

## Outdoor Church: Rain

This is a good session to do on a wet day! Bring your umbrellas! In any case, ask everyone to bring a bottle of water. For children, you could use books like *The Water Cycle*, *The Drop in your Drink*, or *Weather in 30 Seconds* to show diagrams of the water cycle – or print off a diagram.

### 1. Opening Prayer / Worship

### 2. The Water Cycle

> Give everyone a glass of water / Ask them to hold their bottles of water. *Ask and discuss:*

- When it rains, how do you feel? What do people at school / work say when it rains?
- If you were an alien visiting the earth, and you came to a house in Britain where they were talking about the rain, would you think rain was a good or bad thing?
- Even though rain is annoying sometimes, why is it important?

**Rain is part of the water cycle.** Water cycles round endlessly. It evaporates from warming ground, or through the transpiration of leaves. It turns to vapor and rises, and the wind moves it around. When the conditions are right, it condenses and falls again. It's an ongoing process of transformation, one state to another, that has been going on forever.

Water can't be destroyed. It never wears out. It simply transforms and moves. And that means that the same water falling as rain today has fallen before. It fell on your ancestors and dripped from their thatched roofs. The water running down your cheek today once rolled down the long back of a dinosaur.

- Everyone have a sip. That water has been drunk before.

### **Ask: Where does water come from? Anyone know?**

Scientists trying to date water recently discovered that our water goes back even further than that, and is older than the earth itself. In fact, up to half of our water pre-dates our own solar system, and existed as ice crystals in the cocktail of dusty matter that our own sun formed from. That makes it over 4.6 billion years old. So yes, it's drizzle. But it's primordial space-drizzle.

**It's easy to forget when it comes so freely out of the tap, but water is precious.** There's no life without water, no plant or animal that can do without it, including ourselves.

- Ask: What percentage of your body is water? (70% / nearly three quarters) That is, within your cells
- What about the planet – how much of the earth’s surface is water? (70% - the same!)

**Optional** (better on a dry day): Draw a picture of your body in your journal, then colour in 70% of yourself in blue to show that 70% of what is in your cells is water!

**Optional:** Bring a print out of a world map, and colour in the blue oceans.

When scientists go looking for life on other planets, the first thing they look for is water. If a planet doesn’t have water, like the moon – it won’t have life. If it does have water, like Jupiter’s moon Europa, then maybe it does.

### 3. Make a rain gauge

Using a plastic bottle, scissors and a marker pen, make a rain gauge to take home and measure the rainfall over a week in your garden.

<https://www.science-sparks.com/weather-make-a-rain-gauge/>

### 4. Symbolism of Water

Given how vital it is to life, it’s little wonder that water is so richly symbolic in so many religions. In the Bible, it’s mentioned over 700 times – that’s more often than prayer, or faith.

Ask:

- Can you think of any stories in the Bible that involve water? (Noah, Elijah, Jonah, Red Sea, Lake Galilee – calming the storm, fishermen follow Jesus)
- What is a big Christian symbol that involves water? (clue, John the Baptist)

The imagery of water is used for forgiveness and cleansing, for refreshment and new life. It’s also a symbol of divine blessing, demonstrating how God upholds the universe, sustains life, and gives us what we need to flourish.

“God gives rain to the earth and sends water on the fields” we read in Job. “You visit the earth and water it” says Psalm 65. “The river of God is full of water”

Or in Isaiah, God’s purposes are quite directly compared to the water cycle and what it achieves: “Rain and snow fall from the sky and don’t return without watering the ground. They cause the plants to sprout and grow, making seeds for the farmer and bread for the people. The same thing is true of the words I speak. They will not return to me empty. They make the things happen that I want to happen, and they succeed in doing what I send them to do.”<sup>ii</sup>

### 4. Rain and climate change

In the UK, your rain gauge will probably fill up quickly in the autumn/winter time. But climate change is affecting rainfall here and around the world.

The world is getting hotter, which means a warmer atmosphere. And warmer atmosphere carries more water vapour. That means when it does rain, we are seeing more heavy rain and flooding.

At the same time, some parts of the world are *not getting enough* rain, leading to drought. That means harvests are failing, and people go hungry.

Human activity – travel, factories, food production (especially meat) – is driving climate change. Let's take some time to pray for humans to change our systems over to renewable energy and also to our diets, so that the climate can settle down again.

> Take some time to pray about climate change in small groups / from the front.

## 5. Prayer

The next time you're out in the rain, see if you can catch a glimpse of God through the droplets. May you find in them the sustaining, life-giving generosity of God, and the refreshment of divine presence. Let's pray this together (people could join in with the refrain, "God send the rain")

### **A rain prayer**

Fall on the fields and water the grain

God send the rain

To bring new life to the driest plain

God send the rain

Bring deserts back to life again

God send the rain

Rain healing and strength to those in pain

God send the rain

Rain freedom to those who live in chains

God send the rain

Bring peace where there is war and blame

God send the rain

Father, wash over our sins, and our shame

God send the rain

For this whole world is your domain

God send the rain

And we pray all this in Jesus name

God send the rain

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This was a session from Park Church Luton ([www.parkchurchluton.com](http://www.parkchurchluton.com) )

See also [www.engageworship.org](http://www.engageworship.org) for creative ideas for all-age worship.

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<sup>i</sup> Psalm 65:9 ESV, Isaiah 5:10-11 NCV