

GOD'S WORD COMES NEAR

Introduction to the Theme

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"The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart." —Romans 10:8

Think about the last time you heard a great story. Did it make you laugh? Bring a tear to your eye? Evoke joy or anger, love or sadness? Each story, and every part of our lives, is shaped by words—spoken, heard, and read. The greatest story, though, is that of God's salvation for all of creation. In the beginning God spoke words to create light and life. God's Word came alive in Jesus Christ, the Savior. We read God's word in scripture. The many ways we understand "Word" are at the heart of the theme for the week, as we emphasize the importance of God's word that comes near.

Through exploration of Bible stories throughout the week, we will discover ways God's word comes near to us. This happens as we

- ground ourselves in the salvation story that God, in Christ Jesus, has saved the whole world.
- hear how God's story is intricately woven into each of our own stories through Jesus.
- discover how God can use our shared story to create love and justice in the world.

Immersed in God's word in scripture, we find that God's word came near to our ancestors in faith and that God's word comes near to us even now, as we learn

- to see our neighbors as beloved children of God.
- that even though we are imperfect, God loves and blesses us.
- that God will stop at nothing to show God's love for us and the whole world.

God's Word Comes Near in Trusting

On the first day, campers will be grounded in God's salvation story—that throughout scripture and time, God continually works to bring God's people life through love and the forgiveness of sin. In the story of Abraham and Sarah, campers will hear how *God's word comes near in trusting surprises* and in learning to look for God's presence as they are out and about in their daily lives.

God's Word Comes Near in Blessing

On the second day, campers will learn how God is at work in their own stories and that *God's word comes near through love and blessing*. Grounded in the stories of David and

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Lydia, campers will learn about God's blessing and calling. Even though David was imperfect and Lydia was an outsider, God chose and blessed them, just as today God chooses and blesses everyone to lead a life of love using our own unique gifts in the world. Our call is to say yes to God's blessing.

God's Word Comes Near in Listening

On the third day, campers will discover how God's word comes near in listening to others' stories, such as those of our new camp friends. Jesus validates others' stories in his encounter with them because they too are loved and blessed. Through the biblical characters of Jairus and his daughter, and Peter and Cornelius, campers will discover how God is at work in everyone, especially those we might least expect.

God's Word Comes Near in Serving

On the fourth day, campers will build on knowing their story and listening to others' stories, and will find how *God's word comes near to the world through God's miracle of serving*. When a young boy shared five loaves of bread and two fish, and when a complete stranger (and a Samaritan at that!) cared for his neighbor, God's love changed the world. We find that God can use each of our own gifts to bring love, mercy, and justice to the world.

God's Word Comes Near in Following

On the final day, campers will find that God's work in the world is never done, and God is always working to bring life out of death, love out of hate, and order out of chaos. To round out the week, campers will find themselves in a valley of dry bones with the prophet Ezekiel and right in the garden with Mary and Jesus on the first Easter morning, where we see that God's story is not done yet. By following God's word to the promise of new life, campers can continue to help write God's story of love and salvation.