sometimes. Hard things happen. Things make us sad. People get hurt.

Distribute adhesive bandages.

Think about a time you felt physical pain. Maybe you broke a bone or had to have surgery. Maybe you fell and skinned a knee or slammed your pinkie toe into the leg of your bed. Put a bandage on that spot and spend a minute remembering that painful time.

After about a minute, have Crews share their stories.

Distribute tissues.



TREE TIP

Heaven can bring up a lot of questions for preteens and teens. Be Bold is a great weekly curriculum for your preteens and middle schoolers, and it addresses questions about heaven, including: What's heaven like and what do we do there? (Quarter 6, Week 8). Check it out!

SAY And sometimes things hurt our hearts. Maybe we have a tough breakup, or we have a best friend move away. Maybe people at school are mean, or we don't make the team.

Think about a time something made you cry or feel sad. Crumple up the tissue and talk with God about that time.

After a minute, have teens share their stories in their Crews.

God is forever. And the moment you believe in Jesus, your forever life with him begins. But for this part of it, you're still on earth, waiting for the hope of heaven.

And one day, when you get to heaven, you can leave these earthly things like pain and sadness behind.

Read Revelation 21:4.

Thank God for the promise of heaven by throwing away your bandage, which reminds us of pain, and your tissue, which reminds us of sadness. Then enter the room and think about the glory of heaven!

Collect the trash, and leave it outside as you enter the room with teens.



Talk About Heaven

SAY We've explored a lot about heaven, but the best part isn't the way it looks or even leaving pain and sadness behind. The best part is that we share it with God. Remember, Revelation says heaven has no sun or lamp because God is the light shining brightly. Being with him fills us with all the hope and joy we need!

ASK After everything you just learned about heaven, does it sound exciting to you? Explain. What sounds the best? Have Guides lead their Crews in discussion, then ask a few teens to share with everyone.

SAY We discovered today that **God is forever** and he's preparing an amazing place for us in heaven. When we believe in Jesus, we get to go to heaven, a perfect place, and be with God forever. Wow!

Let's pray by thanking God for heaven. Here's how we'll do it. I'll open our prayer, and then everyone can shout out one word at a time that describes heaven. When it quiets down, I'll close our prayer.

PRAY God, thank you for heaven. Thank you that heaven will be...
Allow time for teens to shout out their thanks popcorn-style.

PRAY We're so excited to spend forever with you. In Jesus' name, amen.



SAY

Today is our last day of Rainforest Falls. I've loved sharing with you about the nature of God. We've seen how God is our creator, how God knows everything, how God is our safe place, and how God is love. And now we know those things won't ever change because **God is forever!**

Those are truths you can carry with you for the rest of your lives, things to cling to when life feels uncertain. And I'd encourage you to keep on getting to know God! You can spend your whole life learning about the nature of God and barely scratch the surface of all there is to know about him.

Let teens have a five-minute break before beginning your service project.

SERVICE PROJECT: Hopeful Messages (20 minutes)

Supplies:

- construction paper
- scissors
- markers

Before Teens Arrive

- *Connect with a pastor who does hospice visits, and give a heads-up that your group will be making cards. You might get some advice about what people in hospice care might find particularly comforting or encouraging.*

SAY

This week we've served people in a lot of ways. We've collected money for Operation Kid-to-Kid so people can get fruit trees. We've taken care of God's creation, prayed for our community, and helped people seeking a safe place. So thanks for *your* part in serving our community, our church, and the world!

For today's service project, we'll make cards for people who are in hospice care. Although we have the hope of heaven, dying can still be a very scary and painful time. Your cards could bring encouragement in people's final days.

TREE TIP

Screen teenagers' cards just in case they said anything... not so comforting!

Set out supplies, and have teens make cards. Coaches can assist as needed in thinking of kind and encouraging things to say.

Have Prayer People pray for the people who will receive the cards, as well as praying for those who will receive the fruit trees for Operation Kid-to-Kid.

Allow several minutes for Crews to discuss these questions, led by Guides.

ASK What questions do you have about death and dying?

What do you think would be most comforting to hear at the end of your life?

SAY Death is a real and sad part of our world. It can be slow and painful, and those who love the person who dies are always sad to say goodbye. But because of Jesus, we know death is not the end. **God is forever**, and we can have the hope of a forever life in heaven with him.

Collect the cards to be given to the pastor you made arrangements with, and then have everyone wash their hands and then head to the snack area.



TREETOP TREATS (20 minutes)

Supplies:

- trays with snack from Treetop Treats Leader (1 per Crew)
- napkins (1 per person)
- cups of water (1 per person)

Ask the Treetop Treats kitchen staff to set out the snacks for your group.

If anyone has food allergies, connect with the Treetop Treats Leader to see what snack alternative or variation he or she is providing and make sure the alternative goes to anyone who needs it.

SAY Each person in your Crew can take a cup of water. Treetop Treats Coordinators will each take a tray of snacks. Then head back to our room to sit together, have your Prayer Person pray, and enjoy your snacks together.



Monkey Munch

OR



Forever Loops

When everyone is back in your room and Crews are gathered with their snacks, allow time for relaxed conversation. If Crews need a conversation starter, have them share highlights from the week and what they'll carry into their lives outside of Rainforest Falls.

When everyone's done eating, each Crew's Treetop Treats Coordinator can lead cleanup, throwing away any trash and cleaning up tables. When it's time to move on, head to Canopy Closing.

CANOPY CLOSING (25 minutes)

Join the rest of the participants for an upbeat closing program.

Give thanks to God for an awesome week together!

Waterfall

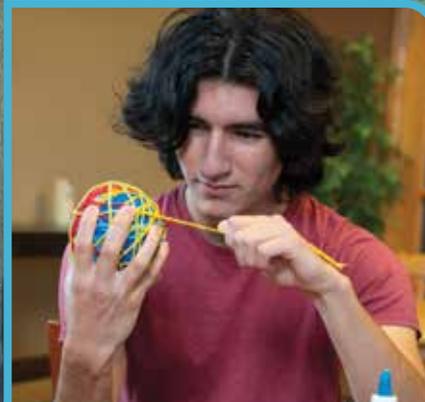
YOUTH LEADER MANUAL

Day 1



Dig into the story of Creation and consider how items in nature show us *God's* nature.

Day 2



Explore what God knows about them through multisensory stations.

Day 3



Give paper people a safe place, then study how God provided David with a refuge from King Saul.

Day 4



Investigate what God's perfect love means for us today.

Day 5



Create their own version of John's vision of heaven, celebrating the incredible place God has promised!



group.com/RainforestFalls
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Group

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