



EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER GUIDE

Surprise! Stories of Discovering Jesus Early Childhood Leader Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus surprised the people he met! People in the temple were amazed by the conversations and questions they had with a boy named Jesus. Hungry people in a crowd had more than enough food to eat when Jesus provided plenty of food. Two travelers were sad that Jesus died, but then they were surprised when Jesus started walking alongside them! With each surprise, people discovered more about Jesus.

Are you ready to be surprised by Jesus? Are you ready to ask questions and discover more about him? Then come along on the journey, open your eyes, and see what you will find!

The five sessions in the curriculum match the interests and developmental levels of children ages 4–5. You will worship together, learn about God, play games, and sing songs. You will eat snacks, move around, hear stories, and be surprised as you discover Jesus!

Allow for flexibility as you set up the area and organize the time. While some children can engage in stories and activities for a longer period of time, others have shorter attention spans and will need to move their active bodies. Wherever possible, provide opportunities for the children to move around between activities. Organize the space to accommodate the different needs and interests of children. Invite youth or other adults to help you with the children, especially during snack, craft, and game times.

Young children:

- enjoy repetition and routine,
- are energetic and need change in activities,
- have short attention spans,
- thrive on positive reinforcement, and
- like to attempt things they know they can do successfully.

SCHEDULE

The K–5 VBS program is structured for a 2-hour-and-15-minute period of time, but some programs may be longer or shorter depending on the amount of time available. Check with the VBS Director to see how long each day will be.

The Early Childhood curriculum has plenty of ideas for a 2-hour-and-15-minute program, but you may need to be flexible when planning, should the length be different. Choose activities best suited for your schedule, space, and the children in your Bible school.

WORSHIP OPTIONS

The *Surprise!* K–5 VBS program includes a time of worship and drama. Though worship and dramas are intended for older children, they are also appropriate for this age group. If you choose to attend with the larger group, you may want to shorten other parts of the session. Talk about the worship experiences and dramas to be sure the children understand them.

ROOM ARRANGEMENT

Prepare different spaces for activities to allow for movement. If the meeting area is small, however, the same space may be used for all of the activities.

- Include a table so that there is an area for activities, crafts, and snacks.
- Create a story area large enough to accommodate children.
- Have a space devoted to quiet items such as books, puzzles, and coloring sheets. Children may pursue these activities as they finish group activities.
- Have a large space designated to play games and do movements together. Some active ideas are appropriate for the outdoors if there is a suitable area.

STORYTELLING

Practice the Bible stories before presenting them to the children. Each session uses props to tell the story. Bring these supplies to the storytelling area in a backpack or bundled in a cloth tied to a walking stick. As the children watch, take out the story cloth and set up the props. Stay silent and focused on the props. When ready to begin the story, make eye contact with each of the children, and begin.

If there are sufficient volunteers for VBS, invite someone to play the role of the storyteller. The storyteller will dress as a traveler, carrying the bag of props, and leave after the story.

Keep the props available so that the children can use them to retell the story on their own.

Wooden craft sticks with faces drawn on them represent characters in the stories. Create them for Day 1, then keep them in a safe place so that they can be reused. In addition, a story cloth is also used each day. Other props are set on top of it as the story is told. Any piece of cloth will do, such as a bandana, towel, sheet, and so forth.

Storytelling props

- **Day 1:** story cloth, wooden blocks, 15 to 20 wooden craft sticks, fine tipped marker, block of Styrofoam or play dough, backpack
- **Day 2:** story cloth, craft stick people, fine tipped marker, two pipe cleaners, play dough, backpack
- **Day 3:** green cloth or paper, blue cloth or paper, play dough, craft stick people, paper bread and fish, baskets, backpack
- **Day 4:** story cloth, wooden blocks, two battery-operated tealights, backpack
- **Day 5:** story cloth, craft stick people, bread, wooden blocks, backpack

After the story, allow time for children to think about it. You may ask some of the questions that are offered, and children may share their responses or think quietly. You do not need to ask all of the questions; simply choose ones according to your group's interests.

ACTIVITIES

Children are invited to respond to the Bible story through *Surprise!* activities that include snacks, crafts, games, and activities in *My Book of Stories*. Choose activities according to the time and space available. Adapt them to meet the needs of the leaders, children, and space. Do activities as one large group or in smaller groups. Be sure to have several youth and adults on hand to help. If you choose crafts, create a sample ahead of time so that children can see what they will make.

A book list is included with each session. Books have been chosen because they go along with the theme of the day, and you may want to read to the children if you have time. Choose from the book list or find others that go along with the theme.

Tip: Keep play dough, drawing supplies, building blocks and other items on hand to pull out if children arrive early or have extra time while waiting for others to finish activities.

MUSIC

The *Surprise!* CD includes music that goes along with each daily theme. Some songs are especially appropriate for young children, and they are mentioned in the session. Play music as children gather in the room, and also for children to sing along with while working on projects or playing.

The following are suggestions for leading preschoolers in music:

- Sing songs from the CD.
- Sing other familiar songs.
- Invite a guest to sing a song to the children.
- Listen quietly to the CD.
- Incorporate movement along with music.
- Create hand motions to act out the songs.
- Have children use rhythm or other instruments.
- Chant song lyrics rather than singing them.
- Record the children singing, and play it back for them.

Be sure to practice songs ahead of time so that you know how to lead them.

BIBLE MEMORY

The same memory verse will be used each day so that by the end of the week the children will know the verse.

Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. —Mark 10:14b

Help the children learn the verse by teaching it to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” (p. 6).

Let the little children come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
let the little children come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
do not stop them (*shake your head and waggle your finger “no”*).

For it is to such as these (*stretch out your right arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
such as these (*stretch out your left arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
such as these (*stretch out your right arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
for it is to such as these (*stretch out your left arm with a broad gesture to the children*)
that the kingdom of God belongs (*raise both hands up high*)!

Be sure to sing the Bible memory verse several times to practice putting all of the syllables with the notes. Some will be sung fast, while others will be sung slowly.

LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME

1 Let the lit - tle chil - dren come to me, come to me, come to me.
2 For it is to such as these, such as these, such as these,

Let the lit - tle chil - dren come to me. Do not stop them.
for it is to such as these the King-dom of God be - longs.

REST TIME AND SNACK

Snack suggestions are included with each session plan and you may use the suggestions or plan your own snacks. Invite adults and youth who are not directly working with the children to prepare the snacks and to clean up afterward. Have napkins or small plates on hand, as well as cups for water or juice. Make sure children either wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before eating.

As you begin snack time, offer a prayer of thanks to God. You may wish to say a simple prayer such as: *Thank you, Jesus, for this good food and the strength it gives us. Amen.* Or maybe your church has a favorite spoken or sung prayer the children can repeat together. You may also wish to let the children lead out in prayer, saying prayers they have learned at home or making up their own prayers.

Snack suggestions (more explanation given in each session)

- **Day 1:** (choose one) 1. trail mix or 2. unleavened bread (or matzo); water or juice
- **Day 2:** gingerbread cookies shaped like children; assorted frosting, candies, sprinkles, dried fruit for decoration; water or juice
- **Day 3:** (choose one) 1. mini pitas or crackers with tuna salad or goldfish crackers or 2. fruit kabobs; water or juice
- **Day 4:** popcorn; water or juice
- **Day 5:** (choose one) 1. monkey bread (*also known as pluck-it*) or 2. bread or biscuits; water or juice

Be aware of children with gluten intolerance or nut or other allergies. Have alternative foods on hand if necessary.

Include a quiet time after the snack for children to rest. Be sure to provide blankets, pillows, or towels for resting on the floor.

PLAN AHEAD

Read through this guide and the sessions, including the Bible backgrounds, stories, and activities. Plan what you will do and gather the materials you will need. Open yourself to God's Spirit as you prepare to teach the children. The children will learn and develop through your interactions with them.



OFFERING PROJECT

We have teamed up with Catholic Charities USA, the official domestic relief agency of the U.S. Catholic Church, to include an offering project suggestion. You may alternately or in addition choose to promote another service organization.

To collect the offering, place a big basket on a stool or table at the entrance to the room, and invite children to place their offering in the basket as they enter for worship each day. Near the end of the worship time, a leader will take the basket to the front of the room and make connections to the day's theme. The basket will then be raised as the leader says a simple prayer: *Bless these gifts, O God.* This ritual is similar to the one Jesus used to break and share bread in the stories presented on both Day 3 and Day 5.

The offering basket will be used during the drama in Day 3 to gather the leftover loaves and fish.

A Message from Catholic Charities USA

Over the last 10 years, the Catholic Charities ministry has helped more than 6.5 million people affected by all kinds of disasters: floods, hurricanes, mudslides, tornadoes, ice storms, droughts, wildfires, explosions, violence, and environmental damage. But the need has only increased. Now, more than ever, we need to support our brothers and sisters through these challenges.

CCUSA provides training in disaster preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation. In particular, agencies anticipate and respond to the elevated risks and challenges of vulnerable populations impacted by disasters. With a national reach through a local presence, Catholic Charities helps people through both the immediate and the long-term process of recovery and restoration.

What Can Our Vacation Bible School Do?

1. Pray. Pray for health and well-being of those impacted by disasters, as well as those who are working hard to help them. You may choose to use or adapt one of the prayers found at <http://bit.ly/disaster-prayers> and <http://bit.ly/ccusa-disaster-prayer>.

2. Inform teachers, children, and parents. The more you learn about disaster relief, the more you'll understand how to help. Many of us are not aware of the impact natural disasters on the poorest of the poor and in parts of the U.S. far from the mainland (e.g. the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico). Learn more at <http://bit.ly/ccusa-disasters> and elsewhere.

3. Donate. One of the best ways to help is through donating to accredited nonprofit organizations that are responding to the need. Learn how to donate at CatholicCharitiesUSA.org.

4. Advocate. Speak out to make sure our government is using our resources wisely to help those in need. For example, see: <http://bit.ly/ccusa-advocacy>.

5. Use Social Media. Follow and retweet @CCharitiesUSA on Twitter for the latest updates and spread the word about the need to your friends and family.

Offering visuals

Plan a visual way to recognize the amount of money contributed for the project. Because bread is featured in two of the VBS stories, use a basket and loaves of bread or rolls as the offering visual. Place the bread or rolls into the basket depending on how much money is contributed. For example, one loaf or roll could indicate \$5 or \$10. The basket and bread or rolls could be real, or created from cardboard cutouts and hung on the wall. Review the amount each day and be sure to thank children for their generosity!

Also consider posting a large map (preferably one including the Caribbean) to highlight where disasters have taken place in the last year or two. You could position color coded stickers for different types, perhaps adding some each day as you tell the group about them. For lists by year, see: <http://bit.ly/2017-disasters>.

Day 1

DISCOVERING JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

Biblical background

The Bible shares just this one story about Jesus' boyhood. It is an important one for children, helping them to understand that Jesus was young once, too.

At age 12, Jesus travels with his parents to Jerusalem to observe the Passover festival. We know from Mary and Joseph's presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple that they observed traditional religious events and rituals. It is no surprise that they make the journey to Jerusalem for Passover. Their faith is a natural part of their life and part of their identity.

Most of the story takes place after the event, as the family travels home. After a full day of walking, Mary and Joseph discover that Jesus is not with them. They are traveling with a group—a community of family and friends—and assumed Jesus was walking with others.

When they realize Jesus is missing, they return to Jerusalem and search for three days until they find him in the temple. Jesus is with the teachers, talking, listening, and asking questions. The teachers are surprised and amazed at his understanding!

When Mary tells Jesus how worried they were, he responds, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (v. 49). Neither Mary nor Joseph fully understands, but Mary treasures the experience.

This story reminds us to take children and their faith experiences seriously, as the teachers did with the young Jesus. Young children are capable of reflecting about God, so embrace their enthusiasm and allow their faith to grow.

Hearing a story about Jesus as a boy allows children to see him as someone who understands them. When Jesus was in the temple, he asked questions as many children do. As a result, he grew in wisdom. Children will learn that they can ask questions, too, and learn and grow in their faith.

Today's Bible experience

Luke 2:41-52

Summary

Jesus' parents travel home to Nazareth after observing Passover in Jerusalem, and discover that 12-year-old Jesus is not with them. They return to Jerusalem and find Jesus in the temple, asking questions and talking with the teachers.

Bible memory

Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. —Mark 10:14b

Faith focus

We can ask questions and grow in wisdom.

Advance preparation

Supplies

- Bible
- Name tags (copy from p. 60); safety pins or tape
- *Surprise!* CD, songbook, and CD player
- *My Book of Stories* student book (one per child)
- Markers or crayons, and stickers for name tags
- Storytelling props: story cloth, wooden blocks, 15 to 20 wooden craft sticks, fine tipped marker, block of Styrofoam or play dough, and backpack
- Snack (p. 17)
- Materials for chosen *Surprise!* activities (pp. 17–19)

Preparation

1. **Pray for the leaders and the children** who will participate in Bible school today.
2. **Prepare items for snack** (p. 17).
3. **Choose activities** from pages 17–19 and gather necessary materials and supplies. Some of the activities require advance preparation.
4. **Create name tags** that can be pinned or taped to children's shirts, or punch a hole through the name tag and string with yarn to create a necklace. Copy them from page 60.
5. **Draw faces on the wooden craft sticks** to use as characters for the Bible story. Use 10 to 15 craft sticks for the group traveling to Nazareth, and another 5 for the teachers at the temple. Save the crafts sticks to use throughout VBS.
6. **Practice telling the Bible story** with the props (pp. 13–14). Keep all of the Bible story props in a backpack.
7. **Practice singing the Bible memory verse** to the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" (p. 15).
8. **Practice the "We Have Come to Bible School" rhythm** (p. 16).

GROUP EXPERIENCE

Gathering

1. **Play the *Surprise!* CD** as background music as the children arrive.
2. **Greet the children** and welcome them to Bible school.
3. **Give name tags to the children** and help them print their names on the tags. Invite the children to decorate their name tags by adding drawings or stickers. Pin or tape the name tags to their clothing, or place them around their necks if name tags are strung with yarn. Make sure adults wear name tags too.
4. **Invite the children to sit in a circle** on the floor in the story area. Say to the child on your right, *(Child's name), I'm so glad you're here today.* Invite that child to turn to the next child and repeat the phrase, saying the correct name. Be ready to offer help with names.
5. **Sing together from the *Surprise!* CD** and songbook.
 - “The Temple”
 - “Bless the Lord”
 - “Just Like You”
6. **Introduce the offering project** and collect the offering (pp. 8–9). Let the children know that an offering will be collected each day of Bible school, and be sure they understand the offering project so that they know what they are contributing toward.

Bible story

1. **Ask the children what celebrations they look forward to** every year. Be sure to share your favorites too.
2. **Explain that Passover is a special festival** to help remember something amazing that God did. Tell the children that each year Jesus' family walked for at least three days from their home in Nazareth to the city of Jerusalem to celebrate Passover!
3. **Open the Bible to Luke 2** and show children where the story is found. Explain that there are stories in the Bible about Jesus when he was a baby, and Jesus when he was an adult, but this is the only Bible story about Jesus when he was a child.
4. **Say:** *Every year, Jesus and his family traveled from Nazareth to Jerusalem for the special Passover celebration. The year Jesus was 12, something different happened.*
5. **Bible story:** Luke 2:41-52

(Open the backpack and set out the story props. Lay out the story cloth. Put a group of wooden blocks, representing the city of Jerusalem, at one end of the cloth. Put several people/craft sticks together at the “temple” and more scattered throughout the city.)

When the Passover celebration was finished, Jesus' family and friends packed up their bags and began the long walk home together. (*Set the block of Styrofoam or play dough just outside Jerusalem and stick many of the people from Jerusalem into it. Move the block away from Jerusalem, to the other end of the story cloth.*) After a whole day of traveling, Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph, looked for him among their friends and family. (*Take two of the people out and move them around to the others as they ask questions.*)

“Have you seen Jesus?” they asked their brothers and sisters.

“Is Jesus with you?” they asked their friends.

No one had seen Jesus. Mary and Joseph hurried back to Jerusalem. (*Walk the Mary and Joseph characters back to Jerusalem and move them about the city as they search.*) They went to the places they stayed. Jesus wasn’t there. They looked in the markets. No one had seen him. They searched the streets and alleyways, but there was no sign of Jesus. They tried for three days to find Jesus.

Finally, they went to the temple. (*Move Mary and Joseph to the temple area.*) Jesus was there! (*Pick up the Jesus character and point to the teachers as you mention them.*) He was sitting with the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. The others in the temple were amazed by the things Jesus said.

Jesus’ mother ran to him and asked, “Oh, Jesus, we have been so worried! Why did you run off like this?”

Jesus said, “Why have you been searching for me? Didn’t you know I would be in my Father’s house?”

Mary and Joseph did not understand, but Mary treasured this memory and kept it in her heart.

The family returned to their home in Nazareth. (*Walk the Mary, Joseph, and Jesus sticks to the rest of the people and add them to the Styrofoam/play dough group.*) As Jesus grew (*touch the Jesus stick*), he became wiser and stronger, bringing joy to both God and people.

Respond to the Bible story

1. **Give children time to think about the story** by asking some of the following questions. The children may share their responses or think quietly.

- I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt when they found out Jesus was not with them.
- I wonder if Mary and Joseph were tired from all of their walking.
- I wonder what Jesus and the teachers talked about.
- What would you like to talk with Jesus about?

2. **Ask the children if they have any questions** about this story. You may want to answer, discuss, or wonder about their questions. Let the children know that vacation Bible school is a good place to ask questions.

3. **Pray.** Explain to the children that when people talk to God, it is called praying. Demonstrate that sometimes when people pray, they sometimes fold their hands and close their eyes.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, thank you for giving us so many stories in the Bible! Please help us know you better when we hear them and talk about them. Amen.*

4. **Introduce the Bible memory verse**, Mark 10:14b. Tell the children that Jesus said these words: “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” Show children where the verse is found in the Bible.

5. **Sing the verse** to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” (p. 6). If your group is able, sing the whole passage. If this is too much for the children, end after “Do not stop them.”

Let the little children come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
let the little children come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
do not stop them (*shake your head and waggle your finger “no”*).

For it is to such as these (*stretch out your right arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
such as these (*stretch out your left arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
such as these (*stretch out your right arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
for it is to such as these (*stretch out your left arm with a broad gesture to the children*)
that the kingdom of God belongs (*raise both hands up high*)!

Be sure to sing the Bible memory verse several times to practice putting all of the syllables with the notes. Some will be sung fast, while others will be sung slowly.

Surprise! activities

1. **Choose several activities** from pages 17–19. Be sure to include a snack during this time, and consider other activities that best suit your group, space, and schedule. Prepare for the activities in advance and have youth or adults ready to help. If a craft will be made, be sure to make a sample one so that the children can see what they are creating.
2. **When it is time to clean up**, chant or sing to the tune of “Here We Go ’Round the Mulberry Bush.”

Do an Internet search if you are not familiar with “Here We Go ’Round the Mulberry Bush.”

This is the way we clean the room,
clean the room, clean the room,
this is the way we clean the room, after Bible school.

Demonstrate your expectations of putting away supplies and cleaning the area. Make sure names are on projects and put them in a safe place so they can be taken home.

Sending

1. **Gather in the story area.** Invite children to sit in a circle to do the “We Have Come to Bible School” rhythm. As leader, rhythmically speak a line (think along the lines of “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt”), keeping the beat by tapping knees. The children will echo the line. Each day a verse about that day’s Bible story will be added.

Do an Internet search if you are not familiar with “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt.”

We have come to Bible school (*children echo*),
we are meeting Jesus (*children echo*).

When Jesus was just 12 years old (*children echo*),
he stayed in the temple (*children echo*),
he asked lots of questions (*children echo*).
I can ask things, too (*children echo*)!

We have come to Bible school (*children echo*),
we are meeting Jesus (*children echo*)!

2. **Look at each child and say the following blessing:**

(Child’s name), God bless you and help you grow wiser and stronger.

As you bless the children, you may wish to gently touch their heads or shoulders, or make the sign of the cross on the back of their hands.

3. **Collect name tags** to use in the next session.
4. **As children leave**, let them know you enjoyed having them in your group and look forward to seeing them again.

SURPRISE! ACTIVITIES

My Book of Stories student book

Turn to page 3 of *My Book of Stories*. Children will use a pencil or crayon to follow the path that Mary and Joseph took as they searched for Jesus.

Snack (choose one option)

1. Trail mix

Jesus, his friends, and his family were on a long journey. Offer children a snack of trail mix in individual plastic bags. Either purchase prepared trail mix or make your own from dried fruits, crackers, cereal, and seeds. Children may wish to take home their leftovers, so label bags. Serve with water or juice.

2. Unleavened bread (or matzo)

Tell children that at Passover, Jesus ate some very special foods, including unleavened bread. Serve with water or juice.

Crafts

1. Play Dough Scenes

Materials:

- Play dough

Give children play dough and invite them to recreate scenes from the story. They can make the temple, Jesus, and other characters and locations in the story. Invite children to use their creations to retell the story.

To make play dough:

- In a bowl mix 2 cups / 500 ml flour and 2 tablespoons / 15 ml alum.
- Heat to boiling 1½ cups / 375 ml water, ½ cup / 125 ml salt, 1 tablespoon / 15 ml oil, and food coloring.
- Stir liquids into dry ingredients.
- Knead until smooth.
- Store in airtight container.

2. Question Tree

Materials:

- Bare tree branch stabilized in a flowerpot with plaster or rocks
- Template from page 61
- Green paper, pencils, and paper clips

Tell children that Jesus and his family took many steps as they walked to the temple. Add that we sometimes have questions when we go places, too. Ask children to think of questions they have had, and use them in this activity.

In preparation, copy the foot template from page 61 onto green paper and cut out at least one per child. Have the children draw (or write) their questions on one side of the footprints. Talk about the questions as a group. See what answers the children come

up with and write these ideas on the reverse of the footprints. Paper-clip the footprints to branches and watch the tree grow!

Add to the question tree through the week if children have additional questions to add.

3. Watch Seeds Grow!

Materials:

- Small pie tin for each child
- Paper towels, seeds
- Plastic bags to cover pie tins
- Twist ties

Write a child's name on each pie tin. Help children line the bottom of their pie tin with damp paper towels. Demonstrate how to sprinkle several fast-growing seeds into their pan. Place each pie tin into a plastic bag and close it with a twist tie.

Talk about what seeds need to grow (light, moisture, warmth). Talk about what children need to grow (food, water, smiles). Keep the seed pans in a sunny place and have the children check their progress each day.

Games and movements

1. Search Walk

Materials:

- Magnifying glass for each child

If outdoor space is available, go on a search walk. Encourage the children to notice little things, such as the joys of looking carefully at a stick or a blade of grass. Do the children have questions about the things they see? Give each child a magnifying glass so that they can look closely at the objects. Give each child an opportunity to share something they discovered. Give thanks to God for the many things the children have seen!

2. Ask, Ask, Grow

Play this game like "Duck, Duck, Goose." Have the children sit on the floor in a circle with one child as It. It walks around the outside of the circle and gently taps the top of each child's head, saying, "Ask" with each tap. After a number of "Asks," It taps one child and says, "Grow!" The sitting child jumps up and races It around the outside of the circle. The player who first arrives at the empty spot sits down, and the other player becomes It. Be sure everyone has the chance to be It.

3. Play Church

Materials:

- Props such as Bibles, songbooks, instruments, offering basket

Jesus and his family went to the temple to worship God. Let the children explore worship by creating their own informal worship service. Give guidance by asking questions about what they would like to include and who would like to play the roles, but let the children be in charge. Offer props similar to what might be used in your church: Bibles, songbooks, musical instruments, offering baskets, and other supplies.

You may also wish to take your group on a tour of the church building to talk about what happens in each space. If there is time, allow children to take turns trying different things such as speaking at the front or into a microphone, playing the piano, washing a few dishes, or collecting garbage.

BOOK LIST

- Card, Michael. Chapter 1 of *Close Your Eyes So You Can See: Stories of Children in the Life of Jesus*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1996.
- McCombs, Margi. *When Jesus Was a Little Boy*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2014.
- Murray, Julie. *Passover*. Edina, MN: ABDO Publishing Group, 2011.
- Weiss, David R. *When God Was a Little Girl*. Chicago, IL: ACTA Publications, 2014. In this book a father does his best to answer his curious daughter's unusual request: "Tell me a story, Daddy... about when God was a little girl."*
- Willems, Mo. *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children, 2004.

* Available for purchase from PastoralCenter.com.

Day 2

DISCOVERING JESUS WITH THE CHILDREN

Biblical background

The story of Jesus blessing the children is a familiar one. People bring children to Jesus, but the disciples stand in their way. Perhaps they feel Jesus is too busy, or perhaps they are caught up in Jesus' words and don't want to be interrupted. Maybe they don't want to let others into their space.

We don't know why the disciples tried to keep children away, but we do know that Jesus was indignant. He insisted that they let the children come. Jesus not only welcomes the children but blesses them, saying, "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." (v. 15)

Jesus embraces the children and all that comes with being a child. This is a marked departure from the culture of the day, in which children had little significance and were seen as weak and defenseless. In this story, the disciples are the ones with power, and they try to use it to keep the vulnerable children away.

But Jesus showed another way—overturning those with power and defending those who are weak. Perhaps the kingdom of God is not about power, but about powerlessness. Perhaps the kingdom of God is not about greatness, but about being vulnerable and humble.

We know Jesus is with us and with the children attending vacation Bible school. Allow time for children to ask questions, or to quietly be present with Jesus. Give them the opportunity to feel heard and blessed.

Children will delight in knowing that Jesus embraces, blesses, and values them. Help them to see Jesus at VBS, through one another, the Bible stories, and the games and crafts. Let children know they are significant to Jesus and that he wants to be with them and bless them.

Today's Bible experience

Mark 10:13-16

Summary

People bring their children to Jesus, but the disciples turn them away. Jesus sees this and insists that they let the children come to him. He takes the children in his arms and blesses them.

Bible memory

Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. —Mark 10:14b

Faith focus

We can receive the blessing of Jesus

Advance preparation

Supplies

- Bible
- Name tags, safety pins or tape
- Extra name tags for new children
- *Surprise!* CD, songbook, and CD player
- *My Book of Stories* student book (one per child)
- Markers or crayons, and stickers for name tags
- Storytelling props: story cloth, wooden craft sticks, fine tipped marker, two pipe cleaners, play dough, and backpack
- Fancy box or gift bag
- Slips of paper
- Snack (p. 27)
- Materials for chosen *Surprise!* activities (pp. 27–29)
- Offering visual (p. 9)

Preparation

1. **Pray for the leaders and the children** who will participate in Bible school today.
2. **Prepare items for snack** (p. 27).
3. **Choose activities** from pages 27–29 and gather necessary materials and supplies. Some of the activities require advance preparation.
4. **Create name tags** for new children that can be pinned or taped to children's shirts, or punch a hole through the name tag and string with yarn to create a necklace.
5. **Write each child's name** on a slip of paper and put it in a fancy box or gift bag. In addition, include names of some children who live far away—either children your group might know or whom you could describe to the group. Be prepared, as children arrive, to add the names of children who are at Bible school for the first time.
6. **Make a Jesus figure from two pipe cleaners** to use in the Bible story.
7. **Cut four or five craft sticks in half** and draw faces on each half. They will represent the children in the Bible story.
8. **Practice telling the Bible story with the props** (pp. 23–24). Keep all of the Bible story props in a backpack.
9. **Practice singing the Bible memory verse** to the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" (p. 25).
10. **Practice the "We Have Come to Bible School" rhythm** (p. 26).

GROUP EXPERIENCE

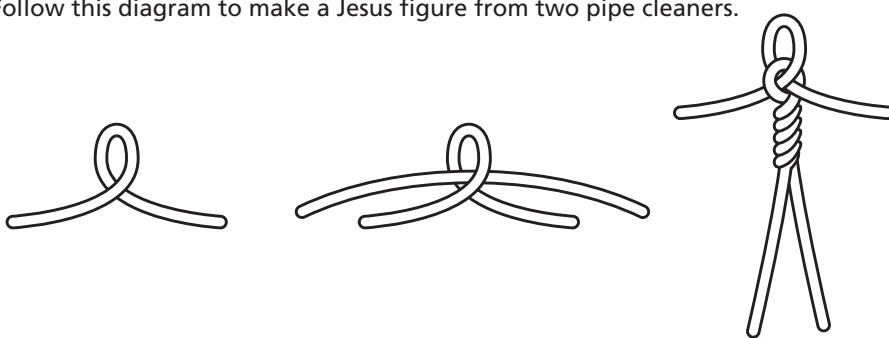
Gathering

1. **Play the *Surprise!* CD** as background music as children arrive.
2. **Greet the children** and welcome them to Bible school.
3. **Give children their name tags** and help them pin or tape the tags to their clothing, or place them around their necks if name tags are strung with yarn. If this is the first day of Bible school for any children, help them make their name tags. Make sure adults wear name tags too.
4. **With the children, check to see if the seeds** have begun to sprout.
5. **Invite the children** to sit in a circle on the floor in the story area. Say to the child on your right, *(Child's name), I'm so glad you're here today.* Invite that child to turn to the next child and repeat the phrase, saying the correct name. Be ready to offer help with names.
6. **Sing together from the *Surprise!* CD** and song book.
 - “Bless the Lord”
 - “Children of God”
7. **Remind children about the offering project.** Look at the display to see how much money has been given. Thank the children for their generosity. Collect today's offering, and remind children that an offering will be collected each day.

Bible story

1. **Tell the children that you have the names of some people** who are deeply loved in your box or gift bag. Let the children help take out one slip of paper at a time. Read each name and, if necessary, talk about who that person is.
2. **Explain that as much as each of these people are loved** by their families and friends, Jesus loves them even more! Add that in today's Bible story, they will hear about a time when Jesus showed how important children are to him.
3. **Open the Bible to Mark 10** and show children where the story is found.
4. **Bible story:** Mark 10:13-16

Follow this diagram to make a Jesus figure from two pipe cleaners.



(Open the backpack and set out the story props. Lay out the story cloth. Put the play dough in the center of the cloth and press it into a wide, low mound. Put the feet of the pipe cleaner Jesus into the mound and add five or six disciples facing him.)

One day, people were bringing their children to see Jesus. (*Place the adult and child stick people in the play dough, set back from Jesus and the disciples.*) They wanted Jesus to gently touch the children and bless them.

The disciples did not want the children there and tried to send them away. (*Turn the disciples to face the adults and children.*)

Jesus was very upset with the disciples. He said, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” (*Move the disciples off to the side.*)

Jesus gathered the children into his arms. (*Curve Jesus’ arms to hold the children and move the children to Jesus’ embrace.*)

He gently touched the children and blessed them.

Respond to the Bible story

1. **Say:** We don't know what Jesus said when he blessed the children. Maybe he said, “Esther, God has wonderful things planned for your life,” or “Nathan, I love the way God’s love shines through you,” or maybe he blessed them with a blessing that has been used for many, many years: “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24–26).
2. **Give children time to think about the story** by asking some of the following questions. The children may share their responses or think quietly.
 - Imagine seeing Jesus sitting in front of you. I wonder what he would say to you.
 - Imagine seeing Jesus sitting in front of you. I wonder what you would say to him.
 - What would you like to talk with Jesus about?
3. **Ask the children if they have any questions** about this story. You may want to answer, discuss, or wonder about their questions. Let the children know that vacation Bible school is a good place to ask questions. If you want, you may continue to add “footprint leaves” to the question tree (pp. 17–18).
4. **Pray.** Explain to the children that when people talk to God, it is called praying. Demonstrate that sometimes when people pray, they fold their hands and close their eyes.
5. **Pray:** *Thank you, Jesus, for (name each child). Thank you for loving them and for wanting them to be with you. Please bless and keep each one. Amen.*
5. **Introduce the Bible memory verse, Mark 10:14b.** Tell the children that Jesus said these words in today’s Bible story. “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”

6. **Sing the verse** to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” (p. 6). If your group is able, sing the whole passage. If this is too much for the children, end after “Do not stop them.”

Let the little children come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
let the little children come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
do not stop them (*shake your head and waggle your finger “no”*).

For it is to such as these (*stretch out your right arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
such as these (*stretch out your left arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
such as these (*stretch out your right arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
for it is to such as these (*stretch out your left arm with a broad gesture to the children*)
that the kingdom of God belongs (*raise both hands up high*)!

Be sure to sing the Bible memory verse several times to practice putting all of the syllables with the notes. Some will be sung fast, while others will be sung slowly.

Surprise! activities

1. Choose several activities from pages 27–29. Be sure to include snack during this time, and consider other activities that best suit your group, space, and schedule. Prepare for the activities in advance and have youth or adults ready to help. If a craft will be made, be sure to make a sample one so that the children can see what they are creating.
2. When it is time to clean up, chant or sing to the tune of “Here We Go ’Round the Mulberry Bush.”

Do an Internet search if you are not familiar with “Here We Go ’Round the Mulberry Bush.”

This is the way we clean the room
clean the room, clean the room,
this is the way we clean the room, after Bible school.

Demonstrate your expectations of putting away supplies and cleaning the area. Make sure names are on projects and put them in a safe place so they can be taken home.

Sending

1. **Gather in the story area.** Invite children to sit in a circle to do the “We Have Come to Bible School” rhythm. As leader, rhythmically speak a line (think along the lines of “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt”), keeping the beat by tapping knees. The children will echo the line. Each day a verse about that day’s Bible story will be added.

Do an Internet search if you are not familiar with “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt.”

We have come to Bible school (*children echo*),
we are meeting Jesus (*children echo*).

When Jesus was just 12 years old (*children echo*),
he stayed in the temple (*children echo*),
he asked lots of questions (*children echo*).
I can ask things, too (*children echo*)!

When Jesus was all grown up (*children echo*),
children came to see him (*children echo*).
Jesus was so happy (*children echo*)!
Jesus loves me too (*children echo*)!

We have come to Bible school (*children echo*),
we are meeting Jesus (*children echo*)!

2. **Look at each child and say the following blessing:**

(Child’s name), the Lord bless you and keep you . . . and give you peace.
(Numbers 6:24, 26b)

As you bless the children, you may wish to gently touch their heads or shoulders, or make the sign of the cross on the back of their hands.

3. **Collect name tags** to use in the next session.
4. **As children leave**, let them know you enjoyed having them in your group and look forward to seeing them again.

SURPRISE! ACTIVITIES

My Book of Stories student book

Turn to page 5 of *My Book of Stories*. Point out the picture of Jesus on the page. Invite the children to draw pictures of children coming to see Jesus, including themselves.

Color the picture.

Snack

Materials:

- Gingerbread kids
- Icing
- Sprinkles
- Dried fruit
- Table knives
- Paper towels
- Cups
- Water or juice

Have the children decorate gingerbread cookies to look like themselves, and then eat them together. Offer water or juice to drink.

Be aware of children with gluten intolerance or nut or other allergies. Have alternative foods on hand if necessary.

Crafts

1. Joy Paintings

Materials:

- Newspaper
- Painting shirts
- Blank paper
- Fingerpaints

In preparation, cover the table with newspaper. Make sure each child wears a painting shirt.

Talk briefly about how the children in the story may have felt when they came to see Jesus. Were they happy, peaceful, excited, hesitant, or otherwise? Provide children with paper and fingerpaints and encourage them to create a picture showing that feeling, or to paint a picture of Jesus and the children.

2. Doorknob Hangers

Materials:

- Doorknob hanger template (p. 62)
- Card stock
- Markers
- Crayons
- Stickers
- Glitter glue
- Other decorative materials

Make copies of the doorknob hanger template (p. 62) on card stock, one per child, and cut them out. Help the children write their names on the dotted line and read the words to them, “(*Child’s name*) is a beloved child of God.” Invite children to decorate the doorknob hanger however they wish.

3. Cards of Blessing

Materials:

- Construction paper or card stock, folded in half (and cut to fit envelopes)
- Markers
- Pencil crayons
- Crayons
- Pencils
- Stickers
- Envelopes
- List of seniors’ names and addresses
- Stamps

Have the children make cards for seniors in your parish, or others who would appreciate them. Discuss what designs or pictures are appropriate for the front of the card, and what words or phrases could be written on the inside. As the children decorate the cards, ask each child what he or she wants written on the inside, and write it. They may write their name on their card, or youth and adults helpers may need to write it for them.

Suggestions of things to write inside are: God bless you, Jesus loves you, I thought about you today.

Games and movements

Jesus loves all the children from all around the world. Play one of these games from another country.

1. *Cinco Marias (Brazil)*

Materials:

- Five smooth, small stones for each group of two to four children

Children in Brazil gather favorite stones to use in playing this game, and they play it in groups of two to four people. Begin by placing five stones on the floor, then choose one. Gently toss the stone into the air, and while it is in the air, use the same hand to pick up one of the stones on the floor. Then, catch the stone that was tossed. Toss the stone again, this time picking up two stones. Continue until all four stones are picked up.

2. *Skippyroo Kangaroo (Australia)*

Invite the children to sit in a circle on the floor. Choose one player to be Skippyroo, who will go into the center of the circle and crouch down with eyes closed. The rest of the children say, "Skippyroo, kangaroo, dozing in the midday sun, here comes a hunter, run, run, run, run." Have one of the children in the circle gently touch Skippyroo's shoulder and say, "Guess who's caught you just for fun?" If Skippyroo correctly guesses who spoke, they swap places and the game begins again. Make sure all the players have the chance to be Skippyroo.

3. *Pilolo (Ghana)*

Materials:

- Several small items that can be hidden, such as stones, coins, and other items

This is a good game to play outside if possible. In preparation, clearly mark a finish line. To begin playing, show children the small objects that will be hidden. Choose one child to be the leader. When the other children turn their backs and close their eyes, the leader hides the objects. After they are hidden, the leader calls out: "Pilolo" (which means "time to search for"). The other players run to find the objects. The first player to find an object and cross the finish line gets one point. Play as long as time and energy allow. The person with the most points at the end of the game wins.

BOOK LIST

- Balika, Susan S. *Jesus Is My Special Friend*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House (Happy Day Books), 2013.
- Card, Michael. Chapter 5 of *Close Your Eyes So You Can See: Stories of Children in the Life of Jesus*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1996.
- Dylan, Bob. *Forever Young*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2008.
- Lloyd-Jones, Sally. *Just Because You're Mine*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2012.
- Walters, Eric. *My Name Is Blessing*. Toronto, ON: Tundra Books, 2013.

Day 3

DISCOVERING JESUS IN THE CROWD

Biblical background

We don't know much about the boy in today's story, but he plays a key role in one of Jesus' miracles. The boy is part of a crowd following Jesus and listening to him speak. The boy, not knowing how long he will be away from home, has brought his lunch along. Imagine his surprise when Jesus' disciples want the food! Why should he give up his lunch? Besides, how could one boy's lunch feed a large crowd?

The boy's food sets the stage for Jesus to perform a miracle that satisfies people's hearts and bodies. Jesus takes the lunch of bread and fish, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to the disciples to distribute. The food not only feeds everyone in the crowd, but there are leftovers! Twelve baskets of bread are carefully gathered so nothing is wasted.

The miracle of this feast has people saying that Jesus is a prophet. They do not yet recognize Jesus' divinity, but know that he must be someone special. The boy has given his lunch and it has blessed others.

God uses our gifts, too. Though we may be surprised at what God asks of us, we should never be surprised at the ways God uses what we give to bless others.

Children and their gifts are important to God. This particular story helps children understand that our contributions, no matter how small or unimportant they may seem, can be blessed and multiplied to do great things. Inviting someone to play, for example, will make that child happy. The child's happiness, in turn, can be passed on to others. Or perhaps children will choose to do an extra chore around the house to help ease the family's schedule. No gift is too small or unimportant for God!

Today's Bible experience

John 6:1-14

Summary

Hungry crowds travel to hear Jesus speak. There is no food except a young boy's lunch of five loaves and two fish. Jesus takes the lunch, blesses it, and the food multiplies to feed everyone.

Bible memory

Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. —Mark 10:14b

Faith focus

We can give to others and bless them.

Advance preparation

Supplies

- Bible
- Name tags; safety pins or tape
- Extra name tags for new children
- *Surprise!* CD, songbook, and CD player
- *My Book of Stories* student book (one per child)
- Markers or crayons, and stickers for name tags
- Storytelling props: play dough, green cloth or paper, blue cloth or paper, craft stick people (disciples, Jesus, and one boy), paper bread and fish, basket, and backpack
- Snack (p. 37)
- Materials for chosen *Surprise!* activities (pp. 37–40)
- Offering visual (p. 9)

Preparation

1. **Pray for the leaders and the children** who will participate in Bible school today.
2. **Prepare items for snack** (p. 37).
3. **Choose activities** from pp. 37–40 and gather necessary materials and supplies. Some of the activities require advance preparation.
4. **Create name tags** for new children that can be pinned or taped to children's shirts, or punch a hole through the name tag and string with yarn to create a necklace.
5. **Gather the wooden craft sticks** from previous Bible stories, or create new ones.
6. **Make paper bread and fish cutouts** for use during the Bible story. Use the templates on page 63.
7. **Practice telling the Bible story** with the props (pp. 33–34). Keep all of the Bible story props in a backpack.
8. **Practice singing the Bible memory verse** to the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" (p. 35).
9. **Practice the "We Have Come to Bible School" rhythm** (p. 36).

GROUP EXPERIENCE

Gathering

1. **Play the *Surprise!* CD** as background music as the children arrive.
2. **Greet the children** and welcome them to Bible school.
3. **Give children their name tags** and help them pin or tape the tags to their clothing, or place them around their necks if name tags are strung with yarn. If this is the first day of Bible school for any children, help them make their name tags. Make sure adults wear name tags too.
4. **With the children, check to see if the seeds** have begun to sprout.
5. **Invite the children to sit in a circle** on the floor in the story area. Say to the child on your right, *(Child's name), I'm so glad you're here today*. Invite that child to turn to the next child and repeat the phrase, saying the correct name. Be ready to offer help with names.
6. **Ask the children a series of questions.** Encourage children to stand whenever their answers to the questions are "yes." If anyone in the group has limited mobility, you may wish to have the children raise hands instead. Ask the following:
 - Do you have brothers or sisters?
 - Do you go to school?
 - Is your favorite color blue?
 - Do you like pizza?
 - Do you have a pet?
 - Is your favorite color purple?

End with these questions:

- Do you like to eat bread?
- Do you like to eat fish?

Tell the children that in today's story, they will hear about people who were very happy to eat some bread and fish.

7. **Sing together from the *Surprise!* CD** and songbook.
 - "Go Make a Difference"
 - "Children of God"
8. **Remind children about the offering project.** Look at the display to see how much money has been given. Thank the children for their generosity. Collect today's offering, and remind children that an offering will be collected each day.

Bible story

1. **Ask the children to talk about a hike or a picnic** that they have gone on. If they have not gone hiking or on a picnic, invite them to share what they think a hike or picnic might be like. Then, ask the children if they have ever been really hungry. Allow time for sharing.
2. **Explain that in today's Bible story** a large group of people went on a walk, and something special happened so that they would have something to eat.
3. **Open the Bible to John 6** and show children where the story is found.
4. **Bible story:** John 6:1-14

(Open the backpack and set out the story props. Lay out the green cloth and set a mound of play dough, to represent a mountain, at the edge of the cloth. Put the blue cloth opposite the green cloth, representing the Sea of Galilee. Stand Jesus, his disciples, and the boy on the mountain.

Children's fingers will represent the people, so have them hold their fingers in front of them, ready to walk.)

The people wanted to be with Jesus, so they followed him to the other side of a big lake called the Sea of Galilee. (*Have children walk their fingers toward the grassy area.*) Jesus went partway up a mountain and looked out at all the people. (*Touch the Jesus figure.*)

"Philip, we need to give these people some food. Where can we buy some bread?" Jesus asked.

(*Touch Philip.*) Philip answered, "Jesus, how can we buy bread for them? I would need to work for six months to earn enough money to buy just a little bit of bread for each person!"

(*Touch the boy figure.*) Andrew said, "There is a boy here who has five loaves of bread and two fish. It is kind of him to share, but how could such a little bit of food make a difference?"

Jesus asked the disciples to have all the people sit down on the grass. There were about five thousand people!

Jesus thanked God for the food and then gave everyone as much bread and fish as they wanted. (*Rip pieces of the paper bread and fish and pass them to all the finger people.*)

When everyone had finished eating, Jesus asked the disciples to gather up the leftovers so that nothing would be wasted. (*Pass around a basket for all the paper bits.*) They collected 12 baskets full of bread!

The people were amazed at what Jesus had done. They knew he was very special.

Respond to the Bible story

1. **Give children time to think about the story** by asking some of the following questions. The children may share their responses or think quietly.

- Imagine walking a long way, just to be near Jesus.
- I wonder how the boy knew that Jesus wanted food for the whole crowd.
- I wonder when you have shared something with others.

2. **Ask the children if they have any questions** about this story. You may want to answer, discuss, or wonder about their questions. Let the children know that vacation Bible school is a good place to ask questions. If you want, you may continue to add "footprint leaves" to the question tree (pp. 17–18).

3. **Pray.** Remind children that when people talk to God, it is called praying.

Pray: *Thank you, Jesus, for making the little boy's lunch feed the whole crowd. Please help me to share what I have, too. Amen.*

4. **Say the Bible memory verse, Mark 10:14b.** Remind children that Jesus said these words in yesterday's Bible story: "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."

5. **Sing the verse** to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” (p. 6). If your group is able, sing the whole passage. If this is too much for the children, end after “Do not stop them.” Try adding actions to the song.

Let the little children come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
let the little children come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
do not stop them (*shake your head and waggle your finger “no”*).

For it is to such as these (*stretch out your right arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
such as these (*stretch out your left arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
such as these (*stretch out your right arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
for it is to such as these (*stretch out your left arm with a broad gesture to the children*)
that the kingdom of God belongs (*raise both hands up high*)!

Be sure to sing the Bible memory verse several times to practice putting all of the syllables with the notes. Some will be sung fast, while others will be sung slowly.

Surprise! activities

1. **Choose several activities** from pages 37–40. Be sure to include snack during this time, and consider other activities that best suit your group, space, and schedule. Prepare for the activities in advance and have youth or adults ready to help. If a craft will be made, be sure to make a sample one so that children can see what they are creating.
2. **When it is time to clean up**, chant or sing to the tune of “Here We Go ’Round the Mulberry Bush.”

Do an Internet search if you are not familiar with “Here We Go ’Round the Mulberry Bush.”

This is the way we clean the room,
Clean the room, clean the room,
This is the way we clean the room, after Bible school.

Demonstrate your expectations of putting away supplies and cleaning the area. Make sure names are on projects and put them in a safe place so they can be taken home.

Sending

1. **Gather in the story area.** Invite children to sit in a circle to do the “We Have Come to Bible School” rhythm. As leader, rhythmically speak a line (think along the lines of “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt”), keeping the beat by tapping knees. The children will echo the line. Each day a verse about that day’s Bible story will be added.

Do an Internet search if you are not familiar with “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt.”

We have come to Bible school (*children echo*),
we are meeting Jesus (*children echo*).

When Jesus was just 12 years old (*children echo*),
he stayed in the temple (*children echo*),
he asked lots of questions (*children echo*).
I can ask things, too (*children echo*)!

When Jesus was all grown up (*children echo*),
children came to see him (*children echo*).
Jesus was so happy (*children echo*)!
Jesus loves me too (*children echo*).

One day a young boy shared his lunch (*children echo*),
so Jesus fed the crowd (*children echo*).
I bless other people, too (*children echo*),
by sharing what I have (*children echo*).

We have come to Bible school (*children echo*),
we are meeting Jesus (*children echo*)!

2. **Look at each child and say the following blessing:**

(Child’s name), the Lord bless you and keep you, and give you the courage to share with others.

As you bless the children, you may wish to gently touch their heads or shoulders, or make the sign of the cross on the back of their hands.

3. **Collect name tags** to use in the next session.
4. **As children leave, let them know you enjoyed them in your group** and look forward to seeing them again.

SURPRISE! ACTIVITIES

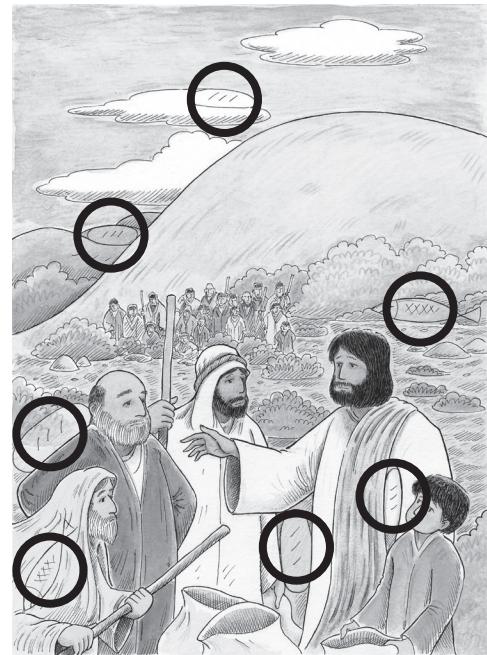
My Book of Stories student book

Turn to page 7 of *My Book of Stories*. Have children find the hidden bread loaves and fish in the picture and circle them.

Snack (choose one option)

1. Serve each child mini pitas or crackers with tuna salad or goldfish crackers. Offer water or juice to drink.
2. Serve fresh fruit kabobs. If you choose the dried fruit kabob activity in crafts, you will want to connect it with this snack. Offer water or juice to drink

Be aware of children with gluten intolerance or nut or other allergies. Have alternative foods on hand if necessary.



Crafts

1. Basket of Fish and Bread

Materials:

- Lightweight paper plates (one per child)
- Strips of brown paper, 1 in / 2 cm wide (several per child)
- Fish (two per child) and bread loaves (five per child) copied from template (p. 63)
- Crayons
- Stapler
- Glue

In preparation, cut slits into paper plates about 1 in / 2 cm apart. Do not cut through the edges of the plates. Cut brown paper into strips that will fit through the slits in the paper plates. Use the template on page 63 to make two fish and five loaves for each child.

Give each child a paper plate and several strips of brown construction paper. Demonstrate how to weave the strips through the slits in the paper plate. Have youth and adults help children weave their own plates. Fold ends that stick out beyond the edge of the paper plate towards the back and have youth and adults staple or glue them in place.

OPTION: Glue the strips onto the paper plate without cutting slits and weaving.

Give each child five paper loaves and two paper fish. Invite children to color them as they wish, and add a picture of someone they would like to share with. Glue these pieces to the baskets.

2. Dried Fruit Kabobs (to share with others)

Materials:

- Assorted dried fruits
- Bamboo skewers
- Plastic wrap or bags
- Labels (p. 64)
- Tape

Everyone needs to wash hands! Demonstrate how to thread assorted dried fruits onto bamboo skewers, and then invite children to do the same. Wrap them in plastic wrap or put them into plastic bags. Tape on a label that says: *The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you . . . and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)* (p. 64). Encourage children to think of someone who they could bless by giving them this treat.

3. Fish and Bread Mosaic

Materials:

- Paper plates
- Glue
- Assorted large dried beans and large seeds

Tell the children that near the place where Jesus performed this miracle, a church was built with a mosaic of a picture of fish and bread built into the floor. Show the children the picture of the Tabgha mosaic.



Give children paper plates and seeds to make their own mosaic. Have youth or adults put glue on the children's paper plates in the shape of a simple fish or loaf of bread, or allow children to create their mosaic designs freestyle. Children will add seeds to the glue to create their own mosaics.

OPTION: Children may color the picture of the Tabgha mosaic on page 13 of *My Book of Stories*.

Games and movements

1. Follow the Leader

People followed Jesus on a long walk to the Sea of Galilee. Go outside, if possible, and have children walk in a line. Have the adult be the first leader and demonstrate what it means to be a leader and how others should follow the leader. Do various movements such as jumping, waving your arms, and others that the children should follow. Allow children to take turns being the leader.

2. Bread Basket (*similar to Upset the Fruit Basket*)

Materials:

- Chairs for the number of players, less one

Make a circle of chairs with one less chair than the number of players. Assign two bread types to your players (whole wheat, pita, muffin, naan, tortilla, crumpet, and so on), with half of the group being one type of bread, and the other half of the group being the second type of bread. Choose one player to be It. It stands in the center of the circle and calls out one bread type. The players who are that type of bread jump up and run to an empty chair. It also runs to an empty chair. Whoever does not get a chair is the new It. It can also call out: "Bread basket!" When this happens, all the players jump up and run to a new chair.

TIP: Caution children against running into each other.

3. Gather It Up relay

Materials:

- Packing peanuts
- Shoe boxes or other small boxes (one per team)
- Masking tape or rope to designate starting and finishing lines

In preparation, designate a starting line and a finish line. Divide the children into teams of three or four children. Have a shoe box or other small box three-quarters full of packing peanuts for each team, and dump the packing peanuts on the floor or ground at the starting line and set the empty boxes at the finish line. Give each team one plate and have the children take turns putting a handful of packing peanuts on the plate, carrying it to the finish line, and putting the packing peanuts into the empty box, and then returning to the starting line to give the plate to the next player. When all of a team's packing peanuts are gathered, they are finished.

Encourage the teams to cheer each other on, rather than competing against one another. Packing peanuts will fall off as children carry their plates—another player can gather these as part of the relay.

OPTION: For an extra challenge, have the children hold the plates on their heads.

Remind children that after Jesus fed the crowd, the disciples gathered up 12 basketfuls of leftovers.

Song

"O, Jesus Fed the Crowd" (to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It")

Do an Internet search if you are not familiar with "If You're Happy and You Know It."

O, Jesus fed the crowd, yes he did!
O, Jesus fed the crowd, yes he did!
'Cause a boy shared his lunch
Of fish and bread,
O, Jesus fed the crowd, yes he did!

O, I can give just like that little boy!
O, I can give just like that little boy!
'Cause I can share what I have,
O, I'll share what I have,
O, I wonder what Jesus will do next!

BOOK LIST

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- Hutchins, Pat. *The Doorbell Rang*. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books, 2006.
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* Available for purchase from PastoralCenter.com.

Day 4

DISCOVERING JESUS AT NIGHT

Biblical background

Nicodemus, a religious leader, has questions about Jesus and wants to learn more. He already knows that no one can do the things that Jesus does apart from God. But what does this mean? He seeks Jesus at night, under cover of darkness, to find out.

Jesus tells Nicodemus that “no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above” (v. 3). Some Bible translations use the phrase “born again” and others use “born anew.” Nicodemus wonders how it is possible to be born as an adult. Jesus replies that a person must be born of water and the Spirit to be part of the kingdom of God and receive new life.

Nicodemus continues to ask questions, and Jesus answers them. He tells Nicodemus about God’s love for the world and about eternal life. He points out that those who believe in God will be in the light. They will do good deeds and people will see them. Perhaps Jesus used this imagery because Nicodemus came to Jesus during darkness. We don’t know why Nicodemus chose to seek Jesus at night, but perhaps he wanted to make sure no one saw them together.

The conversation must have convinced Nicodemus. He is mentioned two more times in the Bible, and in both cases he is supportive of Jesus (John 7:45-52; 19:38-42).

This story is reassuring to children who have lots of questions. They will learn that adult leaders like Nicodemus have questions, too. As a vacation Bible school leader, recognize that it’s okay for you to have questions as well. It is these questions that help us learn more about ourselves, about God, and about our faith. Asking questions shows a desire to learn and grow.

Encourage children to ask their questions. You will all learn a lot!

Today's Bible experience

John 3:1-21

Summary

Nicodemus comes to see Jesus at night. He has seen Jesus’ miraculous signs and wants to know more about him. Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born from above and that God loves the world and wants to save it.

Bible memory

Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. —Mark 10:14b

Faith focus

We can choose to seek Jesus.

Advance preparation

Supplies

- Bible
- Name tags; safety pins or tape
- Extra name tags for new children
- *Surprise!* CD, songbook, and CD player
- *My Book of Stories* student book (one per child)
- Markers or crayons, and stickers for name tags
- Storytelling props: story cloth, wooden blocks, two battery-operated tealights (candles), and backpack
- Snack (p. 47)
- Materials for chosen *Surprise!* activities (pp. 47–49)
- Offering visual (p. 9)

Preparation

1. **Pray for the leaders and the children** who will participate in Bible school today.
2. **Prepare items for snack** (p. 47).
3. **Choose activities** from pages 47–49 and gather necessary materials and supplies. Some of the activities require advance preparation.
4. **Create name tags** for new children that can be pinned or taped to children's shirts, or punch a hole through the name tag and string with yarn to create a necklace.
5. **Draw faces on the sides of the tealights** or their holders (optional).
6. **Find a way to darken the room.** If the room is still bright with the lights turned off, put paper or other coverings over the windows. If the room is too dark with the lights turned off, use a lamp to give a small amount of light.
7. **Practice telling the Bible story** with the props (pp. 43–44). Keep all of the Bible story props in a backpack.
8. **Practice singing the Bible memory verse** to the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" (p. 45).
9. **Practice the "We Have Come to Bible School" rhythm** (p. 46).

GROUP EXPERIENCE

Gathering

1. **Play the *Surprise!* CD** as background music as children arrive.
2. **Greet the children** and welcome them to Bible school.
3. **Give children their name tags** and help them pin or tape the tags to their clothing, or place them around their necks if name tags are strung with yarn. If this is the first day of Bible school for any children, help them make their name tags. Make sure adults wear name tags too.
4. **With the children, check to see if seeds** have begun to sprout.
5. **Invite the children to sit in a circle** on the floor in the story area. Say to the child on your right, *(Child's name), I'm so glad you're here today.* Invite that child to turn to the next child and repeat the phrase, saying the correct name. Be ready to offer help with names.
6. **Ask children to share about something they have seen** outside at nighttime. Tell them that today they will hear about someone who went looking for Jesus during the night.
7. **Sing together from the *Surprise!* CD** and songbook.
 - “We Are the Light”
 - “Go Make a Difference”
8. **Remind children about the offering project.** Look at the display to see how much money has been given. Thank the children for their generosity. Collect today's offering, and tell the children that there is only one more offering that will be collected during vacation Bible school.

Bible story

1. **Invite children to choose a spot in the room** to be their “home.” Ask them to pretend to go to sleep. Darken the room and tell them that when everyone is asleep, you will wake them up, one at a time, to follow you to the story area.
2. **Tap each child on the shoulder** one at a time, and whisper, *Come, follow me.* Quietly lead them to the story area.
3. **Open the Bible to John 3** and show children where the story is found.
4. **Bible story:** John 3:1-21

(Open the backpack and set out the story props. Lay out the story cloth. Set out the wooden blocks to represent a city. Light the Jesus candle and set it at one end of the city. Place the Nicodemus candle [unlit] at the other end.)

One night, a man named Nicodemus went to Jesus to ask some questions. Nicodemus was a Jewish leader. He hurried through the dark streets to the place where Jesus was staying. (*Move the Nicodemus candle next to the Jesus candle.*) He said, “Teacher, I know that you have come from God. I've seen the amazing things you do, and there's no way you could do these miracles without God's help.”

So Jesus said, “If you would like to see the kingdom of God, you must be born from above.”

“Born?” Nicodemus asked. “How can I be born a second time? I’m much too big to fit back inside my mother!”

Jesus explained that God’s Spirit is like the wind—we can’t see it, but we can see what it does—and sometimes it surprises us. He said that we must let God’s Spirit turn us into children of God.

“How can this happen?” Nicodemus wondered.

Jesus said, “God loves all the people in the world so much! God sent his Son so that everyone who puts their hope and trust in him will never truly die, but will be filled with eternal life.”

Jesus explained that God wants to save the world from evil and sadness.

Nicodemus kept listening while Jesus told him that God has given the world a very special light to show them the way to God.

Later stories in the Bible tell us that Nicodemus did choose to put his faith and hope in Jesus. (*Light the Nicodemus candle. Leave the candles lit and the room darkened while responding to the Bible story.*)

Respond to the Bible story

1. **Keep the mood quiet by using a hushed voice** as the children think about the story. They may share their responses or think quietly

- Imagine hurrying through the dark streets to see Jesus. How do you feel? What do you see?
- I wonder if sometimes you have questions in the night.
- I wonder if sometimes you have questions you would like to ask Jesus.

2. **Ask the children if they have any questions** about this story. You may want to answer, discuss, or wonder about their questions. Let the children know that vacation Bible school is a good place to ask questions. If you want, you may continue to add “footprint leaves” to the question tree (p. 17–18).

3. **Tell children that people of all ages want to know more about Jesus.**

Explain that everyone can talk to Jesus anytime—at night like Nicodemus, or in the day like the children and the crowd did. When we talk to Jesus it is called praying and we can pray anytime or anyplace.

Pray: *Thank you, Jesus, for listening to Nicodemus’s questions. Thank you for listening to our questions, too. Help us to know you better. Amen.*

4. **Say the Bible memory verse, Mark 10:14b.** Remind children that Jesus said these words in the Day 2 Bible story. “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”

5. **Sing the Bible memory verse** to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” (p. 6). If your group is able, sing the whole passage. If this is too much for the children, end after “Do not stop them.” Try adding actions to the song.

Let the little children come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
let the little children come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
do not stop them (*shake your head and waggle your finger “no”*).

For it is to such as these (*stretch out your right arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
such as these (*stretch out your left arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
such as these (*stretch out your right arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
for it is to such as these (*stretch out your left arm with a broad gesture to the children*)
that the kingdom of God belongs (*raise both hands up high*)!

Be sure to sing the Bible memory verse several times to practice putting all of the syllables with the notes. Some will be sung fast, while others will be sung slowly.

Surprise! activities

1. **Choose several activities** from pages 47–49. Be sure to include snack during this time, and consider other activities that best suit your group, space, and schedule. Prepare for the activities in advance and have young people or adults ready to help. If a craft will be made, be sure to make a sample one so that children can see what they are creating.
2. **When it is time to clean up**, chant or sing to the tune of “Here We Go ’Round the Mulberry Bush.”

Do an Internet search if you are not familiar with “Here We Go ’Round the Mulberry Bush.”

This is the way we clean the room,
Clean the room, clean the room,
This is the way we clean the room, after Bible school.

Demonstrate your expectations of putting away supplies and cleaning the area. Make sure names are on projects and put them in a safe place so they can be taken home.

Sending

1. **Gather in the story area.** Invite children to sit in a circle to do the “We Have Come to Bible School” rhythm. As leader, rhythmically speak a line (think along the lines of “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt”), keeping the beat by tapping knees. The children will echo the line. Each day a verse about that day’s Bible story will be added.

Do an Internet search if you are not familiar with “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt.”

We have come to Bible school (*children echo*),
we are meeting Jesus (*children echo*).

When Jesus was just 12 years old (*children echo*),
he stayed in the temple (*children echo*),
he asked lots of questions (*children echo*).
I can ask things, too (*children echo*)!

When Jesus was all grown up (*children echo*),
children came to see him (*children echo*).
Jesus was so happy (*children echo*)!
Jesus loves me too (*children echo*).

One day a young boy shared his lunch (*children echo*),
so Jesus fed the crowd (*children echo*).
I bless other people, too (*children echo*),
by sharing what I have (*children echo*).

Nicodemus came at night (*children echo*),
asking Jesus questions (*children echo*).
I can talk to Jesus anytime (*children echo*),
he always hears my prayers (*children echo*).

We have come to Bible school (*children echo*),
we are meeting Jesus (*children echo*)!

2. **Look at each child and say the following blessing:**

(Child’s name), may God bless you and help you to choose Jesus so that his light can shine in you.

As you bless the children, you may wish to gently touch their heads or shoulders, or make the sign of the cross on the back of their hands.

3. **Collect name tags** to use in the next session.
4. **As children leave**, let them know you enjoyed them in your group and look forward to seeing them again.

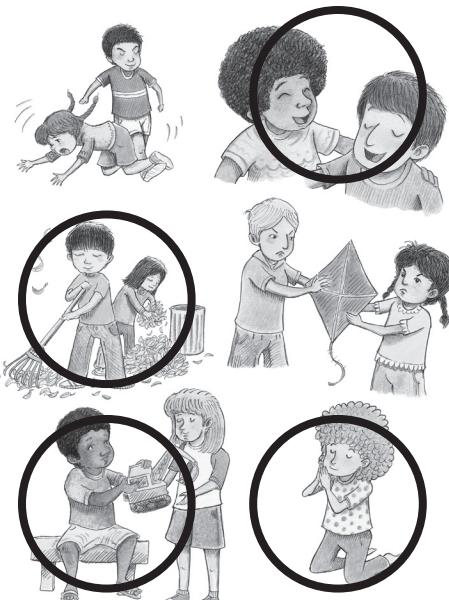
SURPRISE! ACTIVITIES

My Book of Stories student book

Turn to page 9 of *My Book of Stories*. Tell the children that Jesus told Nicodemus that good deeds done for God belong in the light. Have children circle the pictures of deeds that belong in the light of Jesus.

Snack

Make popcorn in a hot air popcorn popper with the children watching. Talk about how we cannot see the air or the heat, but we can feel them and see the change they make in the popcorn kernels. Mention that this is like God's Spirit, in that we cannot see God's Spirit but we can see and feel the difference the Spirit makes in people's lives. Serve the popcorn with water or juice.



Be aware of children with gluten intolerance or nut or other allergies. Have alternative foods on hand if necessary.

Crafts

1. Light of the World Candleholders

Materials:

- Newspaper
- Small baby food jars or votive candleholders (one per child)
- A 50/50 mixture of water and glue
- Paintbrushes
- Squares of tissue paper in assorted colors
- Wax paper
- Battery-operated tealights, one per child

In preparation, cut colorful tissue paper into small squares. Cover the work space with newspaper. Make a 50/50 mixture of water and glue and put it in several shallow containers and place them on the table. Make sure youth and adults are on hand to help the children with this project.

Demonstrate how to "paint" baby food jars or clear glass votive candleholders with the glue mixture. Stick squares of tissue paper to the container, overlapping as desired, and add more glue as necessary. Brush a final layer of glue on top of the tissue paper to seal and keep it sticking. Set it on wax paper to dry. You may wish to let these dry overnight and send them home the next day.

Give children each a battery-operated tealight for their candleholders.

2. Blow Paintings

Materials:

- Newspaper
- Painting shirts
- Paper
- Straws
- Various colors of tempera paint

Remind the children that Jesus said that the Spirit of God is like the wind. In preparation, cover the work area with newspaper. Make sure each child wears a painting shirt.

Give each child a piece of paper and a straw. Put a few drops of paint on each paper and show children how to spread the paint by blowing on it through the straw. Let children create their paintings as they desire. Allow time for everyone to share about their paintings.

3. Let the Light Shine

Materials:

- Newspaper
- Painting shirts
- Paper
- White, yellow, orange, and red crayons
- Paintbrushes
- Watered-down black or blue paint

In preparation, spread newspaper on one table. Put watered-down paint in shallow containers and set them on the newspaper, with paintbrushes alongside. Make sure each child wears a painting shirt.

Give each child a piece of paper and have them draw pictures of something bright such as a candle flame, lightbulb, star, or the sun. They should press firmly with the crayons. After children complete their pictures they should cover them with paint. Make sure youth and adults help.

See the light shining through the darkness!

Games and movements

1. Jesus Says (similar to Simon Says)

Children should know that they can choose to follow Jesus. Begin with an adult leader who says “Jesus says . . . [a movement]” (for example, pat their heads or jump up and down). The children will do the movement. If the leader says to do a movement but does not begin with “Jesus says,” the children should not do the movement.

Ask children if these are things that Jesus calls us to do. Talk about what it means to choose to follow Jesus and the importance of listening carefully. You may want to give examples of what Jesus calls us to do, such as be a good friend, share, and say kind words.

2. Secret Leader

Nicodemus came to Jesus in secret, at night. Play this game to let each child play the role of the secret leader.

Have children sit in a circle. Designate one child to be the guesser. Have the guesser stand facing the wall while you tap the shoulder of the child who will be the secret leader. After the secret leader is chosen, the guesser will stand in the middle of the circle.

Have all the children begin the round by tapping their knees. The secret leader will then change the motion (to something else like clapping, patting heads, crossing arms to slap knees). As other children notice that the secret leader has changed the motion, they should copy the new motion. The guesser tries to figure out who the secret leader is.

Switch roles when the secret leader is correctly guessed or according to your discretion. Give as many children as possible the opportunity to play the roles.

3. Nighttime Sounds

Nicodemus walked through the streets of Jerusalem after dark. Talk with the children about what sounds they hear after dark (sleeping, tiptoeing, whispering, praying, singing lullabies, brushing teeth). Practice making these and other sounds together, then turn it into a game.

Sit in a circle. One child makes a sound. The next child in the circle makes the same sound and adds another sound. The third player repeats the first two and adds a third. Play continues until a player does not remember the sequence. That player starts a new round.

BOOK LIST

- Bateman, Claire Bodreaux. *This Little Light of Mine*. Chicago, IL: ACTA Publications. Angels prepare children for life on earth, and are reassured that their inner light is permanent.*
- Bishop, Jennie. *Jesus Must Be Really Special*. Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 2007.
- Carlstrom, Nancy White. *Does God Know How to Tie Shoes?* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 1996.
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- Omartian, Stormie. *The Prayer That Makes God Smile*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2009.

* Available for purchase from PastoralCenter.com.

Day 5

DISCOVERING JESUS ON THE ROAD

Biblical background

Two men walk to Emmaus discussing the troubling events of the past few days. As they walk, they are joined by a third man, who wants to know what is disturbing them. The men share that “Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people” (v. 19) was handed over by the religious leaders to be sentenced to death and crucified.

The third man is Jesus himself, but the travelers do not recognize him. They continue their story: it has been three days since Jesus’ death, and this very morning his tomb was found empty. What should they think?

Jesus responds by telling the travelers about Moses and the prophets. He interprets scripture for them. Though they still do not recognize Jesus, they ask him to stay with them. As they eat together Jesus takes the bread and blesses it, then breaks it and serves it. The travelers suddenly recognize Jesus, but as they do, he vanishes.

The travelers are inspired. They share that their hearts were “burning within” them (v. 32) as Jesus was talking. They know that something amazing has happened! They return to Jerusalem and share that Jesus has risen and they have seen him.

In this story, 21 years after the boy Jesus discussed and taught scriptures in the temple, he continues to teach. As he took loaves from the boy’s lunch and blessed and broke them to serve the crowd, Jesus breaks bread in this story. Just as Nicodemus had questions for Jesus, so do those who are traveling to Emmaus.

Jesus meets the travelers in their ordinary moments of walking to an ordinary town. Afterward, they realize the significance of this incident. Many times we too encounter God during ordinary moments. Help children to understand that throughout our days, God is with us. During ordinary moments of spending time with friends, taking a walk, eating, or otherwise, God is right beside us.

Today's Bible experience

Luke 24:13-35

Summary

Two men walk on the road to Emmaus, talking about Jesus’ recent death and the empty tomb. Jesus joins them and enters the discussion, but the men do not recognize him. They invite Jesus to stay and eat with them. As he blesses the bread and breaks it, the men recognize him.

Bible memory

Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. —Mark 10:14b

Faith focus

We can recognize Jesus with us.

Advance preparation

Supplies

- Bible
- Name tags; safety pins or tape
- Extra name tags for new children
- *Surprise!* CD, songbook, and CD player
- *My Book of Stories* student book (one per child)
- Markers or crayons, and stickers for name tags
- Older pictures of people that the children would know, but who might be hard to recognize in the pictures
- Storytelling props: story cloth, three craft stick people (prepared for earlier sessions), small piece of bread, several wooden blocks, and backpack
- Snack (p. 57)
- Materials for chosen *Surprise!* activities (pp. 57–59)
- Offering visual (p. 9)

Preparation

1. **Pray for the leaders and the children** who will participate in Bible school today.
2. **Prepare items for snack** (p. 57).
3. **Choose activities** from pages 57–59 and gather necessary materials and supplies. Some of the activities require advance preparation.
4. **Create name tags** for new children that can be pinned or taped to children's shirts, or punch a hole through the name tag and string with yarn to create a necklace.
5. **Find older pictures of people that the children in your group would know**, but might not recognize in the pictures. Ask children's families to help with this, or look on the Internet to find childhood pictures of current children's entertainers. Or, have VBS leaders dress in disguise and take their pictures.
6. **Practice telling the Bible story** with the props (pp. 53–54). Keep all of the Bible story props in a backpack.
7. **Practice singing the Bible memory verse** to the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" (p. 55).
8. **Practice the "We Have Come to Bible School" rhythm** (p. 56).

GROUP EXPERIENCE

Gathering

1. **Play the *Surprise!* CD** as background music as children arrive.
2. **Greet the children** and welcome them to the last day of Bible school.
3. **Give the children name tags** and help them pin or tape the tags to their clothing, or place them around their necks if name tags are strung with yarn. If this is the first day of Bible school for any children, help them make their name tags. Make sure adults wear name tags too.
4. **With the children, check to see if the seeds** have begun to sprout. What have the children noticed over the days of Bible school? Children may take home their seeds and watch them grow even more!
5. **Invite the children to sit in a circle** on the floor in the story area. Say to the child on your right, *(Child's name), I'm so glad you're here today*. Invite that child to turn to the next child and repeat the phrase, saying the correct name. Be ready to offer help with names.
6. **Play Skippyroo Kangaroo** on page 29 to give children a fun opportunity to recognize each other's voices.
7. **Sing together from the *Surprise!* CD** and songbook.
 - “Go Make a Difference”
 - “We Are the Light”
8. **Show the children how much money was given to the offering project**, and remind the children how the money will be used. Collect offering money and count it so that children know a final amount. Thank them for their generosity during Bible school.

Bible story

1. **Show children the old photographs** and pass them around. Do any of the children recognize the people in the pictures? Tell the children who the people are.
2. **Explain that in today's story**, they will hear about some people who did not recognize someone they knew very well.
3. **Open the Bible to Luke 24** and show children where the story is found.
4. **Bible story:** Luke 24:13-35

(Open the backpack and set out the story props. Lay out the story cloth. Place a few wooden blocks at each end of the cloth. One set of blocks represents Jerusalem, and the other set represents Emmaus.)

Jesus' friends were very sad because he had been killed. (*Start walking two craft stick people towards Emmaus.*) Two of these friends were walking to a town called Emmaus and talking about all the things that had happened.

A man came and walked with them. (*Add the Jesus character to the others and continue to slowly walk them to Emmaus.*) He asked what they were talking about.

The friends were surprised by this question. “Do you mean to say that you haven’t heard about what happened to our friend Jesus?”

“What happened?” the man asked.

They told the man about Jesus, about his miracles, his stories, and the things he taught about living for God. They told about how Jesus was arrested and put to death on the cross. They also told the man about how that very morning, some women went to Jesus’ tomb and found it empty! The women saw some angels who said that Jesus was alive!

The man then used the scriptures to explain that all of this needed to happen because it was part of the plan God made a long time ago.

(*Have the characters arrive at Emmaus.*) It was suppertime when they got to Emmaus, so the friends invited the man to stay with them. (*Lean the characters up against the blocks. Place the bread next to them.*) They gathered around the table to eat. The man took the bread in his hands, blessed it, broke it, and shared it with them. (*Break the bread and put pieces in front of the two friends.*) In that moment, the friends realized that the man was Jesus! He was alive! Then Jesus disappeared. (*Take away the Jesus figure.*)

The friends looked at each other. “I should have known!” said one. “My heart was on fire while he was explaining things on the road!”

“Mine too!” said the other friend. “Let’s go back and tell the others!”

The two friends ran through the darkness to Jerusalem. (*Run the two friends back to Jerusalem.*) They found other friends and rejoiced together because Jesus was alive.

Respond to the Bible story

1. **Give children time to think about the story** by asking some of the following questions. The children may share their responses or think quietly.
 - Imagine walking and walking, feeling sad and confused. Who would you want to be walking and talking with you?
 - I wonder why the friends only recognized Jesus when he ate bread with them.
 - I wonder how we can see Jesus today.
2. **Explain that one way we can see Jesus** is through things those who love Jesus do. Talk about how being kind, loving, and helpful are things that those who follow Jesus do. Add that we can also be with Jesus when we read the Bible and pray.
3. **Ask the children if they have any questions** about this story, or any other story they heard during Bible school. You may want to answer, discuss, or wonder about their questions. If you want, you may continue to add “footprint leaves” to the question tree (pp. 17–18).
4. **Pray:** *Thank you, Jesus, for being alive and helping your friends to see you. Please help us to see you, too. Amen.*
5. **Say the Bible memory verse, Mark 10:14b.** Remind the children that Jesus said these words in the Day 2 Bible story. “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”

6. **Sing the Bible memory verse** to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” (p. 6). If your group is able, sing the whole passage. If this is too much for the children, end after “Do not stop them.” Try adding actions to the song.

Let the little children come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
let the little children come to me (*make a “come” motion*),
do not stop them (*shake your head and waggle your finger “no”*).

For it is to such as these (*stretch out your right arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
such as these (*stretch out your left arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
such as these (*stretch out your right arm with a broad gesture to the children*),
for it is to such as these (*stretch out your left arm with a broad gesture to the children*)
that the kingdom of God belongs (*raise both hands up high*)!

Be sure to sing the Bible memory verse several times to practice putting all of the syllables with the notes. Some will be sung fast, while others will be sung slowly.

Surprise! activities

1. **Choose several activities** from pages 57–59. Be sure to include snack during this time, and consider other activities that best suit your group, space, and schedule. Prepare for the activities in advance and have young people or adults ready to help. If a craft will be made, be sure to make a sample one so that children can see what they are creating.
2. **When it is time to clean up**, chant or sing to the tune of “Here We Go ’Round the Mulberry Bush.”

Do an Internet search if you are not familiar with “Here We Go ’Round the Mulberry Bush.”

This is the way we clean the room,
Clean the room, clean the room,
This is the way we clean the room, after Bible school.

Make sure names are on projects and send all of them home with the children today.

Sending

1. **Gather in the story area.** Invite children to sit in a circle to do the “We Have Come to Bible School” rhythm. As leader, rhythmically speak a line (think along the lines of “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt”), keeping the beat by tapping knees. The children will echo the line.

Do an Internet search if you are not familiar with “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt.”

We have come to Bible school (*children echo*),
we are meeting Jesus (*children echo*).

When Jesus was just 12 years old (*children echo*),
he stayed in the temple (*children echo*),
he asked lots of questions (*children echo*).
I can ask things, too (*children echo*)!

When Jesus was all grown up (*children echo*),
children came to see him (*children echo*).
Jesus was so happy (*children echo*)!
Jesus loves me too (*children echo*).

One day a young boy shared his lunch (*children echo*),
so Jesus fed the crowd (*children echo*).
I bless other people, too (*children echo*),
by sharing what I have (*children echo*).

Nicodemus came at night (*children echo*),
asking Jesus questions (*children echo*).
I can talk to Jesus anytime (*children echo*),
he always hears my prayers (*children echo*).

Jesus showed up to his friends (*children echo*),
at first they didn’t know him (*children echo*),
but when he shared some bread with them (*children echo*),
their joy was overflowing (*children echo*).

We have come to Bible school (*children echo*),
we are meeting Jesus (*children echo*)!

2. **Look at each child and say the following blessing:**

(Child’s name), the Lord bless you and keep you, and give you peace (Numbers 6:24, 26b).

As you bless the children, you may wish to gently touch their heads or shoulders, or make the sign of the cross on the back of their hands.

3. **Children may take name tags** home with them.
4. **As children leave**, let them know you enjoyed them in vacation Bible school and hope to see them again.

SURPRISE! ACTIVITIES

***My Book of Stories* student book**

Turn to page 11 of *My Book of Stories*. Have children connect the dots. What do they see? Invite children to color the eye and add details to make it look like their own.

Read the prayer together: *Dear Jesus, please help me to see you. Thank you for walking with me. Amen.*

Snack (choose one option)

1. Monkey bread (also known as pluck-it)

Use a favorite recipe or find one on the Internet, using bread dough or refrigerated biscuits. You may want to prepare the treat in advance, or have children help with dunking the pieces of dough into the butter, cinnamon, and sugar. Assemble the loaf prior to baking. Have a helper bake the loaf. Serve with water or juice.

As the children pull portions off of the loaf, talk about how Jesus' friends recognized him when he broke the bread for them.

2. Plain bread or biscuits

Make bread or biscuits together (using refrigerated dough, a mix, or from scratch). Break the bread and share it together, either in pairs or in a group. Speak words of blessing to each child when giving pieces: *(Child's name), the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you . . . and give you peace* (Numbers 6:24-26). Serve with water or juice.

Be aware of children with gluten intolerance or nut or other allergies. Have alternative foods on hand if necessary.

Crafts

Paper Bag Puppets

Materials:

- Paper lunch bags
- Markers
- Crayons (optional)
- Googly eyes
- Yarn for hair
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue

Review the vacation Bible school stories: Jesus in the temple at age 12, Jesus blessing the children, Jesus feeding many people with bread and fish, Nicodemus going to Jesus at night, and Jesus and the travelers going to Emmaus. Give the children supplies to make paper bag puppets of the characters in these stories. Use the puppets to retell the Bible stories heard throughout vacation Bible school.

Burning Hearts

Materials:

- Hearts on card stock (p. 64), one per child
- Small squares of tissue paper in red, orange, and yellow
- Glue sticks or a small dish of glue with cotton swabs, one per child

When Jesus spoke to the two friends, they felt their hearts burning within them. Talk about or imagine what your heart feels like, or could feel like, when Jesus speaks to you.

In preparation, make copies of the heart template on card stock and cut them out, one per child. Give each child a pile of tissue paper squares and demonstrate how to glue them onto the hearts. The tissue paper can be glued to the heart flat or sticking up in little tufts.

Fingerprint Footprints

Materials:

- Ink pad(s)
- Markers
- Paper

Show the children how to use an ink pad to make fingerprints on paper, and then use a marker to add toes and turn them into footprints.

Have the children make a line of their own “footprints” on a piece of paper and then add a line of Jesus’ footprints to show him walking alongside. Children may add other details to their pictures, such as a road, rocks, trees, buildings, and other things.



Games and movements

Jesus Walks with Us

Materials:

- Large space
- Materials for the pathway (as suggested: carpet squares, table, tape, chairs)

Jesus walks with us everywhere we go! In preparation, create a pathway with simple obstacles that children must walk around. Demonstrate the path to the children before beginning. A suggested sequence:

Place carpet squares a few paces from each other on the floor that children must walk on, leading to a table that children must crawl underneath, with a taped line moving away from the table on which children need to walk heel to toe, leading to at least four chairs that children must weave around, leading to four taped boxes on the floor that children need to jump in and out of, and ending with a line that children must run to.

Children may want to do the course again, or perhaps do it backward. Remind children that Jesus is always with them.

What Do Your Fingers See?

Materials:

- Variety of household objects, each hidden in a bag (suggestions: plate, bar of soap, book, toothbrush)

In preparation, gather a variety of ordinary household objects and place them individually in bags so that children cannot see them. Pass a bag to a child and have the child feel the object in the bag and try to recognize it by touching it. Pass out more bags to different children. Can they guess what is inside? After several guesses, show the objects.

Remind children that the travelers did not recognize Jesus at first, either.

Walking the Story

Have the children express what the friends in the story were feeling by walking how they think the friends would have walked. If you are in a small space, the children can walk in place.

Say:

- *Show me how the friends walked when they were sad and confused on the way to Emmaus.*
- *Show me how the friends walked when the stranger was explaining things about Jesus to them.*
- *Show me how the friends felt when they recognized Jesus.*
- *Show me how the friends walked when they went back to Jerusalem to tell the others that they saw and talked with Jesus.*

BOOK LISTS

- Jersak, Brad. *Children, Can You Hear Me? How to Hear and See God.* Aldergrove, BC: Fresh Wind Press, 2003.
- Kroll, Virginia. *I Wanted to Know All about God.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997.
- Martin, Bill Jr. *Adam, Adam, What Do You See?* Nashville, TN: Tommy Nelson, 2000.
- Showers, Paul. *The Listening Walk.* New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1991.

NAME TAGS



Name



Name

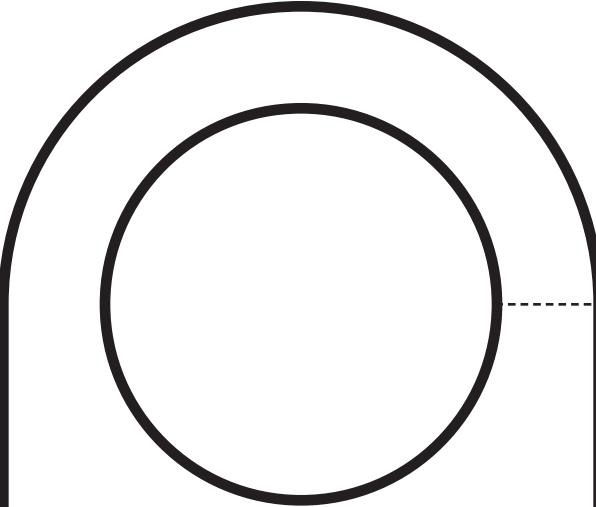


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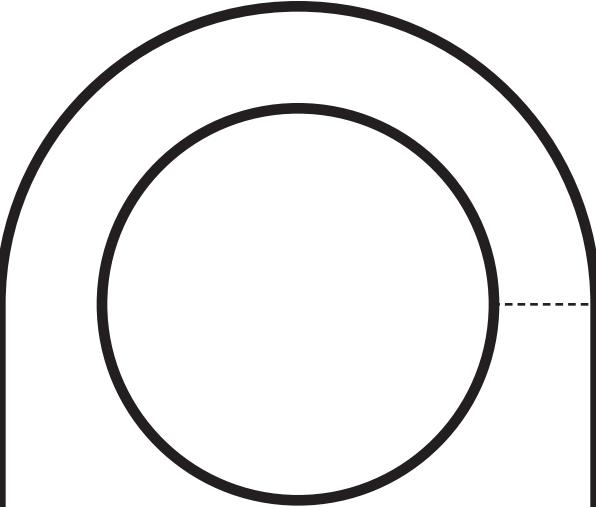


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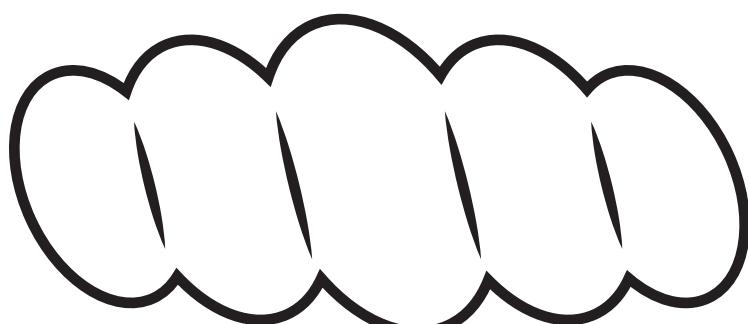
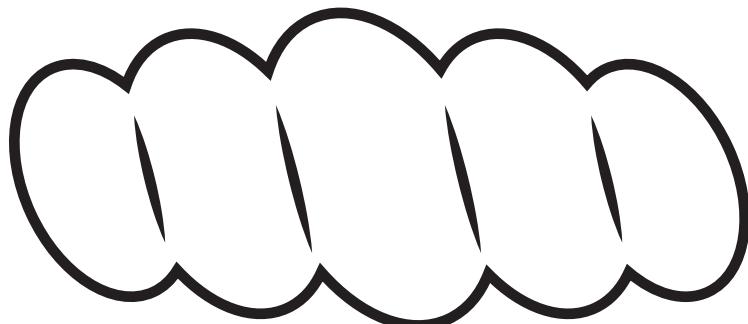
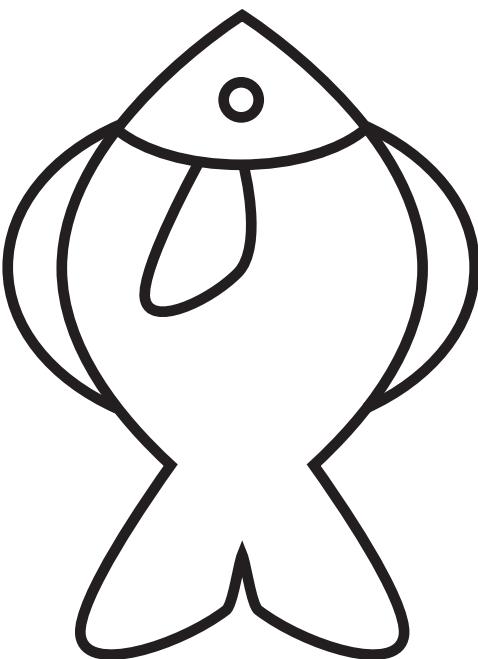
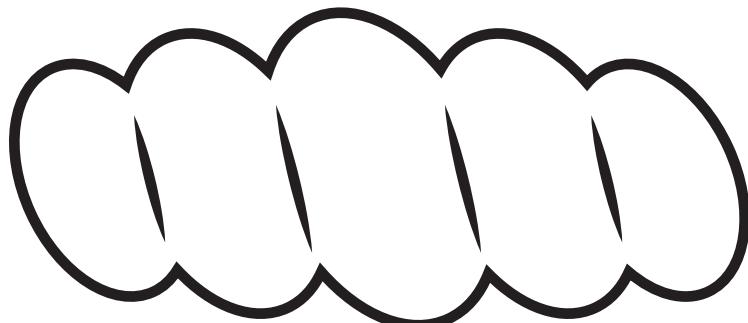
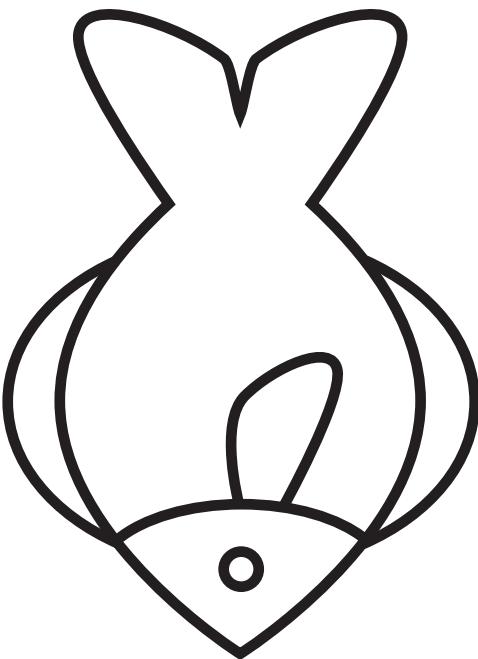
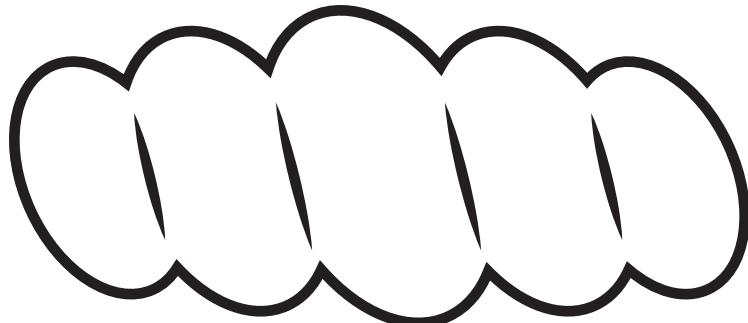


is a beloved
child of God.



is a beloved
child of God.





The LORD bless you
and keep you; the LORD
make his face to shine
upon you . . . and give
you peace.
(Numbers 6:24-26)

The LORD bless you
and keep you; the LORD
make his face to shine
upon you . . . and give
you peace.
(Numbers 6:24-26)

