

All the Stars Family Devotional

Introduction:

Hi families! It's possible you just left your camper, maybe in the high spirits that often accompany the excitement of a new adventure, or perhaps with a tear or two because sleepaway camp can be a big deal for lots of families. Either way, your child is at camp, and you're someplace else, and that is that. At camp, Sundays often include big feels; we recognize that may be true for the grownups who go home alone today as well. Are you bereft? Relieved? Giddy? Whatever you're feeling is just fine. Take a deep breath and enjoy a moment just for yourself.



These daily home devotions are intended to connect you with a bit of the spirit we're enjoying at camp this week and offer a peek into what we are exploring together in Bible study. Each day, we'll share the day's story and theme, suggest a few questions to think on, invite you to pray, and close with a blessing. Use this resource as it suits your schedule and your family, knowing that your camper will be learning, playing, praying, and blessing along with you this week.

The theme for our summer at camp this year—**All the Stars**—is inspired by verse 26 from Isaiah 48:

Look up into the heavens.

Who created all the stars?

*The Holy One brings them out like an army, one after another,
calling each by its name.*

*Because of God's great power and incomparable strength,
not a single one is missing.*

We're celebrating and exploring God's deep love for the unendingly diverse universe this summer, and we're reminding one another that this good creation includes a place of acceptance and honor and joy and rest for everyone and everything—including each of us. Join us in that spirit. See you Friday!



Day One: **SUNDAY**
Theme: **Rejoice**
Scripture: **Psalm 148 (Read it in your Bible)**

Reflection

This summer's theme, **All the stars**, is echoed in Psalm 148:3 which is, "Praise God, sun and moon; praise God all you shining stars!" As you read this wonderful Psalm, you may notice it seems to have a good word for everything: hailstones, sea monsters, fruit trees, flying birds—the list goes on. This psalm is all about rejoicing, about noticing the amazing bits of creation, and about gratitude. The word 'praise' shows up 14 times in this psalm- and it's only 14 verses long! (And on the topic of repetition, this psalm also contains 11 exclamation marks!)

The whole entire universe is invited to praise God, because God created every nook and cranny of it. There are no exceptions.

In addition to the huge list of things—beings, people, plants, animals, and other natural phenomena—that have a part within this universal choir of praise, Psalm 148 also describes how every part of the universe is celebrated for praising God *in its own way*. The way a star praises God will be different than the way a fruit tree praises God, but both are totally possible and valued—both matter! How might a jellyfish praise God? How might your pet at home praise God? How might you praise God? The person who wrote Psalm 148 invites us to imagine a cosmic, inclusive, chaotic, beautiful symphony of praise with NO voices left out.

Ask Yourself

- Of all the parts of creation included in Psalm 148, which one jumped out to you most when you read or listened to it? Why do you think it jumped out to you?
- If you were to add some specific things to Psalm 148 what would you include?
- What are your top three ways for praising God?
- Which parts of the universe are harder to imagine praising God?

Pray with Us

God of stars, grasshoppers, angels, and all of us, the good things you give are too vast to count. Make us as they are and open our hearts in praise. Praise God from the deepest corners of space, from the highest mountain peaks on earth, from the wateriest ocean depths, and everywhere in between! Praise God now and forever. Amen!

Receive this Blessing

*May the same God who hung **all the stars** in the night sky
Give you strength for the journey of your life
Through weariness and beyond worry
May you be carried on wings of angels
And may you shine like stars
Reflecting God's love in the world.*

Day Two: **Monday**
Theme: **Remember**
Scripture: **Isaiah 40: 25-31 (Read it in your Bible)**

Reflection

When our hearts and lives begin to spiral out of control, when our fears about the future take over our bodies, there is nothing more comforting than to remember that, for as long as time has been counted, as sure as millions and billions of stars are still shining, the God of the universe is speaking these words of promise over your children and your loved ones, your neighbors near and far—and you, too:

Even youths will become weak and tired,
and young people will fall in exhaustion.
³¹ 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 connects us with all of creation and with one another. And it reminds us to stay in the struggle. The same God who hung the stars in the sky, we are reminded, will give us strength for each new day.

Ask Yourself

- Our Bible reading tells us that God, who created **all the stars**, also gives YOU strength when you feel alone, or weak, or tired, or scared. Can you think of a time when you needed help from God?
- Have you ever been somewhere so dark that you could look up and see millions of stars? What was your reaction the first time you experienced this?
- What is your biggest concern for our world right now? How is God giving you and others the strength that we need to work for a better world?

Pray with Us

We come to you, O God, and we ask that you give us strength for this journey of life. That we may run and not grow weary. That we would walk and not faint. And that when we have been beaten down by the troubles of this world, you would lift us up on wings like eagles, that our hearts might soar in the presence of your love.
Amen

Receive this Blessing

*May the same God who hung **all the stars** in the night sky
Give you strength for the journey of your life
Through weariness and beyond worry
May you be carried on wings of angels
And may you shine like stars
Reflecting God's love in the world.*

Day Three: **Tuesday**
Theme: **Renew**
Scripture: **Genesis 1:14-19 (Read it in your Bible)**

Reflection

Genesis 1:1-2:3 is a poetic imagining of the creation of the universe. Some folks read these verses like a history book. They want to answer the question of HOW God made the universe, and they think Genesis 1 will help them do that. But that's not the way most Biblical scholars, Lutheran pastors, or camp staff read them. Rather than describing the how-tos and precise timeline of the world's creation, these verses reveal instead WHO made the universe. Genesis is clear: GOD made the universe.

Why does this matter? Because the stuff that God makes is bound to be great. "God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good" (v 31).

God's work isn't done—not for the stars, the seas, the starfish, or for you. Creation was not a one-time activity, it's present and ongoing. Watch the seasons change, or the sun move across the sky. Watch trees grow tall and thick, or tomatoes ripen, or riverbanks shift over time. Watch your child grow into the person they are becoming day by day. Creation is happening now, and we're all a part of it.

Renewal is an essential part of this ongoing creation. Every day this earth that God is creating and loves is renewed. The grass is renewed by the morning's dew, the blue jay is renewed by a tasty insect, the lake is renewed by the afternoon's rain, and we are renewed when we watch the sunset.

Ask Yourself

- Where and when have you seen some amazing stars?
- What do you do to feel renewed?
- What parts of creation need some renewal right now?
- How can you participate in the ongoing creation of the world? Because you can. We all can.

Pray with Us

God of stardust and moonlit nights, the beauty of your creation leaves us in awe. In these summer months, when creation sings and shines with your glory, help us to find renewal, and remind us that we are called to join you in the renewing of all of creation.

Amen

Receive this Blessing

*May the same God who hung **all the stars** in the night sky*

Give you strength for the journey of your life

Through weariness and beyond worry

May you be carried on wings of angels

And may you shine like stars

Reflecting God's love in the world.

Day Four: **Wednesday**
Theme: **Resist**
Scripture: **Matthew 2:1-12 (Read it in your Bible)**

Reflection

This story has been wrapped into Christmas plays and pageants forever. If a person has heard about the baby Jesus in a manger, they've probably also heard about the "Three Wise Men" who came and found him by tracking and following a shining star. Sometimes the wise men are called *magi*. Magi means something like "magician" or "sorcerer." In the ancient world, these were the guys who studied the earth and the sky to look for signs that important things were happening. Magi were often high-ranking officials. This is likely why some versions of the story call them kings. In the story Matthew is telling here, the magi represent all the kingdoms of the world who—along with the non-human parts of creation—are recognizing and honoring the world-changing importance of Jesus' birth.

The magi offer us some lessons.

- The magi had **courage**. They resisted the urge to stay safe and home, to worship or admire Jesus from far off. They wanted to know God up close. They embraced the adventure of a journey into the unknown.
- The magi were **observant**. They paid attention to what was happening in the natural world. They resisted quick and easy answers in favor of the slower wisdom and more subtle patterns in the movements of the stars. They trusted their intuition and their hearts. They cared about the truth, so they told it and they trusted others to do the same. Herod took advantage of that trust.
- The magi were **faithful**. They were open to learning about what God was doing and when they discovered it, right there in that dirty little human baby Jesus, they also found joy. They wanted to give themselves away to everything Jesus was and all he represented. It was this same faithfulness and trust that helped them pay attention to their dreams and resist Herod.

Ask Yourself

- What helps you have courage? How have you demonstrated courage this week? How have you shared courage with others?
- When were you last "overwhelmed with joy"? How is being joyful an act of resistance?
- Who is resisting evil in the world today? What does their life show you?

Pray with Us

God who gives us courage, grant us all that we need to bring aid to those who are hurting, to stand up for those whose power has been stripped away, and to follow the path you cleared for us through Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen.

Receive this Blessing

*May the same God who hung **all the stars** in the night sky*

Give you strength for the journey of your life

Through weariness and beyond worry

May you be carried on wings of angels

And may you shine like stars

Reflecting God's love in the world.

Day Five:

Thursday

Theme:

Remix

Scripture:

1 Corinthians 15:41, Matthew 5:13-16, 1 Peter 3:15
(Read them in your Bible)

Reflection

Today's theme is REMIX. "Remixing" is the creative work of taking things that exist and combining or contrasting or pairing them in ways that create things or moments that have never been seen or heard or felt before. When we remix our experiences and perspectives with the ideas we inherit or receive from others, we get to add our voices to the ongoing song of creation, and we get to be part of the unfolding newness of the whole.

It's ok that the way each of us describes our faith in God is different from how others do—in fact it's how the universe has been made. We don't have to say the same things in order to belong in God's family or somehow deserve God's approval or acceptance. Each of us has a hope within us—probably several hopes and dreams and hurts and hungers—and the way we perceive and receive God's blessings and God's love in, with, and among all that's going on in us is part of the unique and personal quality of our faith. Learning to share that unique and individual faith—to tell the story of the hope that's in us—is a wonderful, creative, and very personal adventure.

We're all shining with our own colors and our own particular glory. The differences between us are part of the glorious diversity of the universe. Each of our unique remixes is part of the soundtrack of God's good creation. They're worth celebrating.

Ask Yourself

- What does hope feel like in you? What are some things that you hope for – for yourself and the people you love? For the wider world? How might these hopes find their way into your prayers?
- How can you live out your hopes?
- Who has shown you how to talk about your faith? What "faith words" mean the most to you?

Pray with Us

God of all that is new - through Jesus, you shine your light on us that we might shine the light of your love in this world. Help us to take up holy space in our communities, that together we might reimagine justice and joy for all people.

Amen

Receive this Blessing

*May the same God who hung **all the stars** in the night sky*

Give you strength for the journey of your life

Through weariness and beyond worry

May you be carried on wings of angels

And may you shine like stars

Reflecting God's love in the world.

Day Six:

Friday

Theme:

Restore

Scripture:

Isaiah 58: 9-12 (Read it in your Bible)

Reflection

This Isaiah passage reminds me that all of creation is connected. How I treat my neighbor has a direct impact, not only on my neighbor's life, but on my life, and on the flourishing of all creation. That same God who hung the stars, also calls us to be people of justice, and all of it is connected. All of it. The stars, the gardens, the way we treat our neighbor, the way our own lives are restored.

The fruits of doing justice look and feel and taste like restoration. When we are living the life that God intends for God's people, we will be leaning into the love that God has for all of creation. This is how our light will shine, and how our lives will come to be like watered gardens—lush and green, flowers bursting with color, trees growing toward the sky.

These verses reveal God's vision for how creation can and should be, and how our lives can and should be: restored, alive, thriving. The hope is that when your campers head home today, they are feeling restored like that well-watered garden. We hope this week has been restorative for you as well! The challenge for you and your camper in the weeks to come is to determine how you will continue to cultivate this expression of God's creation throughout your lives.

Ask Yourself

You get to welcome your camper home today. How will you help them bring home what they've learned in ways that will make a difference in their lives?

- Name one daily faith habit of yours you can share with them.
- Write down three questions you'll ask about their time at camp
- What is one thing you can do at home or at school to accept Isaiah's invitation to care for the oppressed, feed the hungry, and take care of one another?

Pray with Us

Gracious and loving God, you restore the face of the earth, and you restore each of our lives with your love. Thank you for the kindness of camp, and for the people who make it happen week after week and year after year. Thank you for the hope and joy my camper brings to our life together. Following the words of the prophets and the example of Jesus, may we be restorers of hope and bringers of peace to a world in need. Amen

Receive this Blessing

*May the same God who hung **all the stars** in the night sky
Give you strength for the journey of your life
Through weariness and beyond worry
May you be carried on wings of angels
And may you shine like stars
Reflecting God's love in the world.*