



Imagination Station

Elementary Station Leader Manual

Group resources really work!

This Group resource incorporates our R.E.A.L. approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it's:



Relational

Person-to-person interaction enhances spiritual growth and builds Christian friendships.

Experiential

What we experience through action and discussion sticks with us up to 9 times longer than what we simply hear or read.

Applicable

The aim of ministry is to equip people to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

Lifelong

Experiences transform the heart, moving faith beyond the walls of church and into everyday life for years to come.

Imagination Station Leader Manual

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group.com

group.com/TrueNorth

Thanks to our talented team for all they do to point kids to Jesus! Laura Baldwin-Stout, Jody Broelsma, Stephen Caine, Lyndsay Gerwing, Charity Kauffman, Micaiah Lee, Laycie McClain, Mike Porter, Joani Schultz, Elisa Snell, Rodney Stewart, and Ali Thompson

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ISBN 978-1-4707-7740-1

Printed in the United States of America.

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Thanks for joining the team!

True north is a fixed point on Earth's globe. Unlike magnetic north, *true north* is unmoving, unchanging, reliable, resolute.

If you're reading this manual, chances are that *Jesus* is your true north. You've trusted him to be a faithful friend when life's journey got lonely. You've relied on his unchanging love through life's ups and downs. You've turned to Jesus' comforting words of hope when the world felt cold and dark.

And you want to share *all* of that with kids in your community!

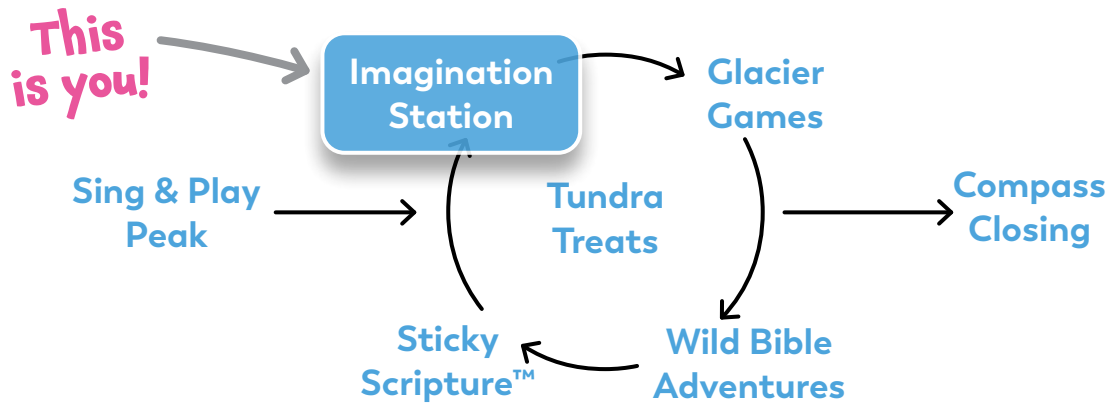
Like you, we love Jesus, and we love kids. We know that kids today may find their world untamed and wild. We understand that kids' source of truth may shift, depending on the latest news headline, trend, or social media influencer. We long for kids to boldly step out in faith, knowing that Jesus always points them in the right direction. He is *their* true north. Now...and for eternity!

That's why we're so glad you've joined this adventure! Think of our team as trail guides, going ahead to make sure the terrain is smooth and the trail is well-marked. We've tested these activities with kids, so you can make the most of every minute you have. And we're praying that God's vast love amazes and astounds you as you lead kids into the wonder of a friendship with Jesus.

It's hard to find your way in a world gone wild.

But we have Jesus—our true north!

Together, let's give kids a rock-solid foundation and point them to Jesus, their unmovable, unshakable friend forever.

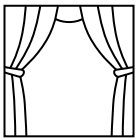


Before True North



Pray for everyone who will attend True North.

Ask God to prepare your heart and the hearts of the kids and leaders who will be part of VBS.



Get your room ready to energize imaginations!

Choose a room with enough space for Crews to do the activities. Move chairs and tables out of the way. Place blankets on the floor for each Crew in a rotation to sit on. Use the decorating ideas at group.com/vbsTools to make your room look like kids are camped out on a snowy glacier—the coolest place around! You'll also use the Talk-Starter Posters at the start of each day's session.



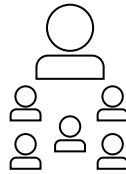
Work with the VBS Director to collect necessary supplies.

Almost all the supplies are easy to find around the church, from church members, or from Group.



Order Imagination Station Crew Discovery Packs.

At Imagination Station, kids don't just watch experiments—they participate in the science! Each day's Crew Discovery Pack provides supplies for Crews of five kids plus a leader to do fun experiments! These Crew Discovery Packs will make sure the sciency-fun wows stick as lasting memories to help kids remember the Bible Points. Be sure to order an extra pack so you can demonstrate experiments.



Determine the number of Crews you'll have in each rotation.

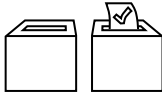
Kids join mixed-age Crews—groups of up to five elementary-age kids and one adult or teenage leader. Plan on one-fourth of the total number of Crews in each rotation. If your VBS has 20 Crews, you'll work with five Crews (approximately 25 kids and five leaders) during each session.

During True North



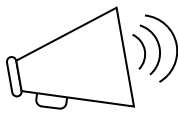
Get Crew Leaders involved!

Guide Crew Leaders to participate right along with kids. When Crew Leaders listen, get involved, and have fun, kids do too!



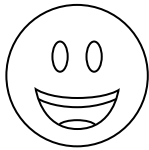
Talk About Talk-Starters.

Start each day with a talk-starter question to help kids get to know each other. Kids will “vote” for their answer by doing various actions. You’ll need the Talk-Starters Posters for the room to show kids their options.



Use an attention-getting signal.

Attention-getting signals let kids know when it’s time to stop what they’re doing and look at you. Use the Wilderness Whistle (available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier) or another signal of your choice.



Call on kids' Crew roles.

Every day, kids choose one of five jobs: Guide, Kit Carrier, Prayer Person, Schedule Supervisor, or Thank You-er. Kids love when those jobs get called on! In Imagination Station, you’ll call on the Kit Carrier.



Repeat the daily Bible Point often.

Every activity focuses on one memorable Bible truth called the Bible Point. Repeating the Bible Point helps kids remember it and apply it to their lives after VBS. Each time kids hear the day’s Bible Point, they pretend to pull a rope and say, “trust Jesus!”



Play the Sing & Play Peak Music while kids explore.

Music creates a fun atmosphere and, more important, reinforces faith!

DAY 1:

When we wonder, we can trust Jesus.

Bible Story: John prepares the way and baptizes Jesus. (Matthew 3; 11:1-6)

Bible Verse: “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise.” (Matthew 7:24)

Sing & Play Peak

- Learn the Day 1 Bible Point and verse, and meet Bible Memory Buddy Ponder.
- Sing True North songs.
- Meet Scout Rivers, an explorer who has lots of questions about the wilderness.



Wild Bible Adventures

Consider people's wonderings about Jesus, then act out the surprising thing that happened when John baptized Jesus!



Tundra Treats



A (Northern)
Light Snack



Blizzard in a Cup

Sticky Scripture

Play “Wilderness Wise” as they explore Matthew 7:24 and discover what it means to have wisdom.



Imagination Station

Investigate with magnets, then craft a compass to discover what it means to trust Jesus—he always points us in the right direction!



Compass Closing

See how we can trust Jesus to stand strong, even when people try to “poke holes” in our faith.



Glacier Games



Goals for Good



Water Way



Fish, Wolf, Bear



At **True North**, the daily Bible Point is carefully integrated into each station's activities for unforgettable Bible learning. See how your station reinforces today's Bible Point.

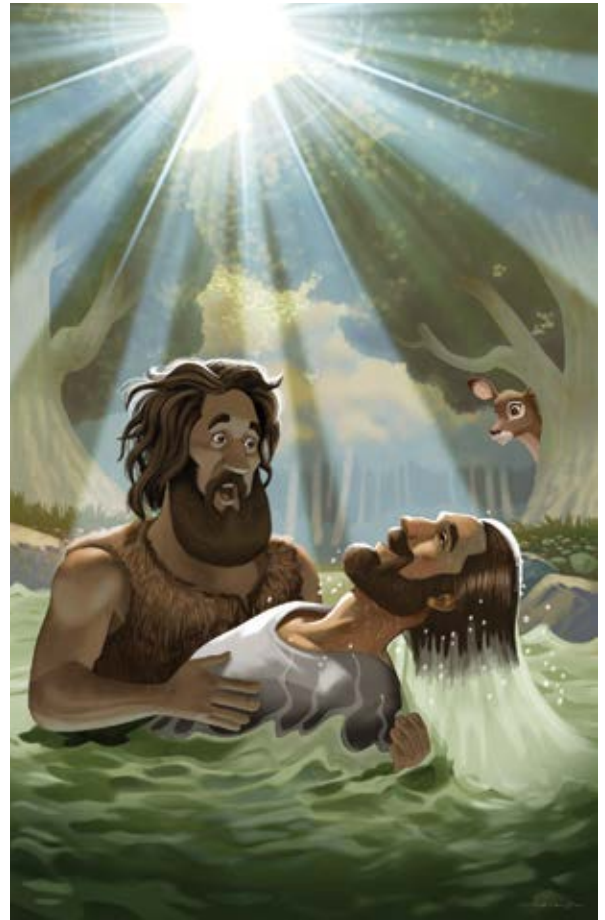
When we wonder, we can trust Jesus.

Bible Verse: “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise.” (Matthew 7:24)

Bible Story: John prepares the way and baptizes Jesus. (Matthew 3; 11:1-6)

Jesus’ cousin John came with unconventional clothes, a pauper’s diet, and a bold message: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.” Meaning? Jesus—the Messiah and fulfillment of God’s kingdom on earth—is *here*! John proclaimed Jesus’ power and authority. He resisted the very idea of baptizing Jesus, the one who would baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit! While John adamantly proclaimed Christ, even *he* had questions about Jesus. From prison, John sent a message to Jesus, asking, “Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?” John’s circumstances may have caused him to wonder if (and when) Jesus might take political action. Scholars ponder if John may have assumed the Messiah would be the one to rescue God’s people from Roman rule—as many Jews of the time anticipated. However, Jesus had a greater mission than anyone could comprehend. He came to save *the world* from sin. Such love and compassion go beyond anything we can understand or imagine!

Kids’ curiosity can be intimidating—and a bit wearying. They have so many questions, many of which we simply can’t answer. And when it comes to questions about Jesus, God, or the Bible, adults can *really* feel overwhelmed and underprepared. But we don’t have to have all the answers! Sometimes our wonderings can lead to true *wonder*, as we discover the mystery and marvel of God. Today, celebrate curiosity and questions. Point kids to Jesus, a trustworthy and true friend who will guide us as we seek to know and understand him better.



Pointing to Jesus

People (even John the Baptist) wondered about Jesus. This passage can encourage kids that it’s okay to ask questions about Jesus—he will always help us find the truth.



Items for Every Day:

Imagination Station Poster Pack*

Bible Memory Buddy® Mini Posters*

- baskets to hold supplies (1 per Crew in a rotation)
- blankets (1 per Crew in a rotation)
- 1 or more helpers (2 would be great!)



Sing & Play Peak Music CD or download*

- media player

Wilderness Whistle* or other attention-getting device



Day 1 Supplies:

Day 1 Talk-Starter Poster from Imagination Station Poster Pack*



True North Compass Kits* (1 per Crew)

Glue Dots (enough for each Crew to have one ½-inch Glue Dot)



bottle of bubbles

• paper (1 sheet per Crew)

• paper clips (about 5 per Crew in a rotation)

• pompoms (about 5 per Crew in a rotation)

• chenille wires

• confetti (small handful per Crew in a rotation)

• aluminum foil

• resealable snack bags

• scissors (for Leader only)

• cups of water (1 per Crew in a rotation)

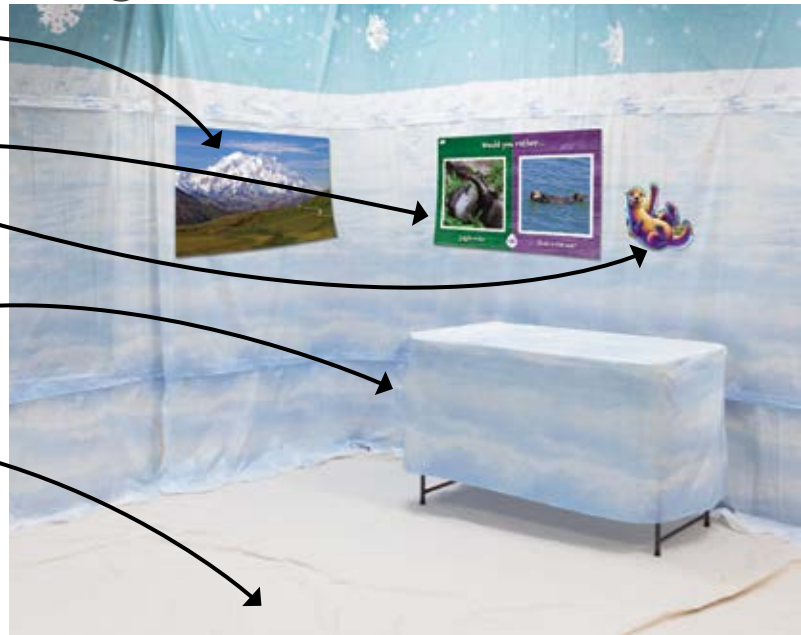


*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier

For the “Explore Magnetic Poles” section, you’ll need more than one powerful magnet per Crew, so kids can explore magnetic polarity. We found that magnets from craft stores varied in reliability, so here’s an easy tip! Pull out the magnets from *all* of the Compass Kits and set them aside. These work *wonderfully* for the “Explore Magnetic Poles” section. Then you’ll be able to provide four magnets per Crew, at no additional expense! If you don’t do rotations and only have kids come through Imagination Station once, you’ll need to purchase extra ceramic magnets.

- Before Day 1, decorate your room to look like a snowy glacier, and hang the five decorating posters around the room. We used the Snowscape Plastic Backdrop and the Winter Sky Plastic Backdrop.
- Hang the Day 1 Talk-Starter Poster at kids’ eye level.
- Hang the poster of Ponder from the Bible Memory Buddy® Mini Posters.
- Place a table along a wall of your room. You can place the day’s supplies on the table for easy access and store the remaining supplies under the table.
- Set out blankets for Crews to sit on.

Imagination Station



Before You Hit the Trail

- Take the large magnets from every Day 1 Crew Discovery Pack. Divide them among the number of Crews you have in each rotation. For example, if you have four Crews, make four sets of magnets. These magnets are strong and will stick together. It's a good idea to keep them away from any electronics.
- Cut the chenille wires into roughly 1-inch pieces. Cut aluminum foil into approximately 1-inch squares.
- Place the chenille wire pieces, aluminum foil, pompoms, paper clips, and confetti into separate resealable bags, one bag of each item per Crew in a rotation.
- Create a basket of supplies for each Crew in each rotation. (You can restock between rotations.) You'll need one supply basket per Crew.

Each Crew basket should contain:

- ✓ 1 sheet of paper
- ✓ 1 bag of about 5 paper clips
- ✓ 1 bag of chenille wire pieces
- ✓ 1 bag of confetti (a handful)
- ✓ 1 bag of about 5 pompoms
- ✓ 1 bag of aluminum foil squares

COMPASS CLUE

Give clear, concise directions while demonstrating experiments. This is where kids explore, experiment, test, try...and play! Guide kids in your expectations, but also give them some freedom to test their own hypotheses!

COMPASS CLUE

Be sure to order an extra Crew Discovery Pack for yourself! That will give you a Compass Kit so you can demonstrate the steps. Kids will find it much easier to follow directions when they see you demonstrating what to do.



Got Imagination?

Have the fun Sing & Play Peak Music playing as Crews arrive. Greet kids enthusiastically as they enter Imagination Station. Then have Crews sit together on the Crew blankets.

SAY Welcome to Imagination Station! All week long, we'll explore the great outdoors of the Alaskan wilderness to discover what science can show us about God! We'll do fun experiments that help us understand how God created so many cool things we can find in Alaska. But before we begin, I have a question.

ASK Who brought their imagination today?

SAY It's okay if not everyone remembered their imagination—it is our first day of True North. But since this is *Imagination Station*, we're definitely going to need lots of imagination as we explore. The great news is, I know someone who makes me think very imaginatively! Our Buddy Ponder the otter makes me think a lot about imagination. Otters love to play and have fun—which is what we'll be doing in Imagination Station! Point to the poster of Ponder.

One game otters like to play is juggling rocks! Some scientists think there's no reason for it other than to just have fun! So let's loosen up our imaginations with an otter juggling game!

Blow bubbles, and have kids try to catch and juggle them. After about 30 seconds, sound the Wilderness Whistle to settle kids down.

Wow! I think having fun and playing like otters really got your imaginations ready!

Today we're exploring that **when we wonder, we can...** (*trust Jesus!*) When it comes to Jesus, there might be a lot of questions we wonder about. But when we trust Jesus, he points us to the truth! Let's see how science can remind us of that.

Answer a Talk-Starter Question

SAY Every day at Imagination Station, you'll get to answer a fun talk-starter question. Here's today's question.

Point to the Day 1 Talk-Starter Poster.

ASK Would you rather juggle rocks or float in the sea?

SAY If you'd rather juggle rocks, pretend to juggle! If you'd rather float in the sea, lean your head back and stretch your arms out to your sides.

When everyone is in position, point out which choice seems to have more votes.



COMPASS CLUE

Ham it up as you present the talk-starter question each day. You'll set a fun mood and encourage kids' imaginations at the same time!

SAY All week long, you'll get to answer fun talk-starter questions and find out more about the other people in your Crew!

Explore Magnetic Poles

Have Kit Carriers come get the baskets for their Crews. These baskets should *not* contain the powerful magnets, because they'd stick to the items in the bags!

It may be tempting and distracting for Crews to rifle through these goodies! Have Kit Carriers give the baskets to their Crew Leaders, and tell kids only the Crew Leaders should touch the baskets when you call for a supply.

ASK If a helicopter dropped you in a huge, vast Alaskan wilderness, what things might help you find your way out? Take plenty of responses.

SAY One thing that might come in handy would be a compass. Point to the poster with a compass on it. Today we're going to explore how compasses work and why they always point north.

ASK If your parents had to drive somewhere and they didn't know how to get there, what would they do?

SAY These days, most people don't use compasses much. We have GPS on our phones that tells us every turn we need to take.

But before there were GPS apps on our phones or websites to look up directions or road maps of our country, there were compasses! Compasses helped people sailing across the ocean keep their ships pointed in the right direction.

And we still need compasses today, too! After all, when you're lost in the woods in Alaska, your phone might not get any signal! But a compass works anywhere—no cell signal needed!



FIELD TEST FINDING

Kids had a lot of great ideas, such as signs, a compass, or a telescope.

FIELD TEST FINDING

We've found that the Wilderness Whistle is a great way to get kids' attention back after a Crew activity or discussion. But if kids start talking or lose focus when you weren't planning on it, you may need a quicker way to get kids' attention. Our Station Leader said, "If you can hear me, make moose antlers!" Another option would be to make a waterfall by trickling your fingers down as you make a calm "shhhhh" sound, and have kids copy you. Both of these help quiet kids down and get their hands out of distracting items. Whatever you choose, be sure to pause before moving on so everyone can hear—there's so much fun in this station!



COMPASS CLUE

You may be wondering why we didn't include the magnets in the baskets of pompoms and chenille wires. We thought it might give away the answers! The magnets may stick to the magnetic things, revealing the results before kids have a chance to hypothesize.

FIELD TEST FINDING

Kids immediately leaned in when they saw all the colorful items to play with! The chenille wires were particularly fun and colorful as they stuck to the magnets.



FIELD TEST FINDING

Kids loved sharing their observations, including, "They stuck!" and "They move around when the magnets moved."

SAY

So let's find out how they work. And to do that, we'll need to experiment with magnets!

Have your helpers distribute the magnets from the True North Compass Kits to each Crew, dividing up all the magnets you purchased for all rotations. Crew Leaders can get out the sheet of paper and bags of confetti, chenille wire pieces, pompoms, aluminum foil, and paper clips from their baskets.

Just to be safe, it's a good idea to keep these powerful magnets away from cellphones.

Let's see what magnets attract and what they don't attract. Now, before experimenting, a good scientist always makes a hypothesis—an educated guess about what's going to happen. So before you get out the magnets, spend some time in your group making guesses about which things will stick to the magnets. Then test them out!

You have pompoms, confetti, paper clips, fuzzy wire pieces, and aluminum foil. You can also try other things like your shoelaces or coins you have in your pockets.

Allow a couple of minutes for experimenting, and play upbeat music during the experiment. Then pause the music and sound the Wilderness Whistle.

ASK

Well? What did you discover? Did anything surprise you?

SAY

Let's use what we learned to experiment some more. Spread out the things the magnets attracted on a piece of paper. Pause while Crews quickly do this. Now have someone hold that paper about a foot off the ground. Pause again.

ASK

What would happen if you placed a magnet under the paper? Make your hypotheses, and then try it out.

Allow time, playing music as Crew members work together. One child will hold the paper firmly with both hands while other kids experiment with magnets. Then switch roles.

What happened?

SAY

You saw how magnets attract metal—but not all metal! The magnets didn't attract the aluminum foil. But let's try one more thing. Pick a partner in your Crew, and hold your magnet up toward the other person's magnet. Note what happens, and you'll report back in a few seconds! Allow about 20 seconds, then sound the Wilderness Whistle.

Have Crew Leaders put the magnets and other supplies back in the baskets. Instruct Crew Leaders to count the magnets and be sure they have the correct number so kids don't try to leave with magnets! You'll need these in every rotation.

ASK Why do you think some magnets attracted each other and other magnets pushed each other away?

SAY Every magnet has two poles—a north pole and a south pole. That means one side of your magnet is the “north” side and the other side is the “south.” Magnets repel—or push against—the same pole on another magnet. So if you and your friend were both holding up the south side toward each other, they’d push away! But magnets attract opposite poles. So the north side of one magnet will stick to the south side of another!

ASK After all these magnetic experiments, what are some things you still wonder about magnets?

SAY So what does that have to do with a compass?

Well, the inside of our earth is one giant magnet! It’s not super strong—otherwise a paper clip would be too hard for you to pick up off our floor! But it is strong enough that the north pole of our earth attracts the south pole of other magnets.

And that’s how a compass works! A compass is a magnetized needle that can move around. Because of the magnetic point of the needle, it will always point north.

Now here’s something you should know. The “magnetic north” point of the earth isn’t exactly true north. True north is like an arrow pointing right to the North Pole—the exact top of our planet. Compasses sometimes point a little bit to the left or right of that because the magnetic north pole isn’t exactly true north. That means compasses don’t point us exactly true north, but they point us in the right general direction of north.

But faith in Jesus can always point us to truth—exactly true north. Faith in Jesus won’t ever get off track! **When we wonder, we can...** (*trust Jesus!*) Let’s explore compasses more.

Use a Compass

SAY Let’s imagine we’re lost in the Alaskan wilderness and we need to go north to get out! Point in the direction you think is north.

Have kids guess which way is north.

It seems like we need compasses to be sure we’re heading north! Let’s make some.

Have your helper give each Crew a True North Compass Kit and a Glue Dot. Crew Leaders can get out one of the mighty magnets from their baskets.

First, you need to magnetize the needle of your compass. It’s pressed safely into a foam packing peanut. One person in your Crew will hold the needle and swipe it against the magnet in the same direction 20 times. Watch how I do it, and the first person in your Crew can do it along with me.



COMPASS CLUE

Some kids know a lot about science! They may want to share their fun facts during activities. Redirect them by saying something like “Wow! It sounds like you know a lot about magnets! You can talk with your Crew about that during snack time or while you’re traveling between stations.” This will give kids the opportunity to share without compromising your ability to complete the activities at Imagination Station.





FIELD TEST FINDING

Crews were having so much fun with magnetic experimentation today that some of them were moving the magnets around the edge of the compass to make it spin instead of pointing north. Be sure to collect the magnets so the compasses all point north!



SAY

Let's all count to 20 together. Demonstrate how to swipe the point of the needle in a downward direction 20 times. One person in each Crew will follow along with you.

Then you'll pass it to someone else! Again, lead kids in counting as a child in each Crew swipes the needle 20 times. Repeat until each child has swiped the needle with the magnet 20 times.

Have your helper collect the magnets from every Crew.

Now we need to stick the needle to the cork so it floats. Have Crews use Glue Dots to attach the needle to the cork.

Give each Crew a cup of water, and have them pour about ½ inch into their compass disk.

Now it's time to make our needles float! Show Crews how to put the cork in the water so the needle is on top.

And now for the moment of truth—your compass should be pointing north! Use your fingers to show me which direction your compasses are pointing. Pause.

Yay! Now we can get out of the woods because we know we need to go north! Let's take two steps north. Lead kids in taking two steps north.

We made it! Let's have a seat on our Crew blankets and talk about what happened. Crew Leaders, you can bring me your compasses. Collect the compasses as Crews sit.

ASK

How well do you think you'd do at knowing which way north is without a compass?

SAY

We've seen how compasses guide us. Now let's think about what that shows us about Jesus.

ASK

A compass can help you find your way when you're lost. Who are some people who can help you trust Jesus when you don't know what to do in life? This is a thinking question, so don't take the immediate silence as a reason to move on. Give kids time to think and process.

SAY

When we wonder, we can... (trust Jesus!) We all have questions and doubts about faith. Those questions might make us feel lost! But we can look to Jesus to point us in the right direction when we don't know what to do.

I'm so glad all you scientists were able to join me today and discover more about how compasses use the earth's magnetism to point people to true north. And Jesus points us to truth, too! When we wonder, we can... (trust Jesus!) I'll see you tomorrow for more sciency fun!

Imagination Station

Day 1



Investigate with magnets, then craft a compass to discover what it means to trust Jesus—he always points us in the right direction!



Day 2



Create crystals in a flurry of fun about snow formation, connecting God's cool creations with the way we are each uniquely made.



Day 3



Discover the secrets of majestic mountains and Mighty Wires as they explore the surprising power we have in Jesus.



Day 4



Examine God's luminous light show—the northern lights—and glow about having hope in dark times.



Day 5



Study God's grand glaciers, bursting with life-giving water! These frosty formations are a huge help in cooling the earth by reflecting light!



Amazing science experiments that grow faith, stretch imaginations, and delight kids!



Questions:

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800.447.1070

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ISBN 978-1-4707-7740-1



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VBS Programming



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