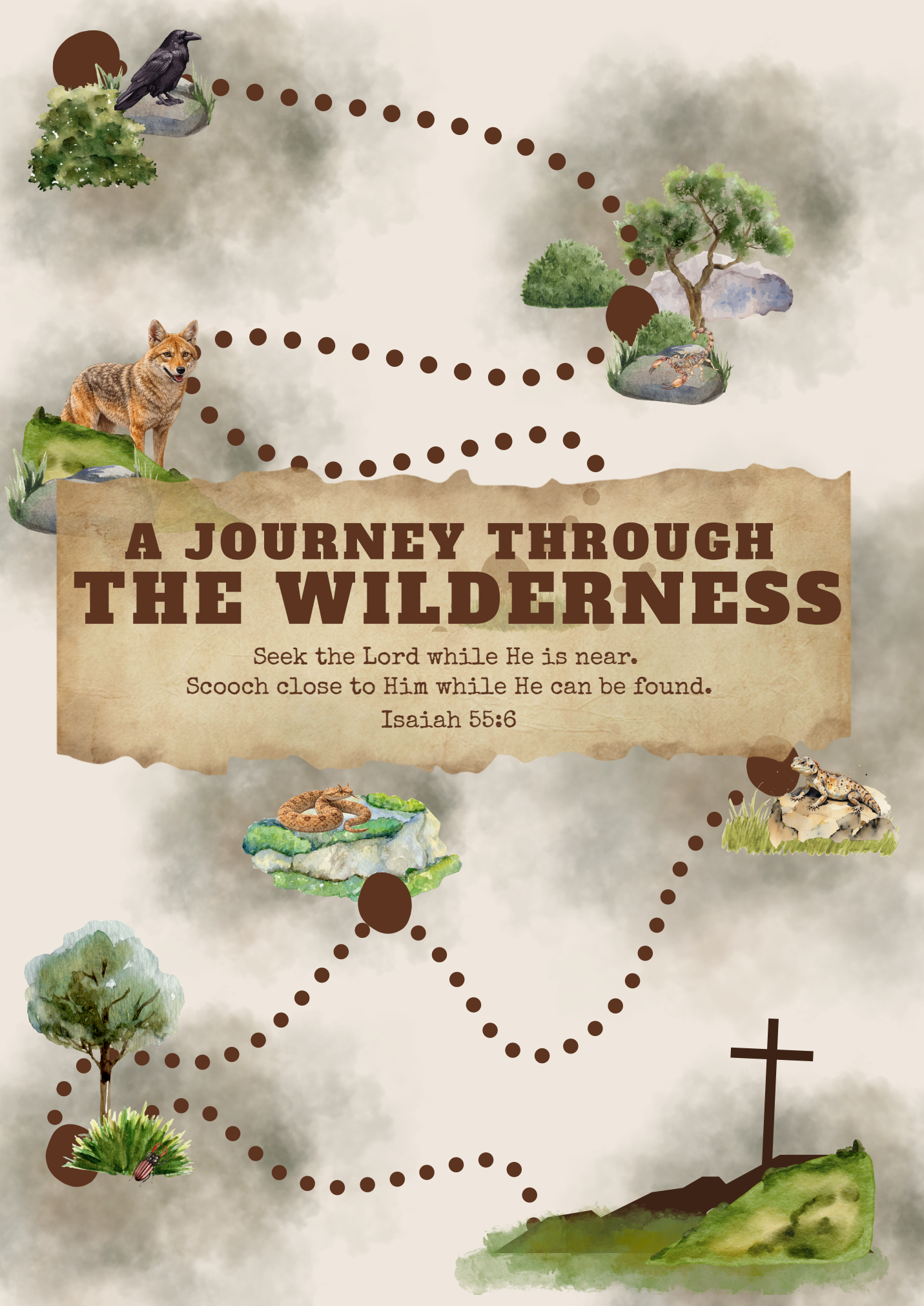
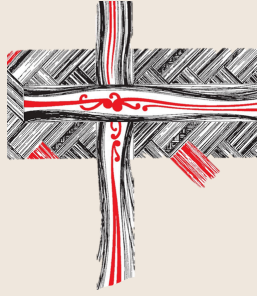


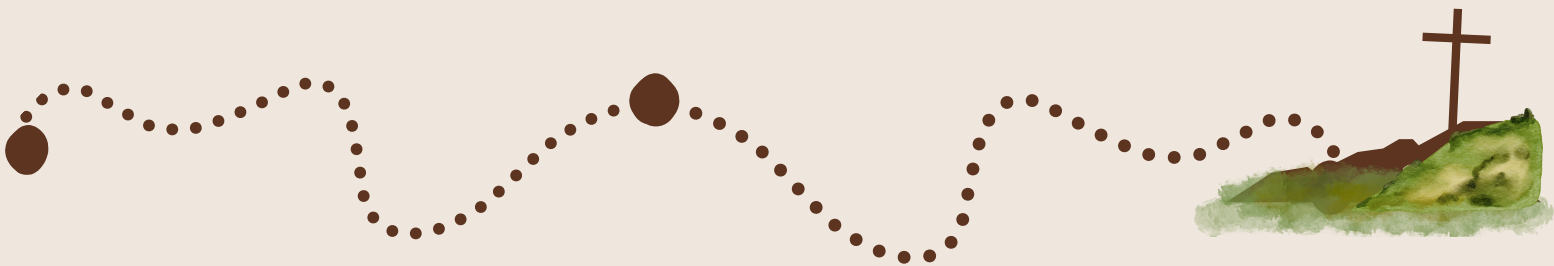


A JOURNEY THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

Seek the Lord while He is near.
Scooch close to Him while He can be found.
Isaiah 55:6



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JOURNEY THROUGH THE WILDERNESS



Nau mai haere mai, welcome to this 7 week series on the journey toward Easter we call Lent. What is Lent? Lent is about turning away from anything that's getting in the way of God's Way in our life. It's about taking some time to think about what's going on in our hearts and minds and clearing the way to following Jesus. Over these 7 weeks, tamariki will learn about how to draw near to God and follow the Way of Jesus, while following Jesus journey towards the cross. If you are new to Lent, kei te pai! There will be plenty of info and tips along the way.

Preparing to Lead: Take some time to read Matthew 4:1-11. Watch [this Bible Project video](#) on the biblical theme of Wilderness. In which fresh ways is God speaking to you about Wilderness? What might this journey through the Wilderness with Jesus hold for you / wonder?

This curriculum is designed to provide teaching lessons and activities to deepen learning. Let me encourage you to find a good rhythm to your programme that includes more than what is covered here. There's a great planning resource on our website that will help you refine and reflect on your sessions. For more tips on how to set your sessions up for success, check out the STRANDZ website.

For this 7 week series, you might want to include decor or themed spaces that tie in with exploring the wilderness. Tamariki are really into shows like "Alone" where human limits are tested in the wilderness. Get creative with how you draw on this theme. You'll notice the animals on the cover page, all are actually present in the Judean wilderness!

Each akomanga/lesson has the lectionary scripture reading, as well as 7 lesson components, each with a corresponding symbol:



Whakaaro
Reflection



Kupu Hou
New Words



Matau
Hook



Kōrero
Story



Karakia
Prayer



Tākaro
Play



Hanga
Create

created by:



WEEK 1: INTO THE WILDERNESS

MATT 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The accuser came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."' Then the accuser took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."' Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."' Again, the accuser took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."' Then the accuser left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.



Whakāro/ Thoughts for leaders

Our theme for this Lent season, is the idea of a journey through the wilderness. If you haven't done so already have a look at [the bible project video](#) on the biblical theme of wilderness.

The wilderness is a place of struggling. It's the reality that we aren't home yet. But in the Bible, time and time again. God meets His people in the wilderness.

Over and over again, we see how God uses the tragedy and sadness of the wilderness to prepare His people for future garden life, (the Biblical theme of garden being connect to heaven.)

So in a shocking twist, the wilderness, is in fact the place where God meets with His people and transformation happens. It's where we become the people who are ready to really enjoy the future garden life that God promises.

Have a listen to [this podcast](#) on Jesus' journey through the wilderness.

Have a think about which wilderness you are in right now.

What are the trials and temptations you face?

In which ways might God be meeting you in the wilderness?

What helps you hold on to the garden hope of future life with Jesus?



Kupu Hou/New Words

Kia tata mai: Come close to me

Try this phrase when you start today's kōrero.

Tata (close) is also in our memory verse for this series.

"Rapua a Ihowa i tona kitenga ai; karangatia atu kei TATA ana ia." Ikaia 55:6 (Isaiah 55:6)

Throughout this Lent wilderness journey Jesus calls to our tamariki "Kia tata mai."

WEEK 1: INTO THE WILDERNESS



Matau/Hook

Pull out the wilderness map/banner.

Ask: What might this be for?

Explain: We will be going on a special journey into the wilderness with Jesus.

Ask tamariki to count the dots on the map, "what might they mean?" (7 stops on our journey, over 7 weeks.)

Ask: Have a look at where we are heading. What might the cross symbol at the end mean? And have a look at what's at the first dot, where we are starting today? Where else have we seen a sneaky snake in the Bible? What was he up to?



Kōrero/Story

Say: We call this wilderness journey towards Easter, Lent. Lent is a special time that churches all over the world travel in our hearts and minds together every year in the weeks before Easter.

We will be learning about what Lent is, why we celebrate it, and why it's so awesome over the next 7 weeks.

But today we'll read about Jesus' real life wilderness time.

Read: Matthew 4:1-11

Ask: I wonder how it felt for Jesus to be without food for 40 days?

I wonder how Jesus felt at the start of His journey?

I wonder how he felt at the end?

I wonder what gave him hope and courage to keep going when the accuser was giving Him such a hard time?

Some people think that the best way to summarise what the accuser was saying to Jesus was "Don't be a loser"

Ask: Has anyone ever said that to you?

I wonder why it's so hard to resist the temptation to do the wrong thing when someone says "Don't be a loser?"

Say: When people do and say mean things to us, it's really hard to make the right choices. In fact no human has ever managed to make the right choice every time EXCEPT Jesus. In the wilderness He is going through a big test, a test that every other human being had failed, and guess what... He passes!

I wonder what it means that Jesus, God with skin on, is the only human to ever pass the accusers test?

Teaching Tip

It takes tamariki, on average 10 seconds to come up with an answer to a patai/question. As adults we are so tempted to jump in with more patai or thoughts. Count to ten in your head after asking a question. Even if some tamariki are ready to answer, give everyone a window for thought. Awkward silences are your friends.

WEEK 1: INTO THE WILDERNESS



Tākaro/Play

Surviving the Wilderness

You'll need: 2 x backpacks, wilderness survival gear i.e. torches, hats, sunblock, maps, compass, matches (empty box!) etc, PLUS some random NON essentials. Toys, lollies etc and "Obstacles" cushions, cones, etc.

Ask: What do we need in the wilderness? As a team you've got 2 minutes to pack a bag, choosing ONLY 5 items and be at the starting line.

After bags packed

Ask: What might we need to survive a wilderness journey of our hearts with Jesus, a journey that might take us through hard times?

In Jesus' story, what helped him to survive the things that the accuser said to Him?

Game cont....One child from each group to wear the back pack, blindfold them and have their team call them through a "wilderness" of obstacles. Do this one team at a time. Then get tamariki to call a leader through. Leader to "give up" at various points saying "I'm a loser!" "This is too hard" and get tamariki to call out encouragement. You might like to set up an "accuser" leader to tempt you with treats.



Karakia/Prayer

"Jesus, you invite us into the wilderness. Wilderness can be hard and scary as well as exciting. Help us to remember, that you faced the wilderness and you won the ultimate battle against the accuser. You are the best leader to have in the wilderness. Keep us close to you, Kia tata mātou ki a koe. Āmine."



Hanga/Create

Lenten Koru

You will need: Copies of the whānau lent journal (one per family), air dry clay (400g per whānau) small birthday cake candles, hard surface (i.e. icecream container lid) that clay can be taken away to dry on.

Have tamariki roll out clay into a long sausage and coil it up into a koru shape.

Then press the base of the birthday candle into the clay koru 40 times, so there are 40 evenly spaced candle shaped holes in the top of the koru.

In combination with the journal, whānau can journey toward Easter with a short daily practice of moving the Lenten candle forward one space and lighting it, then completing the simple reflection in the journal.

WEEK 2: JESUS OUR MOUNTAIN GUIDE

MATT 17:1-9

17 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. 3 Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 4 Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' 5 While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!' 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Get up and do not be afraid.' 8 And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. 9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, 'Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.'



Whakāro/ Thoughts for leaders

Check out [this video](#) from the Bible Project about the meaning of Mountains in the Bible.

Here is a Lenten blessing for you as you prepare to gift your time and skills to the tamariki of your community:

"Blessed are you, ready to open yourself to a new joy, a doorway that until now has been hidden.

In this culture of acquisition and gain, blessed are you who desire fresh ears to hear what might be a bit too loud. Who take the next step to turn it down a notch and make more space for God.

Who discipline yourself, with time, intention, and hope, anticipating God to show up in your discomfort. Trusting that when we need God, God promises to be there.

God, give me courage, give me strength, give me hunger for You. Let this set time of less be a chance for more of You.

Let this fast be an entrance into the discernment I desire, the divine presence I'm longing for, and the hope to will what You will, oh God, to be who You've called me to be."

- Kate Bowler



Kupu Hou/New Words

Maunga

mounga (Taranaki dialect)

Both mean mountain.

Puke = hill

Rohe = area

whakarongo = listen

Take time to notice the maunga and puke around your neighbourhood and town. What are their stories?

WEEK 2: JESUS OUR MOUNTAIN GUIDE



Matau/Hook

Resources: wilderness map/banner and mountain image (in Weekly Banner Images Doc). Before the session starts, glue the mountain over the rocks to the left of the second dot.

Ask: Where is our Lent Journey through the wilderness with Jesus taking us this week? Who can spot the second dot on the map? What can you see next to it?

Reminder: Remember, this journey in the wilderness is called “Lent” and it’s about drawing close to God, and getting rid of anything that might get in the way of us being close to Him and following His way.

Say: To get ready for our mountain journey let’s do some stretches and warm ups! (Get the wriggles out before kōrero time)



Kōrero/Story

Ask: Who has ever climbed a mountain?

What did you need on your trip?

Did you have someone to show you the way?

Say: Just like in Aotearoa, mountains were special, often sacred or tapu places to the people of Israel.

When Jews thought of mountains, or looked at mountains, they saw places where heaven and earth met.

Ask: Which maunga do we have in our rohe/area?

Have you ever seen clouds low enough to touch a mouna/maunga? Does it make it seem like heaven and earth are touching? What might happen when heaven and earth meet?

Say: In many stories in the Bible, when people go up mountains, to the place where heaven and earth meet, they have strange, scary or wonderful encounters..... with God! Let’s follow Jesus today up a mountain and see what happens.

Read: Matthew 17:1-9

Say: Imagine you are James, Peter or John and you get down the mountain to your other mates, tell the person next to you what happened up the mountain!

Say: God showed up! And when He did, he said something amazing “This guy is my Son! I’m stoked with Him, **listen to Him**” God is telling John, James and Peter, listen to Jesus, do what He says, let Him be your guide.

Ask: What do you think John, James and Peter thought about that?

Say: As we journey through the wilderness, whether it’s during Lent or any other hard times in our life, even the good ones, these are great words of advice.

Ask: Jesus doesn’t walk around in a body here on Earth today, giving us loud instructions like a classroom teacher or a parent, so how can we listen to Him.

Teaching Tip

If you have a raised area outside and time/resources/space allows, take the tamariki on a “hike” through obstacles to get to this raised area for the lesson. Is there perhaps a window where you can see out over a large area instead? Don’t forget to informa parents if tamariki will not be in the same place they were dropped off.

WEEK 2: JESUS OUR MOUNTAIN GUIDE



Kōrero/Story continued....

Create a brainstorm poster that may include ideas like: The Bible, wise words from wise people in my life, in dreams, in nature, a still quiet voice inside when we focus and listen.

Remember Lent is a time to really focus on getting close to God. Just like with our friends and family one of the signs that we are close to someone is that we can hear their voice! When we are far away from someone he can't hear them.

Ask: Can you think of a time when you heard Jesus' voice in one of the ways we've brainstormed?



Tākaro/Play

Whakarongo Mai!

Use a whisper voice to give action instructions to the tamariki i.e. hop on one foot, wiggle your nose, high five your neighbour.

You might like to deliberately put some older tamariki further away from you to make it harder, reinforcing the lesson.

Say: raise your hand if it was hard to hear.

Ask: What did you notice?

Who watched what others were doing to get some clues?

That is just like in life, when we are close to people who are close to Jesus, we can see what they are doing and how they live and learn from them!

Who in your life is really close to God and listens to his voice a lot?

What sorts of things do they do that show you they are good at listening to Jesus?



Karakia/Prayer

"Jesus, we want to know your voice and hear it everyday. Show us how we can scooch close to You.

Āmine."



Hanga/Create

Cup Phone:

Have tamariki make cup phones and experiment with voice volume.

Write this week's prayer on one of the cups.

WEEK 3: A DRINK IN THE DESERT

JOHN 4:5-15

⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well.

It was about noon.

⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."



Whakāro/ Thoughts for leaders

'Today's reading actually stretches the whole of John 4, and it's a banger of a story (Take a read!) Jesus' banter with the samiritan woman by the well is amazing on many levels; firstly Jesus comes out and tells **her** he's the messiah. Secondly, although she doesn't walk away fully understanding what he's saying, her testimony radically changes the life of her little village. Many people become followers of Jesus, because her story leads them to Jesus.

Today with the tamariki we'll be focusing on Jesus offer of 'Living water', a phrase used at the time for 'running' water, from a stream or river, fresh and clean rather than potentially stagnant. But Jesus isn't talking about water as we know it. He is talking about the new life that he is offering to anyone, even outcasts of the time like adulterous Samaritan women.

In fact, all the water on earth is just a signpost, a pointer to this water Jesus offers. Water that won't just quench your thirst forever, water that will become a bubbling spring inside you, refreshing you with the new life Jesus is ushering in for the whole world.

And although Jesus doesn't make it clear now, later on, we discover, Jesus is actually referring to God's Spirit! (John 7.37-39) (Adapted from John for Everyone by NT Wright)

Watch [this beautiful bible project video](#) that tracks the theme of life giving water through out the bible.



Kupu Hou/New Words

Wai = water

Rua = container

Wairua = Spirit

Wairua Tapu = Holy Spirit

hiainu = thirsty

Kei te hiainu koe? = Are you thirsty?

WEEK 3: A DRINK IN THE DESERT



Matau/Hook

Resources: wilderness map/banner and well image (in Weekly Banner Images Doc). Before the session starts, glue the well beside the fourth dot.

Ask: Where is our Lent Journey through the wilderness with Jesus taking us this week? Who can spot the fourth dot on the map? What can you see next to it?

Reminder: Remember, this journey in the wilderness is called “Lent” and it’s about drawing close to God, and getting rid of anything that might get in the way of us being close to Him and following His way.



Kōrero/Story

Resources: A bottle of sparkling spring water in the middle of your circle.

Ask: What’s one thing that is really important to take with you on a long hike, especially if it’s hot and dry, like the wilderness we’ve been learning about.

Water! Wai!

Say: Today on our journey with Jesus through the wilderness we are stopping somewhere to get a drink.

Ask: Where does your drinking water come from?

Where did drinking water come from in Jesus’ day?

Say: Wells were where the water came from, and it was the job of the women in households to go and get water early in the morning for her whānau to use during the day. But in today’s story, Jesus turns up in the middle of the day, hot, tired and thirsty. Let’s see what happens...

Read: John 4:5-15

Ask: What is this living water Jesus is offering?

Say: Jesus is offering this woman new life from the inside. A lot of times in the Bible, water is described as “life giving”, and water from God, as water that gives you life that lasts forever. Later on in this story, we find out Jesus that when He is talking about this special living water he’s talking about Wai-rua Tapu, the Holy Spirit, which He sends to live inside His followers.

We’ve talked a lot about following close to Jesus in our Lent, wilderness journey. Last week we talked about learning to hear His voice, even although He isn’t here in a body to speak to us right now. This story tells us, God is so close to us, His Spirit lives in us! Wow! We can hear God’s voice from inside of us. And just like bubbling springs of water, we can bubble over and share the exciting story of Jesus and the Holy Spirit with others! In fact, that’s what this woman did, she left her water jug and ran to her town to tell everyone about Jesus! This good news is like fresh bubbling water spilling out of her! (FINALLY, pour tamariki a cup of the water they’ve been looking at.)

WEEK 3: A DRINK IN THE DESERT



Tākaro/Play

Water relays

You need:

- 1 sponge or cup per team
- 2 bowls per team

Players pass the sponge down a line, squeezing or pouring water into the final bowl. After a set time, measure whose bowl has more water.



Karakia/Prayer

"Jesus, we get thirsty for all sorts of things, our hearts always want more, more, more. Help us to remember that we have a spring of living water inside us, Your Spirit. Help us turn to You, to give us what we need, and not get distracted, grabbing after other stuff. Amen."



Hanga/Create

Kapu Wai

Each tamariki to decorate a drinking glass they can take home, write onto the cup "Whoever drinks the water I give them, will never be thirsty again" John 4:14a. You might want to make a stencil to tape inside the cup so it can be traced.

WEEK 4: THE VALLEY OF SHADOWS

PSALM 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;^[a]
3 he restores my soul.^[b] He leads me in right paths^[c] for his name's sake.
4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley,^[d] I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.
5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
6 Surely^[e] goodness and mercy^[f] shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.^[g]



Whakāro/ Thoughts for leaders

Watch [this clip from NT Wright](#) about the theme of following the Shepherd during Lent.

In the face of the world's encroaching dark places, of our own dark places, it is countercultural to say "I won't be afraid, because Jesus is with me."

As we're on this journey through Lent, towards Easter, remembering Jesus is a good shepherd, is an essential thing to hold onto. Sheep are the perfect analogy here, because I'm told, they are prone to wandering, and useless at meeting their own basic needs. In a dry place like ancient Israel's wilderness, a shepherd was **essential**, unlike Aotearoa, no rogue flocks of roadside goats, would have survived!

"As the story moves us forwards towards the valley of the shadow of death, we look on in awe and wonder as the Good Shepherd goes ahead of us into the darkness. His rod and his staff, two poles of wood, come together in a new pattern, a shape which will etch itself on the heart of the world. We look at the cross and we are comforted." - NT Wright

Does the cross provide you with comfort?



Kupu Hou/New Words

Riv = Valley
Hipi = Sheep
Hepara = Shepherd
arahi = lead, guide

Ko Ihowa toku hepara
God is my shepherd.

WEEK 4: THE VALLEY OF SHADOWS



Matau/Hook

Resources: wilderness map/banner and valley image (in Weekly Banner Images Doc). Before the session starts, glue the valley beside the third dot.

Ask: Where is our Lent Journey through the wilderness with Jesus taking us this week? Who can spot the third dot on the map? What can you see next to it?

Reminder: Remember, this journey in the wilderness is called "Lent" and it's about drawing close to God, and getting rid of anything that might get in the way of us being close to Him and following His way.



Kōrero/Story

Resources: A darkened 'tunnel' (could be made with blankets and chairs/pews)

- A picnic basket with a "feast" inside (easy food to take one and pass it on will work best.)
-

Say: For today's journey, we are going somewhere a bit scary. It's going to be dark, and there might be some scary creatures.

I want you to remember 2 things while you are going through this dark place, hold onto these two things in your mind. You might even want to say them out loud:

1) Jesus is my guide

so.....

2) I don't need to be afraid.

Can you say those two things (give them time to practice)

We are all going through the tunnel together, I wonder what we might find on the other side?

(You can chant the two things as you form a line and walk through the tunnel. On the other side, place a picnic basket. Have tamariki sit in a circle around it)

Say: What's this? A feast!

Hand out kai around the circle. Once everyone is munching read Psalm 23. Jesus Storybook bible has a beautiful version. ([listen here at 11:36](#))

Say: Sometimes in life we go through scary things, a bit like dark scary tunnels or valleys. And when you are in the middle of hard things, God knows it's easy to forget all the wonderful and true and awesome things we've been learning about Him, about Jesus. This Psalm shows us that when we go through hard times, we need to stick with Jesus be close to Him just like we talked about last week.

Who remembers some ways we can be close to God and hear His voice from last week?

WEEK 4: THE VALLEY OF SHADOWS



Kōrero/Story continued....

Hiding God's words in our hearts is one way to keep close to Him when life is scary. Remember 2 weeks ago when Jesus was in the wilderness and the accuser tried to get him to make the wrong choices? Jesus used God's words, which He had said over and over again, hiding them in His heart, and that was how he fought off the accuser.

Ask: What are some dark times you can think of where you might need to remember that Jesus is with you and you don't need to be afraid.

When we see bad things happening

When bad things happen to us.

Are there any other promises in today's Bible reading that would be helpful to hold on to in dark times?

When we go through a hard time, it's really hard to stay focused on God. Just like when we are in the dark, we can't see things clearly. It's easy to feel like God isn't there, but He's still right next to us!



Karakia/Prayer

"Jesus, you are a good shepherd, a great guide on our darkest journeys. Hide your words of hope in our hearts for us to remember when we are afraid. Āmine."



Hanga/Create

Waiata Mai!

Let's hide God's words in our hearts by turning them into a song with actions. Have tamariki work on this in small groups and perform to each other. The goal here is for them to have a waiata they can remember in the dark. They can choose which parts of the Psalm they want to sing about.

WEEK 5: A STINKY CAVE?

JOHN 11: 33-44

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

³⁵ Jesus wept.

³⁶ Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."



Whakāro/ Thoughts for leaders

This week is a heavy one, we're diving into sadness, crying and lament. All part of the journey of Lent and more than that the journey of being a human. Leave a decent chunk of time in the lesson for the story and prayer response time. One of the beautiful gifts this story of Lazarus offers us, is Jesus sitting with His loved ones, in sadness. He could have come quicker and avoided the pain sure, he could have said "Stop being sad, he's just asleep", like he'd said earlier to his disciples in verse 11.

The shortest verse in the bible says a whole lot;
"Jesus wept."

What sadness do you hold today?

Can you share that sadness with Jesus now in prayer?

Can you imagine Him weeping as he hears what's happening?

NT Wright unpacks the idea of Lent as "Weeping Together" in [this video](#) on today's passage.

He parallels Jesus calling Lazarus out, to Jesus' call to us, to get ourselves untied from whatever has bound us up, and walk out to freedom. Jesus calls us from death to life.

Where might you be tied up? What's holding you back from life in its fullness?

How can you walk freely into new life with Jesus?



Kupu Hou/New Words

Tangi ana a Ihu.
Jesus wept.

Tangi can mean; sound, intonation, mourning, grief, sorrow, weeping, lament, salute or wave.

WEEK 5: A STINKY CAVE?



Tākaro/ Play

Resources: A preferably large outdoor area.

"To recap our Lent wilderness journey with Jesus so far, we're going to play the wilderness game.

When I call out a place or direction, do the matching action!

- Mountain! Climb up high! (March on the spot and reach up tall.)
- Snake is coming! Jump back and say "God is my rescuer!"
- Dark creepy valley! Crouch down low and tiptoe quietly.
- Stinky cave! Hold your nose and shuffle slowly.

I might also call out a direction and you'll need to run to touch the boundary in that direction."

Show them the boundary lines for north, south, east and west.

You can increase speed once they get the hang of it, or change instructions part way through i.e. "North" followed quickly by "Snake is coming!" so they stop running north. You might want to do an elimination round, and kids sit out if they get the action wrong or are the slowest. Prizes always good!



Matau/Hook

Resources: wilderness map/banner and cave image (in Weekly Banner Images doc). Before the session starts, glue the valley beside the fifth dot.

Ask: Where is our Lent Journey through the wilderness with Jesus taking us this week? Who can spot the fifth dot on the map? What can you see next to it?

Reminder: Remember, this journey in the wilderness is called "Lent" and it's about drawing close to God, and getting rid of anything that might get in the way of us being close to Him and following His way.



Kōrero/Story

Resources: The Book of Belonging or a copy of "The Shape of Sadness"

Today we're following Jesus to a cave, and not just any cave. People in today's part of the Bible story are telling Jesus, "The cave is going to be stinky! Don't push that stone away to open up the cave, it's stinky because..... there is a dead body in there!"

In those days, people were buried in caves dug into limestone hills, which were sealed with a big rock, so no-one could get in or out. Let's see what happened next.

WEEK 5: A STINKY CAVE?



Kōrero/Story continued.....

Read: John 11:1-45 or "The Shape of Sadness" from Book of Belonging, photocopied in resource folder.

Ask: What surprises you about this story?

What made you smile?

What questions might you have for Jesus after hearing this story?



Hanga/Create & Karakia/Prayer

Resources: Stones/Rocks to paint on (hand sized)

Paint/chalk pens/permanent markers

Basket

Make: Tamariki to paint or draw on a rock something that is heavy or feeling sad for them in life right now.

Pray: "Jesus, you are powerful and amazing, you can bring dead people back to life! And even with all that power, you still like to sit with us and be with us, no matter what we are feeling, even our sad things."

Invite tamariki to pray out loud, in their minds or whisper into their hands something they feel sad about, then put their rock into a basket.

Pray: "Thank you Jesus, you hear our sadness, you are sad with us."

"Thank you Jesus that you also give us hope of a time when you will undo all the yucky and wrong and sad bad things of this world and make all things right. We're really looking forward to that. Like Martha and Mary, we want to see Your Kingdom come here and now!"

Ask: Is there anything that you would like me/us to pray for you specifically?

Pray: Jesus you also invite us, just like Lazarus, into new fresh life, a new way of living free from old ways of doing things, that aren't good for us.

Say: You can raise your hand or tell Jesus in your heart if you'd like a new fresh start, if you'd like to follow Jesus' way. Maybe there are some mistakes heavy on your heart you'd like to tell God about.

Pray: Jesus you forgive us everytime, when we bring our mistakes to You and ask for a fresh start. Thank you for this new life with You. Amen.

WEEK 6: A DONKEY RIDE

MATT 21:1-11

21 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

⁵ “Say to Daughter Zion,

‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”^[a]

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷

They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna^[b] to the Son of David!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”^[c]

“Hosanna^[d] in the highest heaven!”

¹⁰ When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”

¹¹ The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”



Whakāro/ Thoughts for leaders

Palm Sunday is a day to celebrate and party. Hosanna to God in the highest! And next week, when we gather on Sunday, Jesus will be risen, risen indeed! But as we know A LOT happens, between Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem and Him rising from the dead.

The Bible Project unpacks all the tension and the quite bold and deliberate moves Jesus makes in a city where he is being hunted down in [this great podcast](#) (skip to Chapter 4 for the Palm Sunday bit.)

Who do you identify with in today’s reading? Where are you in this story?

Palm Sunday can be a bit awkward when you think about Jesus’ sadness at the end, about what’s at stake, about how the disciples would have been feeling about this big public display, flying in the face of the authorities that wanted Jesus dead.

And then there’s the crowds, Jerusalem rammed with out of towners for Passover, welcoming Jesus with songs and dancing and less than 5 days later are chanting for Him to be crucified.

Palm Sunday is a good reminder that just like the fickle crowds of Jerusalem, we jump from “Hail Him!” to “Nail Him” very quickly. ([Nadia Bolz Weber, says it better here.](#))



Kupu Hou/New Words

Rātapu Nīkau
Palm Sunday

“Ko wai tenei?”
Who is this?”

Ohana i runga rawa.
Hosanna in the highest.

WEEK 6: A DONKEY RIDE



Matau/Hook

Resources: wilderness map/banner and donkey image (in Weekly Banner Images Doc). Before the session starts, glue the donkey beside the sixth dot.

Ask: Where is our Lent Journey through the wilderness with Jesus taking us this week? Who can spot the sixth dot on the map? What can you see next to it?

Reminder: Remember, this journey in the wilderness is called "Lent" and it's about drawing close to God, and getting rid of anything that might get in the way of us being close to Him and following His way.



Kōrero/Story

Say: We are almost at the end of our Lent journey through the wilderness.

Ask: Who knows what we are celebrating next weekend?

And what is Easter about?

Jesus had been announcing the kingdom of God for about 3 years now. Healing people, telling people to turn away from following their own way and to follow Him instead, even if it meant following through confusing, hard, scary things.

And for Jesus and His followers, things were looking pretty scary! The leaders and bosses of the country had got sick of Jesus' good news. Many of them didn't like that Jesus was drawing attention beyond their very proper looking exteriors, to their nasty, selfish and mean hearts. They wanted Jesus to go away so that they could carry on being the bosses of Israel, and of Jerusalem the big city, where God's temple, and (they thought), God's presence was exclusively hanging out.

Jesus and his disciples had left Jerusalem because it was getting dangerous for them but now after raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus does something that surprises his disciples. "I'm going back to Jerusalem!" he says, "Bring me a donkey"

Ask: What on earth is Jesus up to / wonder?

What is going to happen when he arrives in Jerusalem on a donkey?

Read: Matthew 21:1-11 or "A Peculiar Parade" from the Book of Belonging (see resources) They throw him a party? A parade? Wow!

Ask: How would you have felt riding in with so many people happy to see you and singing?

Why do you think Jesus was crying in the middle of a party in His honour?

Say: Jesus is about to go through the hardest scariest part of the wilderness, but it's not out in the dry desert places, it's here, in the big city.

Ask: Have you every felt lonely in a busy place? Or sad in the middle of a party?

WEEK 6: A DONKEY RIDE



Tākaro/Play

Make Way!

Resources: Coats, cardboard or towels, 1 roughly per child.

Using the above items, in teams, tamariki must stand on items, making a path by laying items in front of them as they make their way to the other side. Keep the number of items small, so that they have to grab items from the back and pass them forward and remain huddled together. Each item must be touching the previous one, no throwing items far in front and jumping ahead.

Ask: What's some ways that we can "make way" for Jesus in our lives?

How do we clear a path between us and Him?

How can we celebrate and remember Him as King in our lives?



Karakia/Prayer

"Jesus, you are awesome and deserve the best parade ever! Thank you for leading us through the Lent wilderness and showing us how we can know you and listen to you and be close to you. In this last week until Easter, help us to remember You and follow you and trust you in happy times and in sad times. Amen"



Hanga/Create

Resource: Palm Sunday Colouring Resource, pastels or crayons

Chop up the image of the donkey. Each of the tamariki colour in a piece and then glue it back together.

WEEK 7: SKULL MOUNTAIN

MATT 28:1-10

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²

And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he ⁷ lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has been raised from the dead, ⁸ and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him." This is my message for you.' ⁸ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'



Whakāro/ Thoughts for leaders

The story of Jesus' death and resurrection has undoubtedly changed the course of human history. It's also one of the most familiar. Ask anyone what Christianity is about, most likely they will say it's about a guy called Jesus, and that he died and came back to life. We run the risk with familiar stories, of tuning out and missing what's in front of us. It's surprisingly easy to forget that angels, earthquakes and a resurrection are NOT NORMAL. Take some time to read today's Bible passage and ask God to open your eyes to the wonders of Easter in a fresh way, with eyes and ears like a child hearing this story for the first time.

An Easter Sunday prayer by NT Wright

"You summon us to life
in the midst of death,
peace
in the midst of violence,
praise
in the midst of despair.
Filled once again with your unruly Spirit,
may we answer your summons
and be part of the movement of life."
Amen.



Kupu Hou/New Words

Kua ara te Karaiti!
Christ is risen!

He pono tonu kua ara a ia!
He is risen indeed!

WEEK 7: SKULL MOUNTAIN



Matau/Hook

Resources: wilderness map/banner and “Skull Mountain” words (in Weekly Banner Images Doc). Before the session starts, glue the words next to the cross.

Ask: Where is our Lent Journey through the wilderness with Jesus taking us this week? Who can spot our last dot on the map? What can you see next to it?

We’ve come to the last stop in our Lent Journey, we’ve been all sorts of places with Jesus, including a mountain (if you did the previous series on sermon on the mount you might want to mention this mountain too) Who can remember what mountains symbolised for the Israelites? Heaven and earth meeting. Today we follow Jesus up the toughest wilderness mountain of all. This one is called Golgotha, the Place of the Skull.



Easter Trail

Inspired by the stations of the cross, today’s story will guide tamariki on a trail around your space, hearing and experiencing the parts of the Easter story.

The events of Holy Week, the week leading up to Jesus’ death and resurrection, are normally spread out in readings/services over the week, but odds are, many tamariki are coming to you without knowing any of these details. Now is your chance to give the whole kōrero, to really build understand of why Jesus’ resurrection was such a incredible event. Some of the images might be hard for tamariki to see, if you have sensitive children in your rōpū, ask a parent to accompany them, or walk closely with them and talk them through it.

You will need: To spend time mapping out where the 8 stations will go.

- Get creative, use outside spaces if you can, hidden stations under chairs etc are a great way to add an element of trail brazing adventure.
- 8 images, laminated if you are heading outside.
- Write a clue as to where the next station in on previous stations.

All other details and instructions you need are included in the Easter Trail Resource. Enjoy!