

SAMPLER





SUMMER JOURNEY KICKOFF

GET READY

Today's Theme

When we journey together, we learn new things, build community, and grow in faith.

Today's Goal

Introduce participants to the summer theme of journeying together and preview the themes of upcoming events.

SUPPLIES

- Music soundtrack and player
- Registration information (schedule, photo release forms, etc.)
- Signs from pages 9-13
- Hiking Skit from page 14
- Image of a backpack on shrinkable plastic from page 15
- Campsite decorations such as tents, artificial Christmas trees, mock campfire, posters of mountains or woods, backpacks, and other camping gear
- Name tags
- Permanent markers
- Backpack with hiking supplies, heart, trail map, friendship bracelet, and hiking boot or sock
- Bible
- Skit props: Backpack, piece of fruit, beach ball, Bible time costume, flashlight
- Hiking sticks*
- Beads
- Feathers
- Leather
- Ribbon
- Colored duct and electrician tape
- Scissors

**A note about hiking sticks: Plan to provide hiking sticks for everyone so people can decorate and embellish them before taking them home and using them all summer. This activity will require some planning to acquire a range of sticks in different heights so all ages can make one that is shoulder height for them. If you have woodworkers and whittlers in your congregation, invite them to help prepare a range of sticks for this kickoff event. Several online tutorials give tips about selecting and whittling hiking sticks.*

PREPARATION

1. Read through the entire event, gather the needed supplies, and set up gathering spaces.
2. Set up a registration table with name tags and markers.
3. Recruit a volunteer for the Welcome Activity to lead people in a game of Freeze.
4. Recruit five volunteers to represent the journey you will take this summer. Make five copies of the Hiking Skit and practice it with these volunteers and the props they'll need.
5. Starting with this kickoff event, ask someone to take pictures during each event. Plan to post them on social media and display them during your end-of-summer event.

GATHERING TOGETHER



**Before serving any food, always check for food allergies. Make your space nut-free, and offer gluten-free options.*

SUPPLIES

- Music soundtrack and player
- Registration information (summer schedule, photo release forms, etc.)
- Name tags
- Permanent markers
- Backpack
- Hiking supplies (compass, matches, canteen or water bottle, multipurpose tool)
- Heart (paper, wood, or another material)
- Trail Map
- Friendship bracelet
- Hiking boot or sock

PREPARATION

1. Prepare the music player with the soundtrack songs.
2. Set up a welcome table with nametags, markers, music player, and other supplies.
3. Place these items in the backpack: hiking supplies, heart, trail map, friendship bracelet, and hiking boot or sock.
4. Recruit a volunteer to lead the game of Freeze as participants arrive.

WELCOME ACTIVITY

Turn on the music soundtrack as you welcome participants and invite them to make a name tag. Distribute the summer schedule and collect any needed registration information. Once a few people are gathered, your volunteer leader can begin playing a game of Freeze. While the music plays, people move to directions as they leader narrates different outdoor journeying scenarios. Here are some examples:

- Walking in place through a field
- Walking in place up a hill
- Climbing a steep mountain
- Building a fire
- Warming hands by a fire
- Cooking food over a fire
- Staking a tent
- Paddling a canoe

Make sure to provide doable movements for little ones and people with limited mobility.

Once the leader stops the music and says, "Freeze!" players freeze in place. Enjoy all the positions that people end up in and try to hold. Each time the leader says "Freeze!" point out and compliment the interesting positions you see.

GROUP GATHERING

Once everyone has gathered, wrap up the Freeze game and invite everyone to find a seat. Follow this script and adapt for your group. **Thank you for coming to this kickoff event for our Journey Together. As we start this adventure, we warmed up our bodies by listening and moving. We'll keep moving and listening as we learn more about following Jesus. We will be journeying together for the next several weeks.** Give specific details about where and when you will meet throughout the summer.

We will follow a path together to learn about how we can trust God, grow in our faith, and be a community together. While we're on this trail, we'll also learn more about following Jesus. We will have adventures together. Sometimes the trail may seem challenging, or we might not be sure where we are going. But we will journey on this path—together. Just like it's important to prepare for a hiking adventure, it's important for us to prepare for our journey together this summer as we grow in faith. Share a few tips about going on a hike, holding up the backpack filled with supplies.

When you hike, it's important to fill your backpack with all the things you'll need for your hike. Unzip the backpack and pull out the hiking items, naming them as you hold them up for all to see.

As we start our summer journey, we'll need to remember a few things. Take out the heart and hold it for all to see. **It's important for all of us to have an open heart to all that God will teach us.**

Take out the trail map. **When you hike, it's helpful to have a trail map so you know where you're going. During our time together, we have a plan so we know themes we'll explore all summer. That way we'll know where we're going.**

Take out the friendship bracelet. **When you hike, it's recommended that you never hike alone. You can encourage and help others on your hike. On our journey together, no one will be alone. We will connect with friends and make new friends too. We can encourage others on our hike.**

Take out a hiking boot or sock. **When you hike, you take one step at a time to get to your destination. We will step into the Bible together and learn more about what it means to be a follower of Jesus.**

OPENING PRAYER

Invite everyone to stand as they are able for this prayer. Everyone can position their feet to show they are taking a step forward.

Dear God, we thank you for gathering us for a journey together this summer. We are ready for a great adventure as we head out on the trail. Help us listen, learn, explore, and grow as followers of Jesus. In your name we pray, Amen.



EXPLORING THE THEME

SUPPLIES

- Signs for each section (Bible, Spirit, Disciple, Church, World) from pages 9-13
- Hiking Skit from page 14, one per volunteer
- Bible
- Backpack
- Fruit
- Beach ball
- Permanent marker
- Bible time costume (robe, head covering)
- Flashlight

PREPARATION

1. Recruit five volunteers to help with the skit. Give them each a copy of the Hiking Skit to preview their actions, letting them know to follow the directions you provide in the narration.
2. Write the nine fruit of the Spirit on the beach ball in permanent marker: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Generosity, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-control.

ACTIVITY: SUMMER JOURNEY SKIT

Present this skit to introduce participants to the five themes of these summer events. (If your congregation is planning events for fewer than all five units, adjust accordingly.) Volunteers will act out each topic—Bible, Spirit, Disciple, Church, and World—through the use of simple props and movement.

When we go on a hike, we encounter many things. This skit will give us an idea of what we will experience during our summer journey. We want to keep our eyes and ears open to God's creation all around us. Let's look at and listen to what the summer has in store for us.

INTRODUCING THE BIBLE SUMMER EVENTS

On our hike this summer, we're going to learn more about the books of the Bible. Hold up the Bible sign. **The Bible is full of amazing stories about God's people and God's faithfulness. Some of these stories talk about Jesus hiking and walking through towns, by lakes and rivers, out in the wilderness, and more. This summer we'll hear stories about the people Jesus meets, what he says to them, and what he did. As we hear these stories, we will learn more about how we can live out lives of faith. These Bible stories will help us follow Jesus.**

While the leader is speaking, the Bible hiker appears carrying a Bible. The person lifts it up, shows everyone, thumbs through some of the pages, reads, smiles, and looks up at the audience, then goes back to reading and flipping through more pages. The hiker should have a look of excitement, and then a look of focus.

Let's thank this Bible-reading hiker!

INTRODUCING THE SPIRIT SUMMER EVENTS

Next, as we hike though our summer together, we're going to learn what we call the fruit of the Spirit. Hold up the Spirit sign. **When we study the fruit of the Spirit, we'll learn there are nine of them: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Generosity, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-control.**

These fruits are gifts of the Holy Spirit. We can grow them and show them to others as we live our lives of faith. These fruits help us follow and teach others about Jesus.

The next hiker comes out wearing the backpack, pulls out a piece of fruit, and takes a bite. Then the hiker pulls out the beach ball with the nine fruits of the Spirit written on the ball. They can toss it to participants a few times and encourage the person who catches it to read one of the fruits.

Let's thank this hiker for showing us the fruit of the Spirit!

INTRODUCING THE DISCIPLE SUMMER EVENTS

We'll also learn more about the disciples who followed Jesus. Hold up the Disciple sign. **Please join me in welcoming who's next.** The volunteer enters wearing a Bible time robe and head covering. As you look at this disciple, pretend you are looking in a mirror. Whatever the disciple does, you do. If the disciple stretches their arm, you stretch your arm. If the disciple claps their hands, you clap your hands. If the disciple yawns, you yawn. After a few actions, invite the rest of the group to join the game. **Another name for disciple is follower. Let's follow what this disciple does.** The disciple can go through a few easy but fun movements that can be done while sitting in a chair or standing up.

- Rub your stomach as you tap your head
- Wave to those around you
- Place palms forward, spread fingers, move arms up and around
- Shake hands

Now we've practiced what it is like to follow someone. As we learn more about being disciples, we'll explore ways we can follow Jesus. Let's thank our disciple!

INTRODUCING THE CHURCH SUMMER EVENTS

This summer we'll also learn more about what it means to be the church. Hold up the Church sign. **We'll explore how our church family can be the body of Christ. Every part of the body is important.**

The next hiker is a kid who comes out waving to everyone and holding a flashlight. The hiker looks around the group and begins shining the flashlight at the kids they see in the group, taking care not to shine it in anyone's eyes.

We'll explore ways that every single person in our church has gifts to share as part of the body of Christ. That means kids too! Look around and see all the kids who are gathered here. Kids have lots of gifts!

Let's thank the hiker who showed how our church is the body of Christ together.

INTRODUCING THE WORLD SUMMER EVENTS

The final theme for our summer journey together is **World**. Hold up the World sign. We will focus on how we can pray for all those in the world around us. When we pray, we're talking and listening to God. We can be standing, sitting, kneeling, or walking. Our eyes can be open or closed. We can have our head bowed or we can look up to the sky. As we hike through this summer together, we'll be doing a lot of praying for our world.

Please welcome our next hiker who's going to lead us through a prayer together. The next hiker appears and leads the group through an echo prayer. This prayer is called an echo prayer. Sometimes when we're hiking on the trail, as we go by lakes and hills, we can hear our voice echoed back to us. If can shout, "Hello!" from a distance, we can hear an echoing "Hello!" a little bit softer. Let's practice. If the hiker says, "Hello!" what would you say?

The group should respond with "Hello!" a little bit softer. The hiker can shout "hello!" and practice with a few more words before they lead the group in an echo prayer.

Dear God, (Dear God,)

Thank you for the gift of your Word. (Thank you for the gift of your Word.)

Guide us to live out the fruit of the Spirit. (Guide us to live out the fruit of the Spirit.)

Help us follow you as disciples. (Help us follow you as disciples.)

Give us courage to be your church. (Give us courage to be your church.)

Hear our prayers for the world. (Hear our prayers for the world.)

Amen. (Amen.)

There you have it—our Journey Together! Thank you everyone. I look forward to our time this summer. Invite applause for all the volunteers.



CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

SUPPLIES

- Backpack image on shrinkable plastic from page 15
- Hiking sticks (see note on page 1)
- Decorations and embellishments: beads, feathers, leather, ribbon, colored duct and electrician tape
- Scissors

PREPARATION

1. Set out all supplies so people can easily find the right size stick and then choose decorations.
2. Make a sample hiking stick.

ACTIVITY: HIKING STICK PROJECT

Hold up your hiking stick. **When you go on a hike, a hiking stick provides balance and support so you don't trip or fall. The hiking stick is a very helpful tool for a journey. As followers of Jesus, we are on a journey too. That means we'll need some tools, and this summer we will learn about and practice some of them.**

To help us remember how followers of Jesus need tools, we're going to make hiking sticks. Everyone can choose and decorate a hiking stick. We have a lot of things you can use to make your stick one-of-a-kind, just like you. Show the leather, beads, feathers, ribbon, colored tape, and other supplies. Encourage participants to decorate their hiking sticks however they want. Young children will need assistance. Provide at least 15 minutes for people to choose a stick, select embellishments, and customize their hiking sticks.

When everyone has finished up their creative work, gather everyone together for a group picture with everyone holding their hiking sticks. **You can use your hiking stick all summer on hikes and walks and adventures. You can keep it in a visible place at home as a reminder of the tools you'll get this summer to help you follow Jesus.** If you want to feature members on your social media sites, invite them to share pictures on their hiking stick adventures.

Each week I'll bring my hiking stick and put a memento on it so we remember what we talked about. This week my memento is a backpack so we remember how we planned for our summer journey together. Hold up the backpack charm made from shrinkable plastic and attach it to your walking stick with a string, piece of leather, or another way to fasten it.

SENT OUT TOGETHER

SUPPLIES

- Bible

ACTIVITY: BIBLE READING

Before we finish, let's learn a Bible verse together. Hold up your Bible. **This verse is from gospel of John in the New Testament. It is verse 6 in chapter 14: "Jesus said, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life.'" Let's say it together as we hold up our hiking sticks.** Say each line and ask the group to repeat as they raise their sticks:

**I am the way,
and the truth,
and the life.
John 14:6**

As we journey together through the summer, we'll keep this verse in our hearts and our minds, remembering that Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life.

Say the verse one more time together.

Now, turn to the person next to you and tell them what you are most excited about this summer. Take a few minutes for sharing and then bring the group back together.

CLOSING PRAYER

Finish your time together with a prayer. Invite everyone to tap their hiking sticks on the ground each time you say the words "journey together" at the end of each line.

**Dear God, we give you thanks for our time on this journey together.
Guide and protect us during our summer on this journey together.
Help us grow in our faith as followers of Jesus during our journey together.
Amen.**

Remind everyone of your next gathering time, and make sure everyone remembers to take home their hiking sticks.



ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES



EAT TOGETHER

KICKOFF MEAL

Build community by eating together. Here are some suggestions for hiking-inspired snacks and meals to serve during this kickoff event.



**Before serving any food, always check for food allergies. Make your space nut-free, and offer gluten-free options.*

Snack Suggestions

- S'mores
- Nut-free trail mix
- Jerky
- Dried fruit
- Granola

Meal Suggestions

- Grilled hot dogs, brats, hamburgers, and veggie burgers
- Baked beans
- Grilled corn on the cob
- Individual foil meals with meat, potatoes, and vegetable



GO OUTSIDE TOGETHER

SITE HIKE

Supplies

- Bags or containers for collecting trash and/or yard waste
- Trash picker claws
- Gardening supplies like gloves, watering cans, and weeding tools

Preparation

1. To ensure everyone can have a successful hike, walk around your church property, noticing any obstacles or unsafe spots. Also take note of places where you can point to parts of your church history, such as an outdoor columbarium or memory garden, donated trees, or places that were changed after a building project.
2. Plan the places where you will lead groups during this time outside. If you have a large group, you may rotate between this activity and another one so people go outside in shifts.

Let participants know that you will be exploring your space together and enjoying God's beautiful creation. Hike around the site with your hiking sticks.

If possible, combine time outdoors with a service project during this activity. If there is any trash or yard waste to pick up or any light gardening tasks, give brief and clear instructions about how groups may help. Kids may especially enjoy picking up trash with track picker claws and/or watering flowers and trees.



CREATE ART TOGETHER

WOODEN NAME TAGS

Supplies

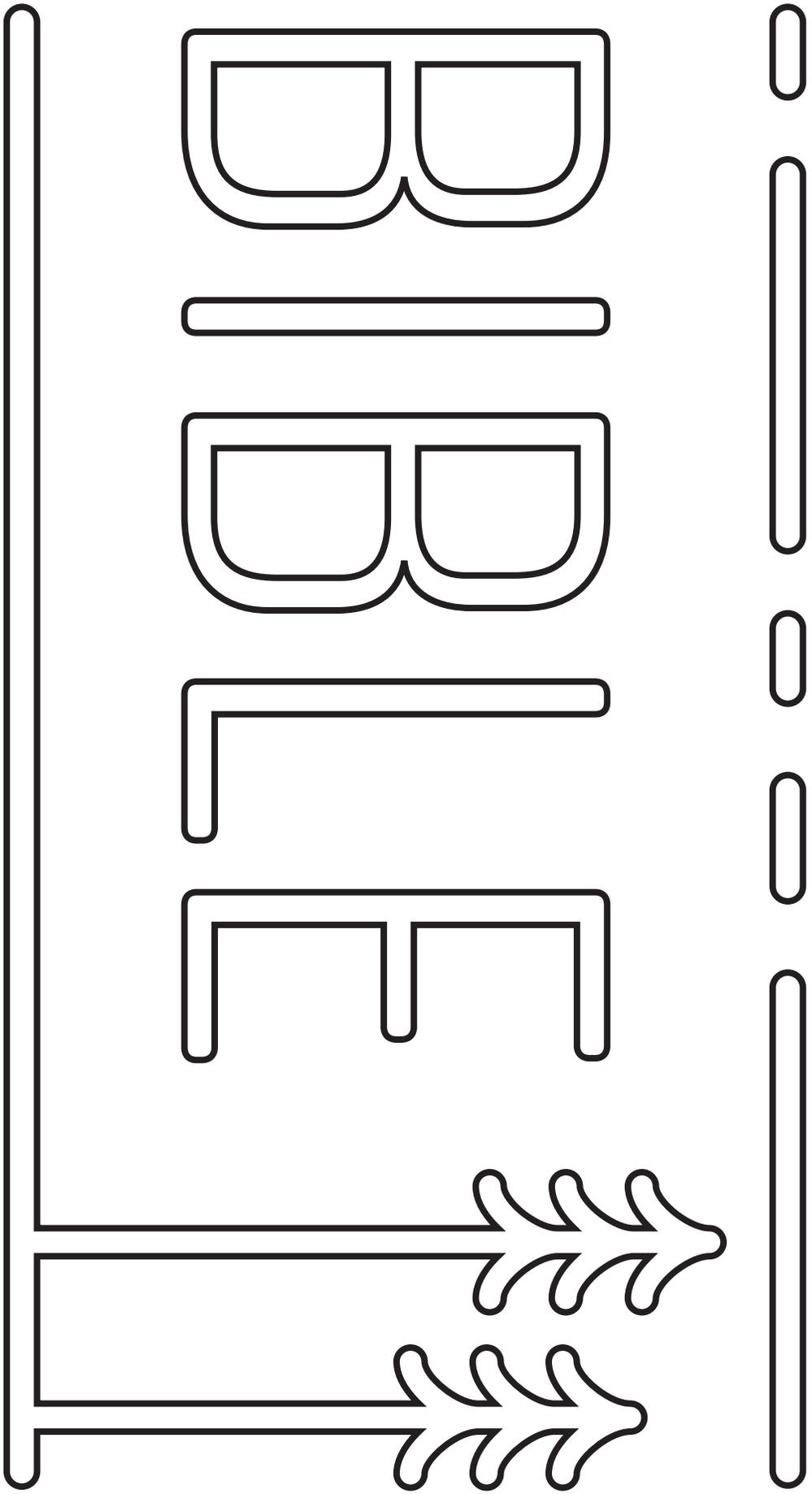
- Branches cut into slices about 3 inches wide and ¼ inch thick
- Bar pins
- Hot glue gun and glue sticks
- Woodburning tools
- Pencils

Woodburning is an exciting way to create a rustic looking nametag people can use throughout your summertime Journey Together. Most kits recommend that it is used for kids age 14 and up, so pair younger kids with an adult who will use the tool as kids watch their name come to life.

Each person can choose a wood slice and sketch their name with pencil. Then use the woodburning tool to burn the design into the wood.

Attach a bar pin to the back of each wood slice using hot glue and let dry.

Because you may only have one or a few woodburning tools available, rotate between this activity and another one so people do not need to wait long to use the tool.



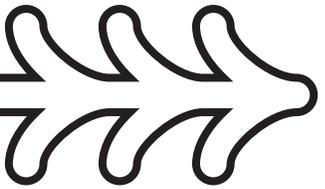
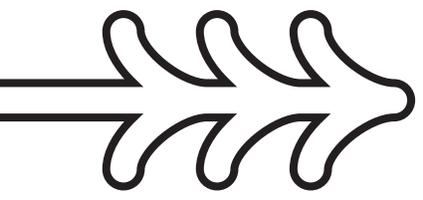
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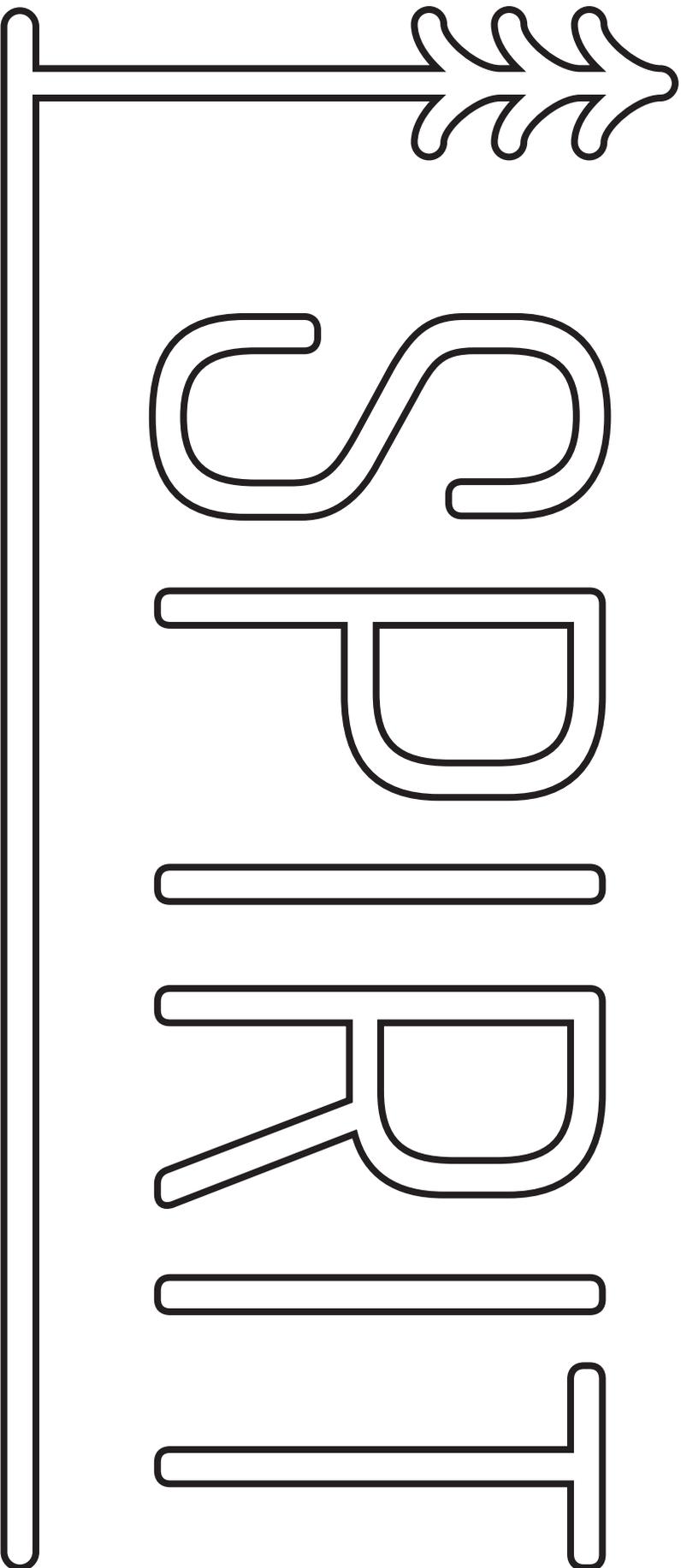
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HIKING SKIT

BIBLE HIKER

The leader will hold up the Bible sign. While the leader is speaking, walk in front of the group carrying a Bible. Lift it up, show everyone, and thumb through some of the pages. Read from its pages, smile and look up at the audience, and then go back to reading and flipping through more pages. Have a look of excitement and a look of focus.

SPIRIT HIKER

The leader will hold up the Spirit sign. While the leader is speaking, come out wearing the backpack. Pull out a piece of fruit and take a bite. Then pull out the beach ball with the nine fruits of the Spirit written on the ball. Toss it to participants a few times and encourage the catcher to read one of the fruits.

DISCIPLE HIKER

The leader will hold up the Disciple sign. Enter the space wearing a Bible time robe and head covering. The leader will look at you and pretend they are looking in a mirror. Begin to show motions that the leader will mimic: stretch your arm, clap your hands, and yawn. After a few actions, the leader will invite the rest of the group to join the game. Go through a few easy but fun movements.

1. Rub your stomach as you tap your head
2. Wave to those around you
3. Place palms forward, spread fingers, move arms up and around
4. Shake hands

CHURCH HIKER

The leader will hold up the Church sign. Enter the space holding the flashlight and wave. Begin to shine the flashlight on the kids in the group. Make sure not to flash it in anyone's eyes.

WORLD HIKER

The leader will hold up the World sign. After introducing this theme, the leader will explain how to pray an echo prayer. You can practice a few times by shouting "Hello!" and a few other words. Once the group has practiced a few times, lead the group in this prayer.

Dear God, (Dear God,)

Thank you for the gift of your Word. (Thank you for the gift of your Word.)

Guide us to live out the fruit of the Spirit. (Guide us to live out the fruit of the Spirit.)

Help us follow you as disciples. (Help us follow you as disciples.)

Give us courage to be your church. (Give us courage to be your church.)

Hear our prayers for the world. (Hear our prayers for the world.)

Amen. (Amen.)

