

Creative prayer idea

Wild worship field guide

What's inspired this resource?

Most of Jesus' teaching was conducted outside... on hillsides, next to lakes, in boats; he filled it with metaphors, pictures and stories about the landscape around the people he was speaking too. And Psalm 19:1-4 and Romans 1:20 are just two of the scriptures that re-enforce this reality of creation's ability to communicate who God is and to help us connect with him and learn more about how to relate to him.

But sometimes we end up losing the richness of the connection between creation and worship... perhaps we enjoy being outside but don't find it naturally prompts worship; or perhaps, in mostly thinking about scripture's rich natural metaphors when we are inside buildings, we miss the real depth of revelation they have to offer.

Being based in the Yorkshire Dales, many of the Sanctuary's team feel like we've come to a new understanding of scripture because of living in such close connection to so many metaphors used in it. And we've found our prayer rhythm's occasional wild worship times have made both creation – and scripture – come alive more; leading us into deeper worship full of wonder and joy. We've also found they have further increased our commitment to creation care and good stewardship from the inside out; the more we love, wonder and connect to God through his creation, the more natural it becomes to take better care of it!

We wanted to share a taste of this approach we've found so helpful, so we've created this field guide; a fun, interactive way, to explore worshipping in the wild!

How does the field guide work?

You can:

- use it individually, or as a group or family;
- use it in the garden, or on walks in the countryside;
- take it out with you on a specific trip or holiday, or keep it close to hand and tick off things as you discover them over a longer period of time; using each one as a gateway to prayer or praise.

The different elements for you to find outside vary from easy to hard; and of course, in a number of cases will only be visible in some seasons, but they're all alphabetised like a glossary... so you can choose whether you find things and check the glossary... or use the glossary for inspiration of what to look for.

But however you choose to use the field guide, you'll find reading the scriptures and reflections while actually looking, touching, hearing or smelling the element of creation they focus on, makes them powerfully memorable... don't rush each one though, spend time thinking about different meanings, and asking God to show you more.

If you are using it on one specific occasion, you might like to prepare for your outing using the prayer overleaf... and/or use some of the reflection questions at the end of this resource, after you've come back.

(If you're interested in more resources like this, take a look at our 'God revealed in creation prayer walk' at <http://thesanctuarycentre.org/resources/prayer-stations-god-revealed-in-creation.pdf>)

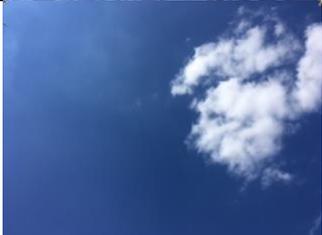
A wild worshipper's prayer

God of the wild and wonderful –
of arcing skies and miniscule, jewelled wings –
set my worship free to explore beyond these walls.
Re-ignite me, excite me and creatively delight me
as your word comes newly alive
through the colourful witness of your world.
Re-tune my senses, sharpen my mind
and quicken my spirit to your presence
as I look, hear, smell, touch and taste more of your goodness
and lead me out into greater adventures
of discovering you and caring for all you have made.

Field guide

The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders; where morning dawns, where evening fades, you call forth songs of joy. (Psalm 65:8)

Wild wonder to spot	Related scripture to inspire worship while looking at, or experiencing, it...	
 <p>birds flying</p>	<p>In the LORD I take refuge. How then can you say to me: “Flee like a bird to your mountain.” (Psalm 11:1) “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” (Jesus in Matthew 6:26)</p>	
 <p>birds of prey</p>	<p>Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:31)</p>	
 <p>birdsong</p>	<p>Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. (Psalm 150:6) Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. (Psalm 96:1)</p>	
 <p>breeze</p>	<p>By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. (Psalm 33:6)</p>	

	calves	But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves . (Malachi 4:2)	
	change of season	There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens (Ecclesiastes 3:1)	
	clouds	He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. (Psalms 104:3) “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.” (Jesus in Mark 13:26)	
	deer	As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. (Psalms 42:1-2) He makes my feet like the feet of a deer ; he causes me to stand on the heights. (Psalms 18:33)	
	flowers	“Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith!” (Jesus in Luke 12:27-28)	
	fruit growing	But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23) Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. (Galatians 6:9)	
	gate	I am the gate ; whoever enters through me will be saved. (Jesus in John 10:9)	
	geese flying in formation	<i>There's no scripture reference for this one. But the Celtic church – who were definitely forerunners in practising wild worship – used the wild goose as their symbol for the Holy Spirit... think about how other geese follow the lead goose; and also how feisty, as well as graceful, geese are!</i>	

	grass	The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever. (Isaiah 40:8)	
	lambs	He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter... (Isaiah 53:7)	
	leaves	On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:2)	
	mountain	Your righteousness is like the highest mountains . (Psalm 36:6) Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? (Psalm 24:3) From the ends of the earth I call to you... as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. (Psalm 61:2)	
	moon and stars	When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? (Psalm 8:3-4) Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars. (Psalm 148:3)	
	oak tree	They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendour. (Isaiah 61:3)	
	pasture / meadow	The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. (Psalm 23:1-2)	
	path	Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths , ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. (Jeremiah 6:16) You provide a broad path for my feet, so that my ankles do not give way. (Psalm 18:36) Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths . (Psalm 25:4)	

	rain	It is the Lord who sends the thunderstorms. He gives showers of rain to all people, and plants of the field to everyone. (Zechariah 10:1) Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains , like the spring rains that water the earth." (Hosea 6:3)	
	rainbow	I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. (Genesis 9:13) And the one who sat there [on heaven's throne] had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. (Revelation 4:3)	
	river	There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. (Psalm 46:4) Let the rivers clap their hands... for joy. (Psalm 98:8) Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away. (Song of Songs 8:7)	
	rock	My salvation and my honour depend on God; he is my mighty rock , my refuge. (Psalm 62:7) "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock ." (Jesus in Matthew 7:24)	
	sand	How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand — when I awake, I am still with you. (Psalm 139:17-18)	
	sea	He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. (Psalm 33:7) Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. (Psalm 42:7) You rule over the surging sea ; when its waves mount up, you still them. (Psalm 89:9)	
	seeds or seed pods	As the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations. (Isaiah 61:11) "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed , you can [move mountains]." (Jesus in Matthew 17:20)	
	sheep	When he saw the crowds, [Jesus] had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Matthew 9:36) "[the shepherd's] sheep follow him because they know his voice... I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." (Jesus in John 10:4,11)	

	sky	The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. (Psalm 19:1-4)	
	soil or earth	“But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” (Jesus in Matthew 13:23)	
	sparrows	“Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows .” (Jesus in Luke 12:6-7)	
	stones	The whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen... Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.” (Luke 19:37-40)	
	swallows	My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young— a place near your altar, LORD Almighty, my King and my God. (Psalm 84:2-3)	
	swifts	Even the stork in the sky knows her appointed seasons, and the dove, the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration. But my people do not know the requirements of the Lord. (Jeremiah 8:7)	
	spring	My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? (Psalm 42:2) “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.” (Jesus in John 4:13-14)	
	sun	For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favour and honour; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. (Psalm 84:11) He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun . (Psalm 37:6)	

	sunrise	But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. (Malachi 4:2) Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)	
	sunset	It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High, proclaiming your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night (Psalm 92:1-3) From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets , the name of the Lord is to be praised. (Psalm 113:3)	
	tree roots	But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit. (Jeremiah 17:8)	
	view on a high place	The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it. (Psalm 24:1)	
	vine (tomato or grape)	"I am the vine ; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (Jesus in John 15:5)	
	wild animals or insects	Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths... wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds... (Psalm 148:7,10)	

(All scripture references are from the NIV. All images are © the Sanctuary or used by permission under CC0 Creative Commons/Public Domain)

Reflective or discussion questions to use after a specific time of wild worship:

1. How did you feel God grow your connection to him, or deepen your understanding of his word, through your wild worship time?
2. What specific sights or experiences particularly struck you, or did you especially enjoy?
3. Did any aspects of creation become more valuable – or more meaningful for you – as a result of connecting them to scripture?
4. What would you love to see or experience from the field guide that you haven't yet found? Where or when could you go to explore finding this?
5. Can you think of any other things you'd like to add to your own version of the field guide?
6. How might you build more wild worship into your life and/or share this approach with others you know?