

We all need water to live, but what would your life look like if you had to spend every day in the water? What if you went to a pool, and lived there for the rest of your life? What would that be like?

Many animals live like this, but instead of pools, they live in lakes, rivers, and wetlands. We're going to be talking about freshwater ecosystems, the plants and animals that live near freshwater. Just to remind you, freshwater is water that doesn't have too much salt in it for us to drink. If it's not saltwater, it's freshwater.

As I talk about freshwater ecosystems, I want you to draw pictures of the things you like most about these amazing ecosystems. You can draw fish swimming in a river, or a frog catching a fly, or anything else that could live in freshwater. To start off, we'll talk about one of God's greatest animals, the beaver.

Do you know what a beaver's favorite food is? It's wood, the sugary wood just underneath the bark of a tree. This wood isn't just tasty for beavers, it helps keep their teeth strong. Beavers end up chopping down trees as they eat. They'll eat some of the tree, but they don't eat all of it. The parts they don't eat, they use for something incredible. They'll take the branches and logs of the tree, bring them into the water, and start building a dam with the wood. A dam is a wall that stops water from a river flowing.

These beaver dams will stop the river from running, creating a lake from all the stopped water. Beavers need lakes to raise their families, so they make their own lakes. That's so smart! Other animals can use these lakes to live and drink from, creating a habitat for many plants and animals. But beavers don't stop at making just a dam. They'll take more branches and build their own houses in the water. These are called beaver lodges.

Building all those dams and lodges, beavers sure work hard. They love building so much, they'll build anywhere they can hear running water. Why do you think beavers love building so much? Why do they work so hard? That's right, beavers need places to protect themselves and their families. And it helps they build with their favorite food. It's like if I built my house out of burritos, yum!

But beavers aren't the only animal living in freshwater. Let's look at a very special fish, the salmon. Most fish can only live in saltwater, or only in freshwater, fish get sick if they swim somewhere they shouldn't be. But not salmon, salmon can live in both freshwater and saltwater.

Salmon are born in freshwater rivers. Then, after a few months, the salmon swim down the rivers all the way to the ocean, where they live most of their lives. But when they start getting older and want to start a family, salmon will leave the ocean and go back to the river where they were born. They'll swim the opposite way to the river, pushing against the water. They'll have to swim past rocks, waterfalls, and predators. Salmon have to face many dangerous things. But after a lot of hard work, they find the lake or pond they were born in to lay their own eggs. These new eggs hatch after a few months, and they start all over again.

Work is a part of everyday life for most animals that live in the wild. They work to take care of themselves, and their kids.

Do you have to work too? Yes, you do. You're working right now, learning about the world around you. Everyone has to work to live well, and that's a good thing. In the Old Testament in 2 Chronicles 15:7, it says, "Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded."

This scripture tells us that if we keep working hard in this life, God will reward that hard work, eventually. God has called all of us to work, for ourselves and for others. In the New Testament, in John 5:17, Jesus taught, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Jesus is saying that God works all the time. It makes sense, God is everyone's Heavenly Father, and we need Him for so many things. Heavenly Father must always be busy, and yet He still listens and knows what we're doing every day. God tells Moses in Moses 1:39, "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."

God works so that you and I can come back and live with Him again. He does everything so we can have a chance to see Him again.

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How do you feel when you work? Can it be hard? Can it be fun? What does it feel like when you finish your work?

How can you work in your home to make it a better place? How can you work to help your family and your friends?

Just like animals, we have work to do every day. Whenever you are blessed with an opportunity to work, remember, "Work is essential to our happiness and personal growth."