

NATURE HIKES & ACTIVITIES

- **“Path Ponderings”** are times to stop and watch and listen during a hike. They can be done as your cabin is walking to an activity or while they are waiting for an activity to begin. Here are some instructions and questions for your “Ponderings.”
 1. Look closely at the side of the trail. Is there any evidence of animal life?
 2. Find the smallest flower in this area. What color is it?
 3. Look up at the sky. What percentage of sky do you think you see? Take note of the plant life. Walk a few more minutes and look up again. Do you see more or less sky? Has the plant life changed?
 4. Find something interesting to point out and ask: Why do you think God created it this way? For example, why did God create pine trees to be so tall and straight? Why is their bark so scaly?
 5. Find a bird. Stand very still and watch it as you silently count to 20. What did you notice?
 6. What in the natural environment around us reminds you of God? Why?
 7. Find something that is not a part of the natural environment. Is it hurting God’s creation in any way? If so, how? Is it providing any benefit to the natural surroundings?
 8. Look for places that animals use for shelter?
 9. Have campers close their eyes and count how many nature sounds and how many human sounds they hear in one minute.
 10. Find examples of different shapes in nature?
 11. Why do we stay on the trail? What harm comes from walking off the trail?
 12. Count how many different shades of green you can see?
 13. Have campers close their eyes and take a few seconds to smell the forest. Then have them lick their finger and wet their noses. Can you smell better with a wet nose? Think about what animals have wet noses.
 14. What ways can we work together to protect and take care of God’s creation?
 15. As you travel from one place to another have campers count the number of birds, squirrels, or things that are red, etc.
- **Illustrations:** Use items in nature to illustrate a larger theme or idea.
 1. A Tree: Trees have special structures that allow them to pump water and nutrients way up in the air. Trees have specially designed leaves/needles for their environment. They provide oxygen and food for other organisms. Trees have a special way of creating more trees (pine cones, fruit). If you really look beyond the surface of a tree, you can see how carefully organized they are. Who could do that?? Only God!!
 2. A Butterfly/Caterpillar: These are a great illustration of how we are a new creation in Christ!
 3. Fungus: Fungi are the decomposers of the world. They take our garbage and turn it back into useful stuff. Stand out on a nature trail and imagine what the forest would look like if nothing decomposed or was recycled. We should definitely be thankful that God created fungus.

- **Scavenger Hunt for God:** Find items in nature or around camp that represent different aspects of God or prayer.

1. Divide campers into pairs and give each pair a small paper bag.
 2. Tell the campers that they must gather items in nature or around camp that represent (show) some characteristic of God and collect them in the bag.
 3. Set boundaries for the hunt and guidelines for items they can and can't collect.
i.e. no live things, no picking flowers, etc.
 4. When the time is up gather the campers and have each group show the items in their bag and describe how they represent God.
- * Hunt for items that represent the parts of prayer or this week's Bible study.
 - * Make a list of characteristics/parts of prayer for campers to find items to represent and give out the list.

- **Blind Date:**

1. Pair campers and blindfold one person in each pair.
 2. The seeing person must guide their partner to a tree and let them get to know that tree then guide them back to the starting point in a different path.
 3. Remove the blindfolds and that person must go find their tree.
 4. Do the same with the other partner.
- * Processing ideas: trust in each other, trust in God, communication
Awareness of the tree is like awareness of God in our lives;
how do we sense God; are we "paying attention" to the details
so we can get to know the larger Creator

- **Sacred Silence:** Silent time alone

1. Take the group on a hike and leave each person at a spot sitting alone for sacred silent time. You can give them a question about God/fait h to think about if they need direction. Listening can also be the focus.
 2. After the entire group has been left, wait for 10 minutes then slowly go back and pick each one up.
- *Also just send campers out to find their own spot. Emphasis the sacred nature of this time. It is not just alone or quiet time.

- **Other Ideas:**

1. Alphabet Hike: Find an item for each letter of the alphabet as you hike along the trail.
2. Study a square foot of earth.
3. Look at the rings on a tree stump. Try counting them and guess how old the tree is.
4. Each camper can create a map of camp.

5. With sidewalk chalk, create a mural on the courts of animals, plants, etc. that are created by God.
6. Look for an ant colony. Study the way they behave; ask campers to share what they noticed about ant behaviors. Ask campers to investigate ways that ants meet their basic needs of food, water, shelter, and space. Do a line up activity on a log to simulate the way ants travel on twigs, etc.
7. Ask campers to draw a picture of their home and include those things they need to live where they do; for example, a place to cook and keep food, a place to sleep, etc. Have campers share their drawings. Discuss what animals need to live where they do. Go on a walk, looking for animal homes.
8. Habitat Game: number off the campers 1-4. Discuss what a deer needs to survive. Now identify each number, the ones are deer, the twos, threes, and the fours are food, water, and shelter. Make a line of deer with their backs to a line of the three elements. Each deer decides what element it is looking for, and each of the Habitat components decides which element it is for that round. On the word "go," the two lines turn toward each other with the elements making the sign of their component (hands over stomach for food, hands over mouth for water, hands over head for shelter.) The deer chase the habitat they need. If they catch it before it reaches the safe line, that element becomes one of the deer. If a deer does not catch its habitat element, it becomes part of the habitat group. Rounds continue with a discussion following.
9. Log Flip: find a rotting log in the forest and flip it over to see what/who lives under the log. Examine the insects, look for insect homes and food, look for plants. Discuss how all parts of creation are important for life, even rotting logs. Flip the log back over and discuss the importance of leaving nature the way we found it.
10. Star Stories: lie outside in a circle with heads together and look up at the stars. Have campers make up constellations and stories about them.
11. Orienteering: Set-up a mini orienteering course on the trails around camp. Make flags and a map the campers must follow from point to point. The flags can be natural things rearranged to make an arrow. Discuss how we follow God, the signs along the way that let us know we are on or off the path towards God.