Deep Sea Discovery

GOD IS WITH ME WHEREVER I GO!

VBS Leader Sample Session

SESSION 3
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### Session Three

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Focus: God STRENGTHENS Me!
Bible Story: Jesus strengthens Peter in the storm. (Matthew 14)
Bible Memory: Psalm 28:7

Large-Group Opening

Play “Wherever I Go” as kids arrive. If you’d like, choose a couple of volunteers to come onstage and help lead the opening song. You will need several Hula Hoops® for today’s large-group game (one for every 20 or so kids).

Special Needs Tip: Some kids may be especially sensitive to louder noises. Consider offering noise-canceling headphones or earplugs.

Welcome everyone and say: Hi, everybody, and welcome back to Deep Sea Discovery! I can’t believe it’s our third day here already! Are you ready to dive into some more FUN? Then you’ve come to the right place! Again today we’ll learn a true story from the Bible that shows how God was with someone who needed Him. Then we’ll discover that God is with US too—wherever we go! We learned about Noah, and how God knew Noah’s heart and saved him from a flood. We learned that God heard Jonah’s prayers, even from the belly of a fish deep in the sea. God knows us, and He hears us too! But it doesn’t stop there! We’ve got more to explore today! So let’s get started by singing our praise to God!

Sing “Wherever I Go,” inviting your volunteers onstage to help.

Introduce today’s large-group game, Hoop It Up! Say: Yesterday we checked out your deep sea hearing skills. Today we’re going to practice teamwork. Everybody needs help sometimes, and we need to know that we can lean on each other when we need to! Divide kids into groups of about 20 or so. Make groups as even as you can, but kids need to stay where they are. Have kids in each group grasp the wrists of the kids next to them (see today’s dive marker icon for an illustration). Then place a Hula Hoop on the shoulder of the first person in each group. At your signal, kids will move the Hula Hoops down the line, stepping through the hoop and passing it to the next person. Kids are not allowed to let go of each other’s wrists, and the first group whose hoop makes it to the other end of the line is the winner.
(If your kids are seated in pews or rows of chairs, this game could be difficult because of space constraints. Consider playing onstage with two groups, and then encouraging kids in the audience to cheer.)

❤️ **Special Needs Tip:** If kids can’t (or choose not to) participate because of physical or sensory issues, let them be on the “observation deck” while others “dive into” this activity. You could also let these kids distribute the Hula Hoops to groups as the game begins. Be sure Diving Buddies keep kids safe and engaged.

Transition to the next activity by SAYING: Great job! I saw some really nice teamwork out there. It’s good to know that we can lean on each other and get through things together. But there’s Someone we can lean on in even more important ways—God! No matter what we’re going through, God loves us. And the Bible tells us that He’s with us wherever we go!

Review the theme verse. Invite a volunteer to come up and read Genesis 28:15. Use the files on the Opening & Closing CD to project it on screen. Then read it once more, encouraging kids to say all or part of the verse with you. Then review these motions to help kids remember a summary of the verse:

- **God is** (point up with both index fingers)
- **with me** (point thumbs to chest)
- **and will watch over me** (shade eyes with one hand and pretend to look for something)
- **wherever I go** (use both index fingers to point right, center, left).

❤️ **Special Needs Tip:** Be sure to slowly model the words and hand motions multiple times to reduce frustration for kids with auditory-processing delays.

SAY: Wherever we go, God is there to help us. Let’s sing a song and praise God for always being with us!

Sing “Strength & Shield.”

Introduce today’s Back2Back mission video by SAYING: Yesterday we continued the story of a young girl in Mexico named Daniela. She was getting more and more sick, and she was desperate for someone to help her. Let’s find out what happened to Dani. Show the clip, and then ASK: What do you think Dani will ask for? Let kids respond; then SAY: We’ll find out soon what Dani asked for. But today God can use you to make a difference in the lives of people who are asking for food, medical attention, shelter, and love—people in our own community and people all across the world. Let’s think about that as we sing this song together.
Sing “Send Me” as you take up an offering.

If you are using the Fish and Bait skits from the Opening & Closing CD, use Skit 3 (opening) at this time. Today Fish, Bait, and the kids help SAM try to recover another clue—but it’s too heavy!

Show today’s dive marker (light green, with clasped hands) and invite a volunteer to add it to the rope on your stage. SAY: Dive markers like these are used to point divers in the right direction when they’re underwater. These dive markers will point us in the right direction too! Our first dive marker reminds us that God knows us. The second one reminds us that God hears us. Today’s dive marker shows two hands clasped together like this (grasp your own wrists to illustrate). What do you think it means? Let kids respond. This dive marker will remind us that God STRENGTHENS us! When things are too hard for us to do on our own, He gives us strength. He helps us because He loves us. God STRENGTHENS you—and He’s with you wherever you go!

Let’s try something to help us remember this very important truth. I’ll ask, “What’s today’s Deep Sea Discovery?” and you’ll say, “God STRENGTHENS Me!” All right, let’s try it. Do so once or twice. Great job! You’ll probably be asked this same question during the rest of our adventure, so be ready to answer “God STRENGTHENS Me!” Let’s ask God to bless our time today.

Say a short prayer thanking God for each person with you. Ask Him to help kids understand that, as big as He is, God sees their struggles and wants to help them. Thank Him for the Bible, which helps us discover that He knows us, He hears us, He STRENGTHENS us, and He’s with us wherever we go!

Play music of your choice as kids head off to their first activity.

❤ Special Needs Tip: Allow groups that have kids with special needs to leave first. Seat them near a door so they can exit easily.

Large-Group Closing

Before kids arrive, count the money collected in today’s offering and be ready to tell how that money will be used. Display the E.C.H.O. Sub Wall Mural with Service Fish, as well as the Service Posters. You will leave these up throughout Deep Sea Discovery. See the Service Projects Leader’s Cards for details and info.

Play “Wherever I Go” as kids come in.
Welcome kids back to Celebration Reef by SAYING: Hello, out there! Welcome back from another awesome dive! I can’t believe we’re already at the end of another day together. Let’s see if you’ve been paying attention. What’s today’s Deep Sea Discovery? Kids respond, “God STRENGTHENS Me!” That’s right! God STRENGTHENS you—and He’s with you wherever you go! Let’s use big, strong voices as we sing our praise to God!

Sing “Wherever I Go.”

If you are using the skits from the Opening & Closing CD, use Skit 3 (closing) here. Fish and Bait review the story of Peter, and get their next set of coordinates from Dr. Waverly.

Let kids know how much money was collected in the offering at the opening session, what the total amount is, and what that money will be used for. SAY: God is using you to make a difference in the lives of other people. Let’s sing a song as we think about all the great things God is doing because you’ve chosen to serve Him. As you sing, let kids add Service Fish to the E.C.H.O. Sub Wall Mural.

Sing “O the Deep, Deep Love.”

Remind kids to do the service challenges they’ve chosen by SAYING: The offerings you give and the service projects you’ve done are making a difference in the lives of people you don’t even know. But it doesn’t end there! Each of you has chosen a special project that will let you serve God by serving others. Who can tell me what you plan to do? Let kids respond, and then SAY: Come back tomorrow and let me know how it went! But before we head out, let’s sing one more song!

Sing “Strength & Shield.”

Close by making any needed announcements. Then say a short prayer, thanking God for each child and each family represented today. Challenge kids to repeat today’s slogan one more time by asking: What’s today’s Deep Sea Discovery? (God STRENGTHENS Me!) That’s right! God STRENGTHENS you—and He’s with you wherever you go! See you next time!

Play “Wherever I Go” as kids leave.

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENTS OR REMINDERS:
Session 3

LIFE FOCUS God STRENGTHENS Me!

BIBLE STORY Jesus strengthens Peter in the storm.
(Matthew 14)

BIBLE MEMORY Psalm 28:7

Bible Story Overview
Jesus was born to save the world, and His life was already making a difference. He healed the sick, raised the dead, fed the hungry, and taught the multitudes. Though He had compassion on the crowds, sometimes He needed to be alone.

On such an occasion, Jesus sent His disciples out in a boat while He went up on a mountain to pray. During the night, as the boat was blown about by the wind, the disciples saw what they thought was a ghost coming toward them. And they were terrified! They called out, and the figure immediately reassured them, “It is I.” When Peter heard His master’s voice calling “Come,” he mustered his courage, got out of the boat, and walked on the water to Jesus. But when fear got the better of Peter, he began to sink. Jesus reached down, caught Peter, and gave him the strength he didn’t have on his own.

God STRENGTHENS us too! When the darkness seems overwhelming. When the winds of doubt whisper in our ears. When we can’t quite keep our eyes on Jesus. In the midst of our triumphs and our failures, God is with us wherever we go.

USE THESE ACTIVITIES TO HELP KIDS:

• KNOW God strengthens them and is with them.
• EXPLORE how God helps them do hard things.
• SERVE God by encouraging others.

Today you’ll help kids find encouragement in knowing that God strengthens them and will always be with them. The story of Peter’s walk on water shows us that God honors our faith and empowers us to do what we could never do without Him. Make sure kids understand that God doesn’t use only adults; He wants to use kids in His work too. As you teach today, let God work through you to communicate His truth in a way that helps kids understand so that their lives will be built on this foundation.
Session 3 • God STRENGTHENS Me!

Tide Pool Centers

ART
Materials: modeling clay or dough, blindfolds (1 per child)

Distribute supplies. SAY: Have fun making something that looks like what you ate for breakfast this morning. Oh, and you have to do it while you’re blindfolded! Blindfold each child and let kids play for a few minutes. While they’re working, SAY: This is hard, isn’t it? This can remind us that God helps us do hard things.

SCIENCE
Materials: tub of water; a variety of objects that can be put in the water, such as a wooden spoon, a sock, an apple, a potato, and a rock. Make sure you have a mix of items that will and won’t float in the water.

Set out the supplies around the tub of water. SAY: Try putting these objects in the water to see if they float. What kinds of things float? What kinds of things sink? Let them play for a few minutes. SAY: If I stepped into that water, I wouldn’t float. But in today’s story we’ll learn about a time when Jesus walked across water without sinking!

TOUCH
Materials: hand weights of various sizes or cans of food with different weights (or other similar objects of various weights, some of which should be too heavy for kids)

Set out the materials. SAY: Try lifting these weights. You might want to work together to lift some of them. Watch kids to be sure they don’t get careless and drop weights or try to lift something that might hurt them. SAY: Which ones are heavier? Which are lighter? Remember, God strengthens us. That means He makes us strong, not so we can lift heavy things but so we can do hard things in life.

MOVEMENT
Materials: a rope or jump rope, tape

Before class, use tape to mark a line on the floor. Gather kids and divide them into two teams for a game of Tug of War. Supervise to make sure kids don’t get too rowdy or get hurt during this game. SAY: Just as you helped each other do something hard, God helps us do hard things.
Peter Walks On Water

Materials: large sheets or rolls of paper, pencil, scissors, stapler, staples, plenty of sheets of scrap paper or newspaper

Special Needs Tip: If teaching a large group, consider using the session 3 icon (STRENGTHENS) as a visual cue to help kids know when to participate.

Before class, create a large paper doll that can be stuffed. Draw an outline of a person on a large sheet of paper (the bigger your group, the bigger the doll should be). Cut out the outline; then use that as a pattern to cut out an identical piece from another piece of paper. Staple the two outlines together around the outside edges, leaving openings in the head, each arm, each leg, and the torso. These openings should be large enough for children to stuff crumpled pieces of paper into the doll to make it three-dimensional.

Gather the children in your Bible story area. Set the large paper doll on the floor in the middle of the group. Place sheets of scrap paper or newspaper nearby. SAY: Today we’re going to hear about how Jesus strengthened one of His friends, Peter. Our Bible story is found in Matthew, a book in the Bible that tells about Jesus’ life when He was living on earth. As I tell this story, I want you to listen for things Jesus helped people do. Whenever you hear about one of these things, crumple a piece of paper and stuff it inside our paper person.

SAY: One day Jesus went away to a quiet place to be alone. But some people knew where He went, and they spread the word. Pretty soon many people had come to the place where Jesus was. They brought sick people and Jesus healed them. He made lots of people well. This couldn’t have happened without God. (Stuff papers inside the doll.)

SAY: After a while His best friends, also called His disciples, realized it was getting late and told Jesus to send everyone away so they could get some food to eat. Jesus told them they didn’t need to go away; the disciples could feed them. Well, the disciples were surprised, and they told Jesus the only food they had was five little loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus made the food
multiply so thousands of people could eat and be satisfied. This couldn’t have happened without God. (Stuff papers inside the doll.)

SAY: After the people ate, Jesus told His disciples to get in a boat and go to the other side of a big lake. He said He would say good-bye to all the people and would come and join His disciples later. He went up on a mountainside to spend time praying and being alone with God the Father.

SAY: While the disciples were in a boat out on the water, suddenly a storm came and they were in danger. The waves were getting bigger and slamming against their boat, and their boat was blowing around in the wind. The disciples were afraid. Suddenly, they saw a strange sight that made them feel even more afraid. They saw a man walking toward them on top of the stormy water! They thought they were seeing a ghost, and they were really scared.

SAY: Then they heard a familiar voice. Jesus was walking on the water! And He told them not to be afraid. Peter wasn’t so sure, and he asked Jesus to show it was Him by letting Peter walk on the water too. Jesus told him to go ahead.

SAY: So Peter stepped out of the boat and wow! He was walking on the water! He started walking toward Jesus. It was amazing! He could not have done that without God. (Stuff papers inside the doll.)

SAY: But then Peter realized he was in a scary situation. He looked around and noticed the big waves. He noticed the wind that was blowing so hard. And he started to sink. He cried out for Jesus to save him, and Jesus reached out and caught Peter and kept him safe. Only God could do that. (Stuff papers inside the doll.)

SAY: Jesus and Peter went to the boat and climbed in. And suddenly the wind and the waves calmed down. The disciples knew that only God could do that. (Stuff papers inside the doll.) So they worshipped Jesus.

SAY: When they landed, they got out of the boat and found another crowd of people wanting to be healed. So Jesus healed them. (Stuff papers inside the doll.) Jesus has the power to heal anyone because He is God.

Point to the doll. SAY: Look at how much we strengthened our paper person! Jesus strengthened the people He fed. He strengthened the people He healed. He strengthened His disciples, who were afraid in the storm. And He strengthened Peter, who got to walk on water himself! God strengthens us too, and He is always with us.
BIBLE REVIEW
Have kids sit in a circle. Point to the stuffed doll. SAY: We’re going to make this paper person talk. We’ll pass him around the circle. When he comes to you, pretend to make him talk and say something you remember from our story.

Pass the paper person around the circle, encouraging each child to use him like a puppet while telling something they remember from the story.

SAY: This paper person can’t really talk unless we talk for him. God also helps us do things we can’t do without Him. God strengthens us and is with us. He helps us do hard things. And we can serve God by encouraging others.

BIBLE MEMORY
Read the Bible Memory from Psalm 28:7. SAY: We’re going to keep saying this verse together, and we’re going to do some actions along with it.

Teach children the following actions to match different parts of the verse. If you’d like, you can hang the Psalm 28:7 Actions printable file from the Preschool CD and show kids the illustrations:

- The Lord is my strength (flex muscles)
- And my shield (pretend to hold a shield in front of you)
- My heart trusts Him (put hands over heart)
- And He helps me. (put hands out in front of your body)

Practice the action with each part of the verse; then run through the whole thing a few times.

Ask crew leaders to distribute this session’s Discovery Wristband. Then SAY: Remember that God strengthens you! That means He is always with you, making you stronger. He helps you do hard things. And you can serve Him by encouraging others.
POINT TO JESUS
Tie today’s story into the gospel message. SAY: When we believe in Jesus, He makes us each into a new kind of person. When we follow Him, we become more like Him. And He strengthens us just as He strengthened people who lived on earth when He did. Even though we can’t see Jesus, He is alive and He will help make us stronger every day.

MY BOOK LOOK
Divide group into small groups or crews. Help kids:
• KNOW God strengthens them and is with them.
• EXPLORE how God helps them do hard things.
• SERVE God by encouraging others.

Materials: student books and stickers, crayons, wooden toothpicks or craft sticks (broken into smaller pieces), glue

Help kids complete the Preschool Student Book session 3 activities. When kids finish, or if time runs out, they can put their student pages in the 3-in-1 Lanyard pouches to keep until they go home, or leaders can keep the pages to give to parents at pick-up (along with the Family Newsletter). Make sure the kids’ names are on their pages.

CHOOSE TO SERVE
Materials: construction paper, glue, pens or pencils, scissors, Encouraging Messages printable file from Preschool CD (optional)

SAY: You can help other people be stronger by encouraging them. This is one way we can serve God. Set out supplies and let kids make encouraging cards from construction paper. They can glue on the messages from the Preschool CD, or help them write their own encouraging messages in the cards.

CLOSING PRAYER
Close by praying: Dear God, thank You for strengthening us and being with us. Thank You for helping us do hard things—things we couldn’t do without Your help. Please help us to trust in Your strength and to serve You by encouraging others. Amen.
LIFE FOCUS God STRENGTHENS Me!

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(Matthew 14)

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On such an occasion, Jesus sent His disciples out in a boat while He went up on a mountain to pray. During the night, as the boat was blown about by the wind, the disciples saw what they thought was a ghost coming toward them. And they were terrified! They called out, and the figure immediately reassured them, “It is I.” When Peter heard his master’s voice calling “Come,” he mustered his courage, got out of the boat, and walked on the water to Jesus. But when fear got the better of Peter, he began to sink. Without hesitation, Jesus reached down, caught Peter, and gave him the strength he didn’t have on his own.

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USE THESE ACTIVITIES TO HELP KIDS:
• KNOW that God strengthens them and is with them.
• EXPLORE how God helps them do hard things.
• SERVE God by encouraging others.

Today you’ll help kids understand that God is with them, even when things seem hopeless. Kids may never find themselves on the brink of drowning like Peter, but their everyday situations can certainly be just as daunting. Help them understand that in any situation, God is with them. God will help them. God will give them the strength to do things that seem impossible. Make an effort today to help kids take courage in knowing God is with them, no matter what they’re facing.
• Mark a Bible at Matthew 14 and hide it in your Bible story area.

• Just prior to the session, mix batches of blue oobleck. Recipes can be found online, but basically it is 2 parts water to 1 part cornstarch. Add food coloring to make the oobleck blue. Someone needs to be constantly stirring the mixture until it is ready to use. This activity is a lot of work, but it is SO MUCH FUN! If you can pull it off, please do! But do not pour the mixture down the drain! It will clog your pipes. Instead, pour it into plastic trash bags and discard. If you cannot make oobleck (or if you have kids with sensitivities to food coloring), substitute another item for kids to walk across, such as shredded blue paper, large wet sponges, or pillows in blue cases.

• Cue the Elementary & PreTeen CD to track 3 (wind blowing). Have it ready to play during the Bible story. This will be most effective if you have an assistant starting and stopping the sound effects.

YOU’LL NEED
- Bible
- Elementary & PreTeen CD from Age-Level Resources Disc Set
- CD player (or laptop computer)
- Daily Theme Stickers
- Diver’s Logs
- snorkel
- 3 aluminum baking pans
- 6 lbs. cornstarch
- blue food coloring
- water
- stir stick
- plastic trash bags
- old towels
- wet wipes
- large fan
- plastic tarp (preferably blue)
- tub of water
- items that sink or float
- Elementary and/or PreTeen Student Books
- pens or pencils
- session 3 poster from Bible Story Poster Pack
- Discovery Wristbands
- (optional: diving gear, shredded blue paper, large wet sponges, pillows in blue cases)
Welcome And Intro

Session 3 • God STRENGTHENS Me!

Pass The Snorkel

As kids arrive, greet them with enthusiasm. Remain outside your room until indicated.
ASK: What’s today’s Deep Sea Discovery? (God STRENGTHENS me and is with me!) Welcome back to the Scripture Search Discovery, an ancient shipwreck filled with mysteries and clues. Are you ready to dive in? Me too! But first we need to mark your Diver’s Logs! Distribute today’s stickers and let kids add them to the appropriate spot in their Diver’s Logs. If kids would like, let them put on various pieces of diving gear (flippers, goggles, etc.) before going inside the room.

Enter the room together and encourage kids to “discover” the Bible somewhere in the wreckage. Open it to Matthew 14 and invite a volunteer to read aloud verse 22. SAY with excitement: Yes! Today we get to learn about Jesus! Tell me a few things that you know about Him. Allow for responses. But did you know that, as much as He loved the people who followed Him, even Jesus needed some time alone? When today’s story takes place, Jesus had just finished feeding 5,000 men—plus women and children. He loved every one of them, but He needed to rest and recharge. He had to do some quick thinking to get some time alone. Let’s see what quick thinkers you are.

Have kids sit in a circle. (If you have a large number of kids, form smaller groups and play simultaneously.) Give one person a snorkel. He is It. You will call out a directive such as, “Name five breakfast cereals” and then, “Pass the snorkel!” The person holding the snorkel passes it to the right as he begins to call out names of breakfast cereals. Kids quickly pass the snorkel around the circle. If it gets back to It before he can name five breakfast cereals, he is It again. Otherwise, the person holding the snorkel when It finishes his list is the new It. Other possible topics: ocean animals, sports teams, vegetables, cartoon characters, cities in your state, candy bars, or bands. If naming five items is too difficult, decrease the number to three. If it’s too easy, increase the number to seven. Play as time allows. Then SAY: You are some pretty quick thinkers! As I said, Jesus had to do some fast thinking in today’s story. But He wasn’t the only one. Let’s check it out!

❤️ Special Needs Tip: Some kids may have trouble retrieving words quickly. Allow them extra time, or allow volunteers to play so nobody feels put on the spot.
Walking On Water

As you begin the Bible story, have some adult helpers prepare the activity. Lay down a tarp. Pour the oobleck into the pans and line them up next to each other in a path on the tarp (long edges of the pans together). Place some old towels and wet wipes at one end of the path. Position the fan so it will blow directly on kids as they walk across the path.

Have kids sit down in the center of the room. SAY: Jesus sent the crowd away and told His disciples to get on a boat and start traveling to the other side of a very large lake called the Sea of Galilee. Jesus went up on a mountain to pray. By the time He was finished, it was well into the night and the boat had drifted far from shore because it was so windy. Play track 3 (blowing wind).

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 14:25. SAY: It was very dark. The water was very rough and stormy. And the wind was blowing very hard. How do you think the disciples felt when they saw somebody walking toward them out in the middle of the water? Allow responses. Then SAY: They were scared to death! They thought it was a ghost!

Ask a volunteer to read aloud verses 27-29. Hopefully your path of oobleck is in place. SAY: Jesus walked through the storm, out to His disciples. He came to show them His power and to help them believe. So He called Peter out of the boat and onto the water. Can you imagine what that felt like? Let's give it a try!

Have kids stand and take off their shoes. Line kids up next to the end of the path without the towels. Turn the fan on high and aim it at the kids. Then let each of them take a turn walking across the oobleck, if they would like. Because it is neither solid nor liquid, it will give at first and then support their weight. Use towels and wet wipes to clean kids’ feet. When everyone has had the opportunity to walk the path, have kids put their shoes back on and take a seat as your helpers clean up. (Remember that when the oobleck is ready to be discarded, DO NOT pour it down a drain. Rather, empty it into plastic trash bags.)

Heart Special Needs Tip: For kids with sensory sensitivities, offer the option of tapping a toe in the oobleck, or touching it with a finger.

26 DEEP SEA DISCOVERY
SAY: So Peter did what nobody else in the boat would do. He got out and stepped onto the waves with Jesus. He must have been SO EXCITED! I mean, who does that? Just Jesus—and now Peter! What do you think Peter did next? Allow kids to respond, and then ask a volunteer to read aloud verse 30. Jesus had just shown Peter and the rest of His disciples that He could feed thousands of people from one boy’s lunch. He could walk across the water to a tiny boat in a storm. He could help Peter walk on water! And yet, Peter was overwhelmed and afraid. Why? Allow kids to respond.

SAY: Jesus showed His power to Peter and many other people in amazing ways that day. But when Peter looked around him, he forgot all that. He saw darkness, crashing waves, and a boat full of terrified friends. It’s easy to get down on Peter, right? He should have trusted Jesus more or been more brave. But that’s what happens to all of us when we stop looking to Jesus and focus instead on all the scary things around us, all the things that might happen.

Ask a volunteer to read aloud verses 31-33. Then ASK: Why do you think Jesus sent His disciples out in the boat when He knew there would be a storm? Let kids respond to each question. Why do you think Jesus called Peter to get out of the boat? Do you think Peter would have gotten out of the boat if Jesus hadn’t encouraged him to? Do you think Jesus was pleased with or disappointed in Peter? What do you think the disciples all discovered that day?

Refer to the Bible story poster as you continue. SAY: Jesus had a powerful lesson for Peter and the rest of the disciples that day. Even though Peter began to sink, at least he got out of the boat. And when Peter was afraid, Jesus was right there to help him and to pull him up out of the water. Jesus does the same thing with us today. He believes in us and challenges us to do things for Him that may seem scary. And sometimes we may mess up. But God will always be there to help us, giving us strength to do the things we can’t do on our own. In the sunshine and in the storms, God is with us wherever we go.

POINT TO JESUS
Tie today’s story into the gospel message. SAY: Peter knew that he needed Jesus. And so do we! Not to keep us from drowning in a storm, but to keep us from drowning in our sin. When we reach out and ask Jesus to save us, He is right there. He pulls us out of our old lives and gives us new life in Him—not because we deserve it, but because He loves us so very much.
APPLICATION ACTIVITY

(If you don’t have time for the application activity, crew leaders can do this with kids during another free part of the day.) Set up a tub of water. Gather several random items that might sink or float (ruler, aluminum foil, can of regular soda, can of diet soda, spoon, pom-pom, toy figurine, egg, apple, bubble wand, crayon, wooden block, matchbox car, chenille wire, cork, etc.). Before dropping each item into the water, let kids guess whether they think it will sink or float. Talk about why different things respond differently when placed in the very same tub of water. Discuss how people sometimes respond differently in the same situations. Explain that sometimes all it takes to keep someone from “sinking” in the problems of life is for a friend to come alongside them and help them stay afloat. Talk with kids about simple ways to encourage people around them.

Option: There are several videos of this game online (search “Sink or Float?”). If you prefer, choose some of them to show to kids instead of setting up this activity.

CREW REVIEW WITH STUDENT PAGES

Have kids get together in crews for small group time. Crew leaders should use the Elementary and/or PreTeen Student Books to help kids:

• KNOW that God strengthens them and is with them.
• EXPLORE how God helps them do hard things.
• SERVE God by encouraging others.

Remind crew leaders that kids can start choosing their serving challenge now, but should complete their challenge and journal pages at home. When crews are done or time runs out, ask kids to fold both student pages and put them in their 3-in-1 Lanyard pouches to keep until they go home.

Read aloud Psalm 28:7 and ask crew leaders to distribute today’s Discovery Wristbands. ASK: What’s today’s Deep Sea Discovery? (God STRENGTHENS me and is with me!) SAY: God loves you and will help you do hard things! And you can show your love for Him by helping others do things that seem hard. You can serve God by encouraging others.

CLOSING PRAYER

PRAY: Father in Heaven, thank You for each person here. Thank You for being near to us and for giving us strength that we don’t have on our own. Remind us to keep our eyes on You when we are overwhelmed and afraid. Help us to serve You by encouraging others. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.
**Session 3**

**LIFE FOCUS**  God STRENGTHENS Me!

**BIBLE STORY**  Jesus strengthens Peter in the storm. (Matthew 14)

**BIBLE MEMORY**  Psalm 28:7

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**Bible Background**

Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry, and taught the multitudes. But sometimes He needed to be alone.

On such an occasion, Jesus sent His disciples out in a boat while He went to pray. During the night, as the boat was blown about by the wind, the disciples saw what they thought was a ghost coming toward them. And they were terrified! They called out, and the figure immediately reassured them, “It is I.” When Peter heard his master’s voice calling “Come,” he got out of the boat, and walked on the water to Jesus. But when fear got the better of Peter, he began to sink. Without hesitation, Jesus reached down, caught Peter, and gave him the strength he didn’t have on his own.

God STRENGTHENS us too! When the darkness seems overwhelming. When the winds of doubt whisper in our ears. When we can’t quite keep our eyes on Jesus. In the midst of our triumphs and our failures, God is with us wherever we go.

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**OVERVIEW**

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**STRENGTHEN ME**

**Materials:** paper, pencils, timer, “Empowered” PowerPoint on Teen CD, laptop, Teen Student Books (optional: video projection unit)

**IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBILITIES**

**Materials:** Bibles, Teen Student Books, pens (or pencils), duct tape (optional: blindfolds)

**ENCOURAGE OTHERS**

**Materials:** Teen Student Books, copies of Flotation Device printable file (cut apart) on Teen CD, bag (or bowl), pens, “Muscle Builder” challenge on Teen CD (optional)
Step 1

Use this activity to help teens know that God strengthens them and is with them.

Strengthen Me

Materials: paper, pencils, timer, “Empowered” PowerPoint on Teen CD, Teen Student Books, laptop (or video projection unit)

Welcome teenagers. Pass out paper and pencils. SAY: You’re going to see five images, each something that could be empowered or strengthened. Your job will be to write down as many ways you can think of for the thing in the image to be strengthened . . . and you’ll have just 30 seconds per picture.

Special Needs Tip: Teens with special needs may need longer to look at each picture to process a thought that could go along with the picture. Working with their Diving Buddies, allow them to view the pictures before the rest of the group to give them the time they need to participate fully.

Explain that students will see two examples first; then they’ll see the five pictures for 30 seconds each. Then play the “Empowered” PowerPoint from the Teen CD.

Afterward, invite teenagers to form groups of two to four. Click through the images again as teenagers share their methods of strengthening. ASK small groups to discuss: • In your opinion, which image was the hardest to think of ideas for? Why? • Which image did you find the most “methods of empowerment” for? Why?

Gather back together and invite teenagers to share some of their answers. Then SAY: We all looked at the same pictures, but we may have come up with different ideas for how we could “empower” the things pictured. For example, you could empower the phone’s battery with a charger, or you could strengthen its signal by going somewhere with better reception! Sometimes we also need different kinds of strength.

Invite teenagers to look at the picture on page 6 of their Teen Student Book. SAY: In today’s Bible story, we see Jesus strengthen three different groups of people in three different ways. God cares about every part of us—our minds, bodies, and souls—and because He’s always with us, He knows exactly what kind of strength we need and when we need it.
Impossible Possibilities

Materials: Bibles, Teen Student Books, pens (or pencils), duct tape (optional: blindfolds)

Divide the class into three groups: The Desert, The Sea, and The Land of Gennesaret. Have the groups use their Bibles and the prompts on page 7 of the Teen Student Book to read about the three places in Matthew 14 where Jesus gave strength to those around Him. Then ASK volunteers from each group to share:

• What kind(s) of strength (physical, mental, emotional) did Jesus give the people in your portion of the Bible story? How did He supply that strength? Have The Sea group share last. Ask a volunteer from that group to read aloud verses 23-32. Then ASK the class:
  • Why do you think Peter decided to climb out of the boat?
  • What does this account show us about Peter’s relationship with Jesus?

SAY: Peter knew Jesus and trusted Him enough to climb out of the boat when He called to Peter. It was only when Peter realized the impossibility of the thing he was doing that he began to sink.

Direct teenagers to stay in their groups. Choose a volunteer from each group to design a “duct tape obstacle course.” This will be a path made out of tape along the ground. Encourage students to add at least one change in direction.

Prompt teenagers to pair up with someone from their group. One by one, have pairs walk along the duct tape, with one partner closed-eyed (or blindfolded) and the other guiding him or her along the path. Have teenagers take turns walking back along the duct-tape path, with eyes closed, this time without the help of a seeing partner.

Gather back together. Invite volunteers to share highlights from their experiences. ASK:
  • How is following God sort of like going through the obstacle course with a friend? How was Peter’s experience of walking on water similar? • What would happen if you didn’t trust the direction your partner was taking you in?

SAY: In today’s Bible story, Jesus strengthened Peter to do the impossible, and when Peter’s confidence and faith wavered, Jesus pulled him out of the water.
Encourage Others

Materials: Teen Student Books, copies of Flotation Device printable file (cut apart) on Teen CD, bag (or bowl), pens (optional: “Muscle Builder” challenge on the Teen CD)

Optional Activity
Start step 3 with the “Muscle Builder” challenge on the Teen CD.

Direct teenagers to return to their small groups to discuss these questions:

• What are some ways we can receive God’s strengthening and build this spiritual muscle? • Make it personal: What’s one area of your faith you would like to see grow? • What spiritual choices or habits might help us trust God more fully? • What would it look like to help strengthen others as God strengthens us?

Put the cut-apart Flotation Devices from the Teen CD into a bag and have each teenager pull a random flotation device from the bag. Have teenagers spend a few minutes reading the verse on their flotation device and writing on the back a short prayer or phrase to think about people in their lives who might need encouragement. Prompt teenagers to spend another minute or two in prayer.

Encourage teenagers to either put their flotation device somewhere they will see it as a reminder or to give it to someone who might need it. SAY: God is constantly inviting us to step out of the boat with Him. He’s always there to give us strength and pull us up when we sink, and He invites us to share His strengthening and empowering love with others who don’t have it yet.

Conclude by using Encourage Others on page 8 of the Teen Student Book.

Note: Before teenagers leave, point out the journal pages in the Teen Student Book and encourage teenagers to write in them each day this week to keep a log of their ideas, service action steps, and prayers. Also encourage them to check out the service ideas on page 23 and to use pages 16 to 17 to interact with today’s Bible Memory, Psalm 28:7.
What You’ll Need
1 large sheet
20 balloons of one color (good balloons)
10 balloons of another color (bad balloons)
Bible

Preparation
Before class, blow up 20 balloons of one color. Inflate 10 balloons of another color. You may want to inflate extra balloons of both colors in case many break throughout the sessions.

Special Needs Tip: Be aware of children who have sensitivity to loud sounds (such as a popping balloon or shouting children). Provide noise-canceling headphones for them to wear to decrease their anxiety during this activity. Some children may appreciate the opportunity to see and touch the balloons on their own, but then may wish to play at Breakaway Bay or simply not participate in the larger group. Encourage Diving Buddies to help each child be as comfortable as they can be.

What You’ll Say and Do
Hello, crew! Welcome again to E.C.H.O. Sea Sub! What’s today’s Deep Sea Discovery? (God STRENGTHENS me and is with me!) Have you ever thought about how strong water is? When water molecules join together, they become stronger. The more molecules that are joined together, the more water can lift things up—like big, heavy boats! People get stronger when they join together too. Let’s see if we can work together right now!

Instruct kids to each hold on firmly to a spot on the edge of the sheet and pull it so that it’s spread out. Place the 20 good balloons in the center of the sheet. Have kids lift up the sheet so the balloons pop up in the air. Tell them the object is to keep those 20 good balloons from falling onto the floor. After a few minutes, start throwing in the 10 bad balloons, one by one. Tell the kids they have to try to keep the bad balloons out while still keeping the good balloons off the ground. After playing the game for a few minutes, have the kids put the sheet on the floor and find a place to sit on it. Read Psalm 28:7 to the kids and ASK:

• Would you say you are a trustworthy person? Why or why not?
• How do we know we can trust God?
• It’s important to be someone people can count on. If you generally are true to your word, people will believe you. What happens if you aren’t true or don’t keep your promises?
• When we rely on God’s strength and stay strong for each other, we can do an amazing job of lifting others up. Why do you think it’s important to encourage others? Let kids respond. Encouraging others is so important; let’s practice doing that right now!
What You’ll Need
Sandy Seal of Approval Sticker Template
(on Elementary & PreTeen CD)
2 ½” circle sticker printer sheets
computer and printer
scissors

Preparation
Print out sheets of Sandy Seal of Approval stickers
and cut sheets in half, so each kid gets 6 stickers.

What You’ll Do
Give each kid half a sheet of stickers. Split kids into groups based on how many helpers are available. Let kids award
stickers to volunteers and helpers at your site. (In order not to leave any kids out, stickers are given to helpers or
volunteers. But consider your participants and think about letting kids give stickers to other kids as well.) When kids
have run out of stickers, gather them back together at the E.C.H.O. Sea Sub.

Special Needs Tip: Let children practice giving stickers away with their helpers first to help relieve
anxiety about talking to others.

What You’ll Say
SAY: Today we’re going to practice encouraging all the people who serve others here at VBS! Lots of people
work really hard to give kids the chance to learn about Jesus in a fun way every day. Let’s say thank you to
them and tell them what a great job they’re doing! After kids have finished giving out stickers, gather them together
and challenge them to continue encouraging others at home. SAY: Sometimes it can be hard to be encouraging.
When you feel down, it might be hard to lift others up. Or if people are annoying you, it might be hard to cheer
them on! But take a moment to think about how God gives you strength, and how you can trust Him to help
you with anything. When you focus on God, you’ll find it’s a lot easier to be an encouragement to others.
Try it! If you don’t feel like talking, send a card. Or do something quietly to help a person instead. Offer your
brother something to drink, or pick up your laundry without being asked. Unload the dishwasher or turn on a
show you know the other person likes. Invite someone who’s lonely to come play with you. There are so many
ways to encourage others! What ways can you think of?

S&S® Worldwide Service Option
As an option for the Lifesaver Awards on the next card, kids can
decorate these Color-Me™ Waterproof Bags for lifeguards or
other community servants. Waterproof bag features a “seal shut”
inner seal and slide zip seal top. 4½” x 6”. Item STL-SD306. To
order: Call 800.243.9232 or visit standard.ssww.com.
LIFESAVER AWARDS

What You’ll Need
Lifesaver Award certificates (see template on Elementary & PreTeen CD)
Life Savers® candy rolls or bags
clear tape
markers
(optional: stickers, inflatable ring—big enough to fit over someone’s head, roll of red paper)

Preparation
Choose a group of community servants to honor. Try to select a group that is meaningful for your students: doctors/nurses at a local hospital, firefighters, police officers, teachers, youth sport coaches, sanitation workers, or others. Then, based on that group’s working environment/hours, choose a time for delivering the awards. If possible, get the names of individuals in the group so kids can put these names on the certificates. Print out enough certificates before the session so kids can prepare them for all the honorees. If you have time and enough volunteers, you could even plan to have an awards ceremony where you serve the recipients snacks or a meal, show a movie (or let your kids put on a show!), and offer childcare.

What You’ll Do
Pass out blank Lifesaver Award certificates and markers. Instruct kids to decorate the certificates as they wish. They can add their own messages to the certificates (“Way to go!” “Thanks for taking care of us!”). If you have the honorees’ names, let kids add those to the certificates. When they are finished decorating, let them tape a package of candy onto each certificate. If possible, make plans to meet at an appropriate time to deliver the awards to the individuals (be sure to get parental consent forms filled out first). For fun, roll out a “red carpet” of red paper and have one person wear the inflatable ring around his or her neck and announce: “Now presenting the <fill in the year> Lifesaver Awards!” Then let the kids hand out each award and say thank you to the community servants.

Special Needs Tip: For younger children or children with fine-motor difficulties, have stickers on hand with appropriate messages or simple decorations (such as stars) so they can easily add to the awards.

What You’ll Say
God strengthens us! Jesus gave Peter the courage to get out of the boat and walk on the water, and He used his physical strength to help Peter too. God wants us to help others too. Sometimes people need emotional strength and sometimes they need physical help. Think about all the people in your family or community who help others. ASK:
• In what ways do you see people helping others?
• In what ways could you be more like these helpers?
• How could you give emotional or mental strength to others?
• How can you use your physical abilities to help others?
CRAFTS & SCIENCE
LEADER’S CARDS
ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN

Curiosity Cavern
CRAFTS & SCIENCE
LEADER’S CARDS
ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN

25 min
SURFACE TENSION EXPERIMENT

What You’ll Need

tarp
baby pool (or large plastic tubs) filled with water
copies of boat instructions and water molecule image (or projector)
(see Elementary & PreTeen CD)
origami paper
aluminum foil
duct tape
small items such as buttons, beads, dried beans, colored gravel

Preparation

Before class, put down a tarp, set the pool on it, and fill the pool with water. Print out the boat instructions and water molecule image (or be ready to project them).

Special Needs Tip: It may be helpful to have extra helpers on hand for this activity to assist kids who have trouble with impulse control and may be tempted to splash the water. Be sensitive to children who wear assistive hearing devices, who may be nervous about getting wet.

What You’ll Say

Hello, divers! Welcome again to Curiosity Cavern! What’s today’s Deep Sea Discovery? (God STRENGTHENS me and is with me!) Have you ever thought about how strong water is? Water has one of the strongest surface tensions of any liquid—that means it can support objects on its surface really well. That is because of the unique way that the water molecules hold on to each other. But even as strong as it is, you wouldn’t be able to walk on water like Jesus did, unless you had His help! When people hold on to Jesus, they get stronger too! Let’s experiment to see how things are able to float (or not!) on water.

What You’ll Do

Distribute paper for every child and keep the other items on hand (have extra paper so kids can make more than one boat). Instruct kids to look at the provided instructions. Walk them through folding their paper into origami boats. Then let the kids test out their boats on the water in the pool. Talk about what happens—how does the water keep the boats up? Show the kids the image of a water molecule. Explain that the oxygen atoms of water molecules have a negative charge, but the hydrogen atoms have a positive charge. When two water molecules get together, the hydrogen atom of one molecule bonds with the oxygen on another molecule. When lots of these molecules join together, the bonds become very strong.

However, if the weight of the object provides enough force, that force will break the bonds and the object will sink. Let kids try adding items to their boats to see how much weight has to be added before the boats sink. Kids can experiment with making new boats and adding tape to the bottom of their boats or making boats out of aluminum foil. Can they add more weight with these modifications? Why or why not? Let the kids come up with ideas about how to make better boats.
STRENGTH MOBILE

What You’ll Need
- glue (or stapler and staples)
- string (or twine) cut into pieces, 2–4’ long, 5 per kid
- scissors
- 10 fish shapes per kid, preferably on card stock
  (see Elementary & PreTeen CD)
- bubble shapes (on CD, at least 10 per kid)
- markers, sequins, plastic jewels, broken CD pieces (or other decorative supplies)
- stick (or wooden dowel), roughly 12” long, 1 per kid
- whiteboard and dry-erase markers (or paper table coverings)

What You’ll Do
Show the kids a sample mobile. Give each child printouts of 10 fish shapes and printouts of bubble shapes, 5 strings, and a stick, and make sure they have access to the decorating supplies, glue, and scissors. Let the kids cut out the fish and bubble shapes. They should decorate 5 of the fish in their set using the decorating supplies mentioned, on one side only. On the other 5 fish, they can write the words “The Lord is my strength,” putting one word on each fish—again, on one side only. (Write these words on a board or on table coverings, where all the kids can see and copy them.) They can also decorate the bubbles, if they wish. Tell the kids to use markers to write their initials somewhere on their sticks.

Instruct the kids to tie 5 long strings onto their sticks, spacing the strings apart (demonstrate these steps). Putting 5 fish pairs in word order (left to right), they can sandwich each string between a pair of fish (putting the blank sides of the fish together) and slide the fish to the desired height on the string (they can choose to stagger their fish or put them all in a line). Once a fish is in position, they can put glue on the back of one of the fish and press the back of the other fish down onto that, with the string in between the pair (or they can staple the fish together, placing a staple very close to the string, just to the right and left of where the string is—this would allow the fish to still be able to slide up and down). They can then continue to use this method for the other fish on the 4 other strings. They can also use this method to attach bubbles to the strings, wherever they want to add bubbles. When kids are finished making their mobiles, they can hold them up and blow on them gently to see what happens.

What You’ll Say
What’s today’s Deep Sea Discovery? (God STRENGTHENS me and is with me!) God strengthens us. He does this in all kinds of ways. Let’s think about a few. ASK:
- The bonds between water molecules are strong because of the way they hang on to each other. What’s one way you can hold on tight to God?
- Paper gets stronger and harder to tear up when it’s folded many times. You can quickly demonstrate this by giving a kid a piece of paper to tear, then taking another piece of paper and folding it over and over again. Let a child try to tear this piece. It’s almost impossible! How do you think God makes us stronger through all the bends in our paths—through problems and struggles that come to us in our lives?
- Some fish travel together through the sea in what are called schools. They find strength in huge numbers of fish moving in the same direction, finding food and fighting off enemies together. How can we get stronger by spending time together with family and friends who know and follow God?
SALTY STRENGTH

What You’ll Need
- watercolor paper (or card stock)
- squeeze bottles of glue
- salt
- watercolor paints (or food coloring)
- cups of water
- paintbrushes (or eyedroppers)
- paper towels
- (optional: trays)

What You’ll Do
Give each child a piece of paper and access to glue, salt, paints, and brushes. Let each child make a design on their papers with the glue. Suggest a wave design to illustrate the waves Peter encountered on the sea when he saw Jesus walking out to him. When they are finished making a design, let them shake salt all over their papers onto the glue designs. Then they should shake off the excess salt. **Tip:** Having trays for each child can help with cleanup and reusing the salt in this project. You can even make foil trays by folding up the edges of big foil rectangles.

Use the discussion questions at this time so the glue can dry a little. Then let the kids wet their brushes and dip them into the paint. Show them how to lightly touch their brushes or drip paint onto the salt-covered glue designs. Explain to the kids that they can drop a little paint and then watch and wait—the salt will help the paint to spread along the designs. Kids can keep painting as much of their papers as they wish.

Special Needs Tip: For younger children or children with fine-motor difficulties, use brushes with thick handles.

What You’ll Say
What’s today’s Deep Sea Discovery? (God STRENGTHENS me and is with me!) The Bible tells us that God is our strength and our shield. We can trust Him because He always helps us. He helped Noah and his family on the ark, He helped Jonah in the belly of a huge fish, and He helped Peter walk across the water. He will help you too! **ASK:**
- Think about a time when you felt God helping you. What was the problem and how did He help?
- The strength we get from God can make beautiful things happen, just like the salt helps carry the paint drops to color our pictures. Have you ever helped to do something awesome for somebody? How did God’s strength help you do that?
- Peter wasn’t strong all the time. He jumped out of the boat, but then the wind and the waves in the stormy sea made him feel afraid. Think about a time when you were afraid. Is it OK to feel afraid? (yes)
- How can knowing who God is help you do hard things, even when you are afraid?
ACTIVITIES & MORE
LEADER’S CARDS
PRESCHOOL
FLOATING FRUIT EXPERIMENT

What You’ll Need
several kinds of unpeeled fruit including tangerines, lemons, limes, bananas, and apples
water
clear plastic container (large enough to allow several items to float in it)
paring knife (keep out of children’s reach)
(optional: lemon juice)

Preparation
Just before class, peel a few examples of each kind of fruit (try to keep the halves of the citrus fruit peels intact). Cut some of the other citrus fruit into halves with the peel still on. Cut an unpeeled apple into 8 wedge slices. Cut one banana into 1 "-thick circular slices. (You may want to soak the apples and bananas in lemon juice to prevent them from turning brown.) Retain some of each fruit whole.

What You’ll Do
Fill the plastic container about 2/3 full of water. Lay out the selection of fruit on a table, and let children touch and examine the pieces and tell the names of the fruit. Then as you name and point to each fruit, ask the children to vote by a show of hands for which fruit will float. Put a whole sample of each fruit into the container, one by one. Then ASK: Which pieces of fruit will float? Will the pieces float the same as the whole fruit? Let each child take a turn selecting a piece of fruit to put into the container. Then show them the citrus peel halves and put those into the container as well.

Special Needs Tip: Model how to drop the items into the water so as not to create a big splash. Be aware of any children who may have assistive devices that cannot get wet.

What You’ll Say
After doing the floating experiment, SAY: What’s today’s Deep Sea Discovery? (God STRENGTHENS me!) Today you’ll learn about the Bible story of Peter walking to Jesus on the water. We just saw some things that were able to float on top of the water, and some things that weren’t. The tiny parts that make up water are called molecules. Can you say that big word, molecule? Let kids repeat the word. Molecules are smaller than a tiny drop of water. They are so tiny, you can’t even see them. But they are very strong when they hold onto each other. They are strong enough to hold up much bigger things—this strength is part of the reason things are able to float. The more water there is, the stronger it gets, and even big things can float on top of it. ASK:

• What was different about the pieces of fruit that were able to float?
• Did small pieces of fruit float better than bigger, heavier pieces? Why do you think so?
• Did the peels float by themselves? Watch what happens when we put some things in the peels. (Add some fruit pieces into the peel halves.) What is happening? Why do you think it’s happening?

Special Needs Tip: Remember to acknowledge and encourage all answers. Children, especially very young learners and those with learning delays, will not have all the correct answers, but the point is to encourage curiosity and the wonder of learning about God’s amazing world.
WALKING ON WATERCOLORS

What You’ll Need
- watercolor paper (big enough to allow both feet of a child to fit on it)
- crayons
- watercolor paint trays
- paintbrushes
- cups of water
- paper towels
- marker

What You’ll Do

Make sure all surfaces are protected. Set out cups of water, paper towels, crayons, paintbrushes, and paint. Give each child a piece of watercolor paper, and instruct them to put it on the floor. They should take off their shoes (and socks, if desired) and place their feet on the paper. Instruct kids to use crayons to trace the outline around each foot. Then instruct children how to paint over the whole paper with watercolor paint. Give them these 1, 2, 3 instructions: 1) Dip—dip their brushes into a cup of water; 2) Drip—drip some water from the brush onto a watercolor paint color of their choice; 3) Double-Swash—swish the paintbrush onto the color; then swish it again onto the paper to spread the color around. Encourage children to paint over the crayon lines and watch what happens. Let them paint their whole pages. When the children are finished painting, helpers can help children use markers to put their names in the corner of their papers and to write “God strengthens me—like Peter!” at the top of their papers.

Special Needs Tip: Diving Buddies can help with the tracing.

What You’ll Say

Talk to the children as they are finishing their pictures. What’s today’s Deep Sea Discovery? (God STRENGTHENS me!) We saw how the tiny parts of water hold together and get strong enough to push up big pieces of fruit. Even in your pictures, the water drops hold together. When we hold onto each other, we get strong too. And when we hold onto God, He gives us BIG strength to help us do things that are hard to do. In the Bible story you are learning about today, Peter was afraid, but Jesus held onto Peter and helped him feel stronger. ASK:

- What things are scary to you?
- What do you do when you are afraid? Do you ever ask God for help?
- What makes you feel strong? Do you think God is able to make you stronger?

S&S® Worldwide Craft Option

Children will have fun watching water drops stick together and spread color all over these Color Diffusing Sealife shapes—with 4 different sealife designs precut from color diffusion paper. Colors mix and mingle when you squirt, spray, and splatter liquid watercolor or food coloring over designs. Approx. 7” x 10”. Pack of 48. Paint sold separately. Item STL-SD299. To order: Call 800.243.9232 or visit standard.sssw.com.
BATH-TIME BRAVERY

Props: washcloth, rubber ducky or another small bath toy

[COOPER enters, shaking as if afraid, and greets LEADER nervously. COOPER has a washcloth tucked in his collar and is carrying a rubber ducky or another small bath toy in his mouth. He sets down the bath toy in front of him. LEADER takes the washcloth.]

LEADER: [concerned] Oh, Cooper. You're shaking! What's the matter?

COOPER: [quietly] I'm s-s-scared.

LEADER: [petting Cooper gently] Cooper, why are you scared? We're your friends. [gesturing to the kids] Look at all your friends here.

COOPER: I heard that we're going to be doing hard things today, so I came prepared to do the hardest thing I could think of.

LEADER: What's that, Cooper? What are you planning to do?

COOPER: [starts shaking again] I'm ready to take a bath.

LEADER: Oh, Cooper. You must not like baths.

COOPER: No, I don't! Baths are really hard for me. [looks at the children] Is anyone else going to take a bath . . . I mean, as the hard thing to do today?

LEADER: [laughs gently] Cooper, no one is going to take a bath here today. But we are learning that God helps us do hard things. Kids, what are some things that are hard for you? [LEADER lets kids share their answers, giving prompts as necessary.]

COOPER: Wow, those are some hard things! Almost as hard as taking a bath.

LEADER: Cooper, you don’t need to take a bath here today, but next time you do, God will help you. God strengthens us. That means He makes us strong, even when we have to do things that are hard for us. He even promises to be with us.

COOPER: Even when we take a bath? Even when our fur is all wet and we’re cold and we think the water might get in our ears? Even when that awful shampoo takes off all the wonderful dog smell? [shivers]

LEADER: [smiling] Even then.

COOPER: Wow. I never realized God would be with me in the bathtub. Maybe I don’t need to be so scared.

LEADER: Maybe not.

COOPER: [His voice is growing stronger.] After all, it’s just a little water and shampoo. God is stronger than those things.

LEADER: That’s right, Cooper.

COOPER: [sounding strong and confident] I’m going to do it! [COOPER grabs his bath toy in his mouth. Then he sets it back down again and speaks a little more cautiously.] Will you pray for me?

LEADER: Sure I will. Cooper. Let’s pray right now. [LEADER and COOPER bow their heads.] God, thank you for being with Cooper and strengthening him. Please help him to do the hard thing and take his bath. Amen.

COOPER: Thank you! I’m going home and get a bath. [COOPER picks up his bath toy in his mouth again and runs off.]

LEADER: [waving] Good-bye, Cooper! I hope it goes well!
SNACKS & GAMES
LEADER’S CARDS
ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN

PELICAN PIER
SNACKS & GAMES
LEADER’S CARDS
ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN

25 min
MAKING WAVES

What You’ll Need (for 1 serving)
2 gluten-free graham cracker squares
2 gummy bears
4 tbs blue frosting
plastic knife
paper plate

What You’ll Do
1. Give each kid a paper plate, a plastic knife, and 2 graham cracker squares. Have kids spread blue frosting on graham crackers, using the tip of the knife to make waves.
2. Let kids add gummy bears on 1 cracker before eating.

What You’ll Say
SAY: What’s today’s Deep Sea Discovery? (God STRENGTHENS me and is with me!) Jesus gave Peter strength when Peter was afraid. And God strengthens us too! God helps us do hard things that we can’t do on our own. Let’s thank Him for His love and for being with us wherever we go!

PRAY: Dear God, thank You for this food. Thank You for being with us and for helping us to do things that aren’t always easy. Help us to serve You by encouraging others. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Option
Use regular graham crackers in place of gluten-free if gluten sensitivities aren’t a problem. If children have dairy allergies, consider using the gummy bears and graham crackers only, and allow kids to “sail” the rafts over a bed of cotton balls or blue crepe paper.
**SINK OR SWIM**

**What You’ll Need (for 1 serving)**
- 1 cup blue Jell-O®
- 2 bear-shaped graham crackers
- 2 tsp whipped cream topping
- blue food coloring
- plastic spoon

**What You’ll Do**
1. Give each kid a Jell-O cup and a spoon. Have kids put the whipped cream topping on their Jell-O. Add a drop or two of blue food coloring and let kids stir the whipped cream to make waves.
2. Add graham cracker bears (or gummy bears) to the Jell-O before eating.

**What You’ll Say**
**SAY:** What’s today’s Deep Sea Discovery? (God STRENGTHENS me and is with me!) Jesus gave Peter strength when Peter was afraid. And God strengthens us too! God helps us do hard things that we can’t do on our own. Let’s thank Him for His love and for being with us wherever we go!

**PRAY:** Dear God, thank You for this food. Thank You for being with us and for helping us to do things that aren’t always easy. Help us to serve You by encouraging others. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

**Option**
Make this a gluten-free snack by substituting gummy bears for bear-shaped crackers. Use bananas as “foam” if students are allergic to dairy.
**What You'll Need**

- 12-muffin muffin tins (1 for every group of 6–8 kids)
- Water
- Ping-pong balls (several per group)
- Coins (1 per group)
- Parking cone

**Preparation**

Fill each cup in the muffin tins with about 1” of water. Randomly place a coin in one cup of each tin. Place the tins in a line, leaving about 3–4” in between. Use the cone to mark a line about 5’ away from the tins.

**What You'll Do**

1. Divide kids into groups of 6–8. Refer to the muffin tins and show that one cup in each contains a coin. That’s the cup they will be aiming for.
2. Give each group several ping-pong balls. At your signal, kids will take turns trying to toss the balls into the cups containing the coins. A player should toss the balls until she lands a ball in the cup with the coin or until she runs out of balls. She should then go retrieve the balls and hand them to the next person in line.
3. If you’d like, establish a point system (5 points for the cup with the coin and 1 point for the other cups). Play for a designated amount of time, and then declare a winning team.

**What You’ll Say**

**SAY:** What's today’s Deep Sea Discovery? (God STRENGTHENS me and is with me!) Jesus had 12 disciples, but only one of them walked to Jesus on the water. And when that disciple got scared and began to sink, God strengthened him! And God strengthens us too! **ASK:**

- Have you ever felt like you were sinking—not in water, but in life?
- When has God helped you do something that was hard or scary?
- When have you helped someone else do something that was hard or scary?
WATER BALLOON RACE

What You’ll Need
large (or medium) balloons (1 for every 2 kids)
water
2 parking cones
laundry baskets (or trash bags)

Preparation
Fill balloons with water and tie closed. Place them in a basket until you’re ready to use them. Place cones in your playing area, about 20’ apart.

What You’ll Do
1. Group kids in pairs. Have them stand back-to-back and link arms.
2. Have pairs line up near the starting cone. Place a water balloon between the backs of the first pair in each group.
   At your signal, pairs will race (arms linked, balloon between their backs) around the far cone and back.
3. Chances are, many of the balloons will burst. When that happens, the pair is out of the race and should go back to cheer on the remaining pairs. If the balloon doesn’t burst, the pair returns to the end of the line and gets to try again.

What You’ll Say
SAY: What’s today’s Deep Sea Discovery? (God STRENGTHENS me and is with me!) It felt pretty awkward to walk with a balloon between you and your partner. But can you imagine what it would feel like to walk on water? Peter did! And when he got scared and began to sink, God strengthened him! And God strengthens us too!
ASK:
• Have you ever felt like you were sinking—not in water, but in life?
• When has God helped you do something that was hard or scary?
• When have you helped someone else do something that was hard or scary?
DIVE! DIVE!

What You’ll Need
- plastic 2-liter bottles with lids (1 per pair of kids; remove wrappers)
- packets of ketchup (or soy sauce) (1 packet per pair)
- water
- bowl

Preparation
Fill the bottles nearly to the top, leaving 5" or so of air. Put lids on bottles. Test the packets of ketchup to find those that contain at least some air pockets. To do so, place each packet in a bowl of water, and discard those that sink to the bottom. (Since soy sauce packets are see-through, you can tell merely by looking whether they contain any air.) Practice this activity ahead of time so you are comfortable with it.

What You’ll Do
1. Divide kids into pairs. Give each pair a bottle of water and a packet of ketchup.
2. Have kids remove the lids from the bottles and carefully place their packets inside. Have them work together to twist the lids on as tightly as possible.
3. Let kids take turns squeezing their bottles and observing what happens. When the air inside the bottle is compressed (squeezed), the packets should sink.

What You’ll Say
SAY: What's today’s Deep Sea Discovery? (God STRENGTHENS me and is with me!) Peter bravely walked to Jesus on the water. But when he felt the pressure of what was going on around him, Peter got scared and began to sink. God strengthened him! And God strengthens us too! ASK:

• Have you ever felt like you were sinking—not in water, but in life?
• When has God helped you do something that was hard or scary?
• When have you helped someone else do something that was hard or scary?
PRESCHOOL STUDENT BOOK

Tide Pool Playland

STICKERS! PUZZLES! ACTIVITIES! AND MORE!

25 min
COLOR the picture and GLUE wood pieces on the boat as you LISTEN to the Bible story found in Matthew 14.

- What did Peter want to do?
- What happened when Peter looked at the waves?
- How did Jesus help Peter?

God STRENGTHENS me and is with me!
God helps me do hard things!

TRACE these words to remember how God helps us do hard things.

BRAVE  GOD  JESUS  HELP

I can serve God by encouraging others.

Good job!
Jesus is with you!
I’ll be your friend.
God loves you!
Keep trying!

Fill the spaces with STICKERS to show encouraging words we can say to others.
Jesus strengthens Peter in the storm.
(Matthew 14)

Jesus sent His disciples out in a boat so He could be alone to pray. During the night, the disciples saw a figure coming toward them on the water. They were terrified! Then a voice said, “It is I.” Peter knew it was Jesus! He got out of the boat, and walked on the water to Jesus. But then Peter became afraid and started to sink. Jesus reached down, caught Peter, and gave him the strength he didn’t have on his own.

Jesus strengthens Peter in the storm.
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Jesus sent His disciples out in a boat so He could be alone to pray. During the night, the disciples saw a figure coming toward them on the water. They were terrified! Then a voice said, “It is I.” Peter knew it was Jesus! He got out of the boat, and walked on the water to Jesus. But then Peter became afraid and started to sink. Jesus reached down, caught Peter, and gave him the strength he didn’t have on his own.

Write a word or draw a face on each footprint to show some of the feelings Peter probably had.

What do you think? Is each thing listed NOT HARD, KIND OF HARD, or SUPER HARD?

Counting to 10 in Spanish
Not Hard

Making new friends
Not Hard

Talking about Jesus
Not Hard

Playing soccer
Not Hard

Telling the truth
Not Hard

God will help you do hard things for Him—all you have to do is ask! Check out Psalm 28:7 and say it in your own words. Remember, God STRENGTHENS you and is with you!

Q: What lies on the bottom of the ocean and shakes?
A: A nervous wreck.
Service Challenge

You can serve God by encouraging others. Even small things can make a BIG difference! Read this list and add some ideas of your own.

- Hug someone for no reason
- Tell your parents you love them
- Make a card for someone who’s sick
- Write a thank-you letter to a teacher
- Teach a younger sibling something new
- Be a friend to someone you don’t know
- Smile at 5 different people today

Now choose which thing you will do, and circle it. Then use the journal on the next page to write about how it went!

Tell how you served God by encouraging others!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT I DID</th>
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PRETEEN STUDENT BOOK
Jesus strengthens Peter in the storm.  
(Matthew 14)

Jesus sent his disciples out in a boat so He could be alone to pray. During the night, the disciples saw a figure coming toward them, walking on the water! They were terrified! Then a voice said, "It is I." Peter knew it was Jesus! He got out of the boat and walked on the water to Jesus. When Peter saw the waves around him, he became afraid and started to sink. Jesus reached down, caught Peter, and gave him the strength he didn't have on his own.

Peter was a fisherman, a hard worker with a strong back. He spent his life on and around the water. But not in this way! There he was, standing on top of the water. Beyond amazing. When Peter realized what was going on, he lost his cool. Who wouldn't? Jesus took Peter's hand and gave him strength, but not just physical strength—strength that would last much longer than one night. Talk with a friend about each of these questions.

What did Peter learn about himself that night?
What did Peter learn about the other disciples?
What did Peter learn about Jesus?

Peter was a fisherman, a hard worker with a strong back. He spent his life on and around the water. But not in this way! There he was, standing on top of the water. Beyond amazing. When Peter realized what was going on, he lost his cool. Who wouldn't? Jesus took Peter's hand and gave him strength, but not just physical strength—strength that would last much longer than one night. Talk with a friend about each of these questions.

What did Peter learn about himself that night?
What did Peter learn about the other disciples?
What did Peter learn about Jesus?

PSALM 28:7 SAYS that God is our STRENGTH and our SHIELD. In Bible times, soldiers used shields to protect themselves in battle. If somebody came at you with a sword, you held your shield in front of you and WHAM!—the sword struck the shield and not you.

If you think about it, life can be like a battle. That's probably not too hard for you to imagine. We all face things that seem bigger than us, harder than what we're able to take on. But the Bible tells us that God is with us in those battles, giving us strength and protecting us. Can you think about a time when you need God's strength and protection? Chances are, you can probably name plenty of times, and that's OK because God WANTS to be there for you and with you!

Take a minute and talk to God. Thank Him for loving you enough to stand with you in the battles of life. Ask Him for courage to do the things that seem too hard. Remember, whatever battle you're in, whatever storm you're facing, God STRENGTHENS you and is with you!
You can serve God by encouraging others. Even small things can make a BIG difference! Read this list and add some ideas of your own.

- Give a sincere compliment
- Teach a younger sibling something new
- Tell your parents you love them
- Help a neighbor with yard work
- Post or send an encouraging message
- Thank a police officer, teacher, or pastor
- Help someone who is struggling
- My ideas

Now choose which thing you will do, and circle it. Then use the journal on the next page to write about how it went!

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<td></td>
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Write how you served God by encouraging others. Circle when you did it, how it went, and whether or not you’d like to do it again.

GOD STRENGTHENS ME!

SERVICE JOURNAL

DAY 3

JESUS DIED ON a cross to pay for the sins of the world. After God raised Him from the dead, Jesus wanted everyone to understand why He came to earth. One morning, Jesus saw some of His disciples fishing, but they hadn’t caught any fish. Jesus told them to throw their net on the other side of the boat. When they did, they couldn’t hold all the fish they caught! Afterwards they came ashore to have a special breakfast with Jesus. Jesus told Peter to love God and love others—just like He does. Jesus loves the disciples—and everyone! (John 21)
DESERT, SEA, GENNESARET

1. In your group, read aloud the portion of today's Bible story you've been assigned. Then discuss as a group the related questions.

   DESERT (MATTHEW 14:13-23)
   - Who did Jesus strengthen? Was His healing or strengthening more physical, mental, or emotional?
   - How specifically did He supply strength? How does this apply to your life?

2. SEA (MATTHEW 14:24-33)
   - Who did Jesus strengthen? Was His healing or strengthening more physical, mental, or emotional?
   - How specifically did He supply strength? How does this apply to your life?

3. GENNESARET (MATTHEW 14:34-36)
   - Who did Jesus strengthen? Was His healing or strengthening more physical, mental, or emotional?
   - How specifically did He supply strength? How does this apply to your life?
THREE STRENGTHS

In your group, read aloud the portion of today’s Bible story you’ve been assigned. Then discuss as a group the related questions.

1. **DESERT (MATTHEW 14:13-23)**
   - Who did Jesus strengthen? Was His healing or strengthening more physical, mental, or emotional?
   - How specifically did He supply strength? How does this apply to your life?

2. **SEA (MATTHEW 14:24-33)**
   - Who did Jesus strengthen? Was His healing or strengthening more physical, mental, or emotional?
   - How specifically did He supply strength? How does this apply to your life?

3. **GENNESARET (MATTHEW 14:34-36)**
   - Who did Jesus strengthen? Was His healing or strengthening more physical, mental, or emotional?
   - How specifically did He supply strength? How does this apply to your life?
ENCOURAGE OTHERS

courage (verb): to make strong. From en- which means “to make or to put in” and courage which means “bravery, determination, and confidence to face fear and danger”

Encouragement is about more than being nice. It’s about putting courage and confidence into a person, enabling him or her to do whatever needs to be done! Jesus strengthened people physically (through healing and provision of food) and He also strengthened them spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. To encourage people is to put a courage and confidence in them that wasn’t there before.

DISCUSS: How can we serve others by helping equip them mentally, emotionally, and spiritually for whatever they’re going through? How can we help build another person’s confidence and faith in real, meaningful ways? Be specific.

As a small group pray together, focusing on two things:

1. Pray for situations in your own lives in which you need encouragement and spiritual provision.

2. Pray for friends or loved ones who need encouragement and spiritual provision to face tough situations.