

Wild Bible Adventures

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.

Wild Bible Adventures 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 Brolsma, 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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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!

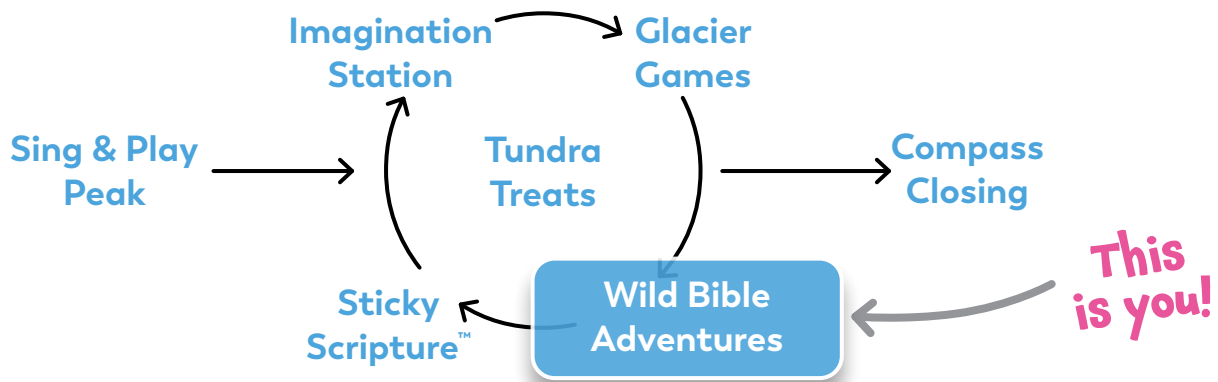
Like you, we love Jesus, and we love kids. We know that kids today may find their world untamed and wild. We understand that kids' source of truth may shift, depending on the latest news headline, trend, or social media influencer. We long for kids to boldly step out in faith, knowing that Jesus always 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



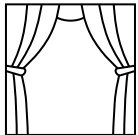
Pray for everyone who will attend True North.

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



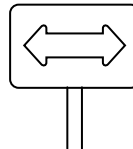
Work with the VBS Director to collect necessary supplies.

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



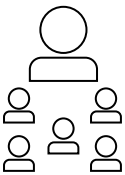
Create a Bible setting that gets used each day.

Kids become part of the Bible story with their hearts, minds, and emotions. Part of that experience comes when you create a “set” that gets used every day. This year the set is easier than ever, with each day using the same backdrops!



Choose a room for Wild Bible Adventures.

Ideally, your room should be large and off by itself a little. Kids aren’t just sitting still or staying put during these Bible Adventures!



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

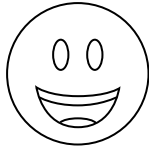
Kids join mixed-age Crews—groups of up to five elementary-age kids and one adult or teenage leader. Plan on one-fourth of the total number of Crews in each rotation. If your VBS has 20 Crews, you’ll work with five Crews (approximately 25 kids and five leaders) during each session.

During True North



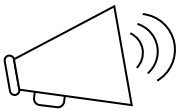
Get Crew Leaders involved!

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



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!

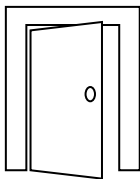


Use an attention-getting signal.

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.



Wilderness Whistle



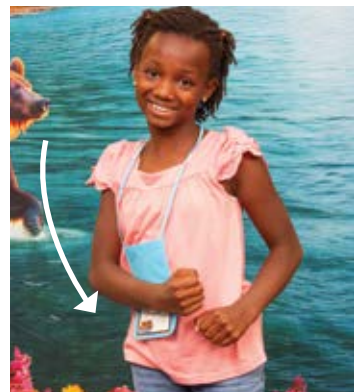
Gather outside the room first.

Gathering kids outside the room allows you to set the scene before they even enter the room and gives you the opportunity to create a big “wow” all at once.



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. Kids help you complete the daily Bible Point. You'll pause and kids will pretend to pull a rope with both hands and say, “Trust Jesus!”



Trust Jesus!

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.

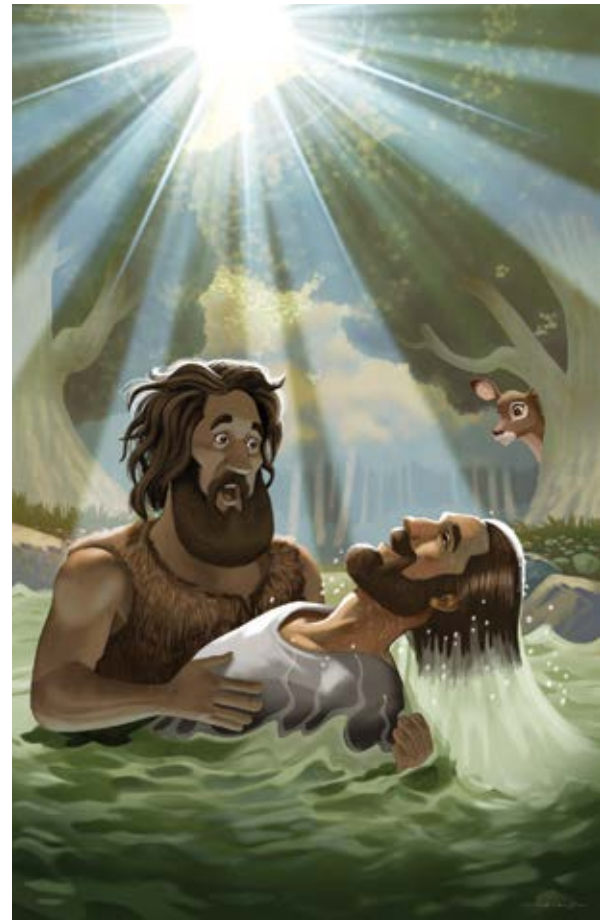
When we wonder, we can trust Jesus.

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.

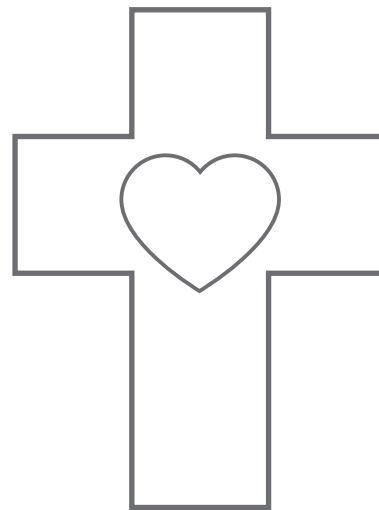


*available from group.com
or your Group VBS supplier



Before You Hit the Trail

- For each Crew, cut a cross shape out of a paper towel, and use a white crayon to draw a heart in the middle. Color in the heart.
- For each Crew in a rotation, prepare a basket of washable markers and paper towels (1 per child).



Outdoors in Israel

Tape the Green Meadow Plastic Backdrops to the bottom of the Blue Sky Plastic Backdrops. You may want to cut the bottom of the Blue Sky in a somewhat wavy pattern to give the appearance of hills.

Hang up the Day 1 Bible Story Poster.

Add some real or fake plants and Tissue Paper Grass Mats to give a touch of nature.

Tape the assembled backdrops to your walls, with the green meadow on the bottom.

Near a wall, arrange Water Fabric or blue fabric to look like a river. Set a bin of water for each Crew on the "river." (You'll need to replace the water in these bins with clean water between rotations.)

Set out blankets for small-group Crews to sit on.



Welcome Crews

Enthusiastically greet Crews outside your Wild Bible Adventures room, holding your Bible.

SAY **Welcome to Wild Bible Adventures. I'm [your name], and this week I get to take you on some wild Bible adventures! The Bible guides us! It always points us to God's truth.**

Hold up your Bible.

You may think the Bible is just an old book that's kind of hard to read. But here you'll discover that it's full of true stories of real people who were able to trust Jesus in a wild world. Let's jump back into Bible times right now!

Motion to the door.

Today we're going back in time to a real place called Israel, where people have been talking about a man named Jesus. People don't know much about him, but there's one guy, John, who won't talk about anything but Jesus! Let's head in and find out more.

COMPASS CLUE

Recruit a dedicated helper for Wild Bible Adventures. Because so much goes on behind the scenes to make each day's Bible story leap to life, you'll need someone at the ready. Bible teaching is a team sport!

Lead Crews into the room, and have each Crew find a blanket to sit on.

Find Out About Baptism

SAY People didn't know much about Jesus. Sometimes we might have questions about Jesus. Sometimes we hear or read things about Jesus that don't make sense.

ASK **What are some things you wonder about Jesus?** Give your own example first, such as wondering how he can be with everyone all at once or why he came 2,000 years ago instead of today. Then let kids share in their Crews. Sound the Wilderness Whistle to regain kids' attention.

SAY **When we wonder, we can...** (*trust Jesus!*) **In our Bible story,** people had questions, too. Let me tell you a little bit about what was going on.

A long, long time ago God's people, the Jews, had their own country. But then people from other countries invaded and took over. By the time of our Bible story, God's people were living in their old country, but it was being ruled by the Romans—not God's people. And the Romans didn't treat Jewish people very nicely! God had promised to send someone called the Messiah, who would save them. But they'd been waiting hundreds of years!

Maybe they wondered...when the Messiah would come.

Maybe they wondered...if God had forgotten about them.

Maybe they wondered...if they had missed the Messiah.

When we wonder, we can... (*trust Jesus!*)

Repent and Wonder

SAY And in the middle of all this wondering, along came John. John was a kind of different guy. He wore camel hair and ate bugs, but he had an important job: Prepare the way for Jesus. John was actually Jesus' cousin!

Let me read to you what John said. Read Matthew 3:2.

Repent means to be sorry for the wrong things we do. Let's try something.

Have kids stand and face away from you.

Imagine that Jesus is standing right next to me. But instead of following Jesus, you've turned away! You've done things your own way. **Repent** means to turn away from—or stop doing—the wrong things you're doing and start doing good things. So when I say, "**Repent!**" you'll turn around. Pause. **Repent!** Kids will turn to face you.



COMPASS CLUE

As you tell kids what you wonder about Jesus, you're modeling a level of sharing. Keep your example simple and brief, but feel free to go a little deep with your example (while still being child-friendly). That helps kids go deeper, too!



Give a few examples of making wrong choices, such as telling a lie or not helping when someone needs help. Kids can turn away from you. Then say, “Repent!” and have kids turn toward you again. Have kids sit back down.

SAY John also said the kingdom of heaven is near. I wonder...

ASK When you think of a king, what comes to mind? Invite responses from everyone.

SAY Jesus was the opposite of what we think of when we think of a king! I wonder...why was Jesus so different?

John also told people, “Prepare the way for the Lord’s coming! Clear the road for him!”

Shout this with me: “Prepare the way for the Lord’s coming!”
Lead kids in shouting that several times.

ASK What does your family do to prepare when you have special guests coming to visit? Invite responses from everyone.

SAY God sent John with a special purpose: to help people get their hearts ready because Jesus was coming!

Learn About Baptism

SAY John is sometimes called John the Baptist because he baptized people. In Bible times, Jewish people washed—or got dunked in water—to show that they wanted to be forgiven for wrong things they’d done, sort of like being washed clean. I’ll show you. Let’s head to the river!

Have each Crew gather by a basin of water on the river. Give each Crew a basket with paper towels and washable markers.

Everyone get a paper towel, and make some scribbles on it. For each scribble, say something people sometimes do that’s wrong. Allow time, then sound your Wilderness Whistle.

We all do wrong things. For the Jewish people in the Bible, getting dunked in water wasn’t what made their hearts clean, but it was a symbol of what God did to forgive them. Let’s dunk our scribbly paper towels in the water.

Allow time for kids to dunk their paper towels and swirl them around for a few seconds, then lift them back out and gently wring them out over the basins. After kids have looked at their paper towels, have them hang the paper towels on the edge of the basin and scoot back so they’re not tempted to play with the water.

ASK What do you notice about your paper towels?

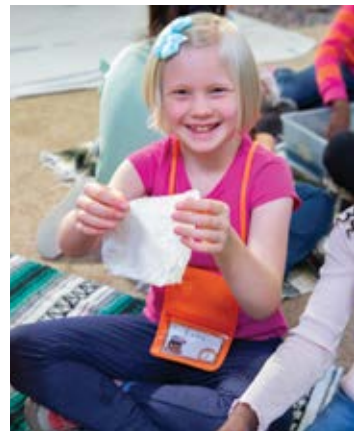
SAY You might still be able to see some of the marker on the paper towel, but God washes our hearts totally clean. And that’s what baptism symbolized to God’s people.

FIELD TEST FINDING

Kids had great responses to this question! They shared about cleaning their rooms, making food, and doing laundry.

FIELD TEST FINDING

We originally had helpers hand out basins of water to each Crew, but that got pretty sloshy and messy! Oops! Plus, when we wanted kids to move away from the water, our helpers had to collect the basins again. Positioning the basins near the “river” got kids more into the story, eliminated the need to distribute water, and was much simpler!



FIELD TEST FINDING

This worked really well! The marker faded almost completely on some paper towels. One child even observed, "There's nothing there!" Kids also loved seeing the water change color. We found that if you use cheaper paper towels as opposed to name brand, the marker will wash away better—because they absorb less ink!

COMPASS CLUE

If you'd like, take this opportunity to briefly explain what baptism is in a way that follows your denomination's guidelines.

FIELD TEST FINDING

Kids described God's voice as dark, booming, and "a nice guy." It's fun to let kids use their imaginations!

FIELD TEST FINDING

It may feel like you have too much to do in 20 minutes. We timed this out with three Crews in a rotation and finished in just under 20 minutes. But you do have to keep things moving!

But one day, Jesus asked John to baptize him! Jesus had never done anything wrong. If baptism shows we're forgiven, I wonder why Jesus wanted to be baptized. I think John had the same question. Let's see what John said.

Read Matthew 3:14.

Jesus never did anything wrong, but he got baptized because it was part of God's plan for him. John wanted to obey! So he baptized Jesus. Try something with me. This time, only your Crew Leader will touch the paper towel.

Give each Crew a paper-towel cross with no ink scribbles on it, and have the Crew Leader set it on the water. As it floats on the colored water, the heart will appear!



Jesus came as an example to us, and he later died on the cross because he loves us so much. When Jesus died on the cross, he took on our sin, just like this cross is taking on some of the colors you washed off your paper towels. And when John baptized Jesus, God spoke.

Read Matthew 3:16-17.

ASK

I wonder...what did God's voice sound like? What do you think?

SAY

John heard God announce that Jesus is God's Son, and that's why we can trust Jesus!

That was a big announcement. Let's shout it together! Lead kids in shouting "Jesus is God's Son!"

Have kids return to their Crew blankets, leaving the supplies behind at the river.



Experience Doubt

SAY That must have been a pretty big experience for John. In that moment, maybe he didn't have any more questions or wonderings. Sometimes we have moments like that—moments where everything is going well and we feel really strong in our faith.

ASK Tell about a time things in your life were really happy. Share your own brief example first, and then have kids share in Crews.

After some time for discussion, sound the Wilderness Whistle.

SAY It's easy to trust and believe in Jesus when things are going well. But for John, things didn't stay good. He ended up getting arrested! And when he was locked up in prison, he started to wonder again. Listen to what he asked.

Read Matthew 11:3.

Wait! John had heard God announce who Jesus is! But when things got hard, he wondered again. Let's try something. Everyone stand up. Pause.

You're standing strong and confidently. And sometimes our faith feels like that! But sometimes we don't feel so sure. Things we thought we knew might not *feel* true anymore. Lift up one foot. Pause.

Now stay standing on just one foot for as long as you can. If you lose your balance, then just stand normally. As you stand, think about a time life was hard for you. Allow about 10 seconds for kids to reflect. Then get kids' attention. Anyone who is still standing on one foot can put their second foot down.

If I were in prison like John, I might wonder, "Why am I in prison if Jesus is really the one who's supposed to save me?" I'd be a little worried about what's going to happen next, and maybe I'd wonder if I was wrong about Jesus.

I might start to think Jesus wasn't who I thought.

Sometimes things are so hard that our faith gets *really* shaky. Stand on one foot and close your eyes. If you start to fall or need to put a foot down, sit down. Pause and allow time until all kids are seated.

ASK How did it feel to stand like that?

FIELD TEST FINDING

It was awesome to see how this truth about who Jesus is really stuck! It came up two times on other days when kids were answering questions about why they can trust Jesus.

FIELD TEST FINDING

Standing on one foot evoked the emotion of instability before they even got started! Some kids responded with "oh no" because they knew it would be tough!



SAY

Jesus knew we would feel [some of kids' answers], so he helps us know who he is. Jesus answered John's questions by saying that his teaching and miracles prove who he is. He reminded John about what John already knew. John learned that even though things weren't going so well for him, that didn't change who Jesus is. Jesus is God's Son whether things are really happy or not so happy.

Stand Strong

SAY

I wish I could promise that nothing difficult would ever happen in life. But I can't promise that. What I *can* do is remind you of the truths that can help you stand strong when life gets hard.

Have kids stand on one foot. You'll stand on one foot to model when to put both feet down.

When people are mean and you wonder if anyone cares, **remember** (stand on both feet) **Jesus loves you.**

Have kids stand on one foot again.

When bad things happen and you wonder why, you can **remember** (stand on both feet) **God has a plan.**

Have kids stand on one foot again.

When you fail and wonder if you're a mistake, you can **remember** (stand on both feet) **God made you in his image.**

Have kids stand on one foot again.

When you've done something really bad and you wonder if it's too bad to be forgiven, you can **remember** (stand on both feet) **Jesus forgives you—no matter what.**

We all have questions, and that's okay! But when we do, our faith doesn't have to be shaky. We can find the truth about Jesus in the Bible. We can ask other followers and friends of Jesus, like our Crew Leaders or our pastor. We can stand firmly on what we know is true.

When we wonder, we can... (trust Jesus!)

And speaking of wondering, I wonder what you'll think when you come back tomorrow and learn about some things Jesus taught people. We'll find out tomorrow!



Track 3

Play "Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus" from the Sing & Play Peak Music while kids get ready to move to their next station.

When you hear your Director's signal, dismiss kids to their next destination.

Between rotations, you and your helper will quickly reset the room by refilling the bins and throwing away the used paper towels.



Wild Bible Adventures

Day 1



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

Day 2



Pretend to be lost and lonely sheep, experience a personal blessing, then pray and give worries to Jesus.

Day 3



Meet a powerful Roman soldier who takes the "troops" through strength training before sharing about his unforgettable interaction with Jesus.

Day 4



Use ice to experience some discomfort as they hear of Jesus' crucifixion. Then give icy "sins" to Jesus and watch them melt with his forgiving, mighty love.

Day 5



Live through the wild wind and fiery flames of Pentecost to see how the Holy Spirit came to be a helper for us—even today!



Questions:

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800.447.1070

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VBS Programming



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