



PARENT NOTES

Day 1: DISCOVERING JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Thank you for entrusting your child to us for this special experience. We appreciate the chance to be with your child and share surprising stories of discovering Jesus with him or her. However, we also know that *you* are the key person who will pass on faith to this child, so we will share with you what we are discussing each day and give you ideas for how to follow up with your child.

On Day 1, we learned about the only story of Jesus' boyhood found in the Bible. At age 12, Jesus travels with his parents to Jerusalem to observe the Passover festival. When Mary and Joseph realize Jesus is missing on the walk home, 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!

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. 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.

Here are conversation starters and next steps for following up with your child today:

1. **"Tell me about the Bible story you heard today when Jesus was found in the temple."** Ask follow-up questions or help them fill in the details if they can't remember them all. You can look it up (see right).
2. **"What kinds of questions do you think Jesus was asking about God or religion?"** Your child may have never thought of Jesus having questions as a boy growing up. Help them to ponder what he might have wondered about, just like any other child.
3. **"What questions would you ask God if you could?"** Don't worry if you don't have the answers to your child's questions. Some will always remain a mystery to us. It's all right to admit you don't know, and to turn the question back to your child "What do you think the answer might be?"
4. **Pray with your child**, perhaps at dinner or bedtime. You can use the prayer starter to the right to begin. This is also a good time for them to recite their bible memory verse from the day (right).

Thank you for all you do as a parent. We're looking forward to spending more time with your child tomorrow!

—The *Surprise!* team

FAITH FOCUS

We can ask questions and grow in wisdom.

BIBLE STORY

Luke 2:41-52

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. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

—Mark 10:14b-16

PRAYER STARTER

Thank you, God, for the gift of questions. Help us to ask questions, just like Jesus did, so that we can grow in wisdom.



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PARENT NOTES

Day 2: DISCOVERING JESUS WITH THE CHILDREN

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Today, we focused on the familiar story of Jesus blessing the children. 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 upset about it. 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).

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.

We know Jesus is with us and with the children attending vacation Bible school. In how you interact with your own children, give them the opportunity to feel heard and blessed. Let them know they are significant to Jesus and that he wants to be with them and bless them.

Here are conversation starters for following up with your child today:

1. **"Tell me about the story of Jesus blessing the children that you heard today."** Ask follow-up questions or help them fill in the details if they can't remember them all. You can look it up (see right).
2. **"Why do you think the disciples tried to keep the children away from Jesus?"** There is no right or wrong answer here, but children will probably recognize the experience of having been "shooed away" at times in their lives.
3. **"Jesus is just as interested in you as he was in those children. What do you think he might want to say to you if he could give you a blessing?"** This may stump some children if they haven't ever thought of Jesus taking a particular interest in them, but they may come up with a surprising, delightful, or insightful response that will be important for them to realize.
4. **Pray with your child**, perhaps at dinner or bedtime. You can use the prayer starter to the right to begin. This is also a good time for them to recite their bible memory verse from the day (right).

Thank you for your help reinforcing what we learned today. Tomorrow we'll be learning more about how Jesus surprises us!

—The *Surprise!* team

FAITH FOCUS

We can receive the blessing of Jesus.

BIBLE STORY

Mark 10:13-16

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. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

—Mark 10:14b-16

PRAYER STARTER

God, help us to know that Jesus cares about us and wants to be with us, even if other people are impatient with us.



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PARENT NOTES

Day 3: DISCOVERING JESUS IN THE CROWD

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Today, we focused on the story of Jesus feeding a huge crowd of people starting just with one boy's lunch. 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 12 baskets of leftovers!

We don't know much about the boy in today's story, but he plays a key role in the miracle. Imagine his surprise when Jesus' disciples ask for the food that he has brought along! Why should he give up his lunch? Besides, how could it feed such a large crowd? In the end, the boy does share his lunch and Jesus uses it 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!

Here are conversation starters and next steps for following up with your child today:

1. **"Tell me about the Bible story you heard today about the boy sharing his lunch."** Ask follow-up questions or help them fill in the details if they can't remember them all. You can look it up (see right).
2. **"How do you think the boy felt when he first thought about sharing his food? How do you think he felt afterwards?"**
3. **"What are things you can share or do to be a blessing to others like the boy was to that crowd?"** Some great brainstorming can happen here. Encourage your child to be as specific as possible and then encourage them to pick at least one thing they can do today or this week to bless others.
4. **Pray with your child**, perhaps at dinner or bedtime. You can use the prayer starter to the right to begin. This is also a good time for them to recite their bible memory verse from the day (right).

We're halfway through, but have a lot of fun still to come!

—The *Surprise!* team

FAITH FOCUS

We can give to others and bless them.

BIBLE STORY

John 6:1-14

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. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it. And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

—Mark 10:14b-16

PRAYER STARTER

God, help us to be like the boy who shared his lunch so that we can be a blessing to others by sharing what we have.



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PARENT NOTES

Day 4: DISCOVERING JESUS AT NIGHT

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Today we focused on the story of a religious leader named Nicodemus who came to Jesus under cover of darkness at night with questions about who Jesus was. We don't know why Nicodemus chose to seek out Jesus at night, but perhaps he wanted to make sure no one saw them together.

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.

This story is reassuring to children who have lots of questions. They will learn that adult leaders like Nicodemus have questions, too. As a parent, 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. Encourage children to ask their questions.

Here are conversation starters for following up with your child today:

1. **"Tell me about the Bible story of Nicodemus that you heard today."** Ask follow-up questions or help them fill in the details if they can't remember them all. You can look it up (see right).
2. **"Why do you think Nicodemus wanted to meet Jesus and ask him questions at night?"** There is no right answer here. It's fine to simply wonder aloud about the possibilities.
3. **"What questions would you like ask Jesus if you met him?"** Let your child know it's all right for them to ask any questions at all of Jesus, even if they make *you* uncomfortable for any reason! The questions your child has may give you insight into what they are thinking or struggling with now. You don't have to be able to answer them all—it's okay to say "I don't know why that is. What do you think Jesus might say/do?"
4. **Pray with your child**, perhaps at dinner or bedtime. You can use the prayer starter to the right to begin. This is also a good time for them to recite their bible memory verse from the day (right).

We have one day left ahead of us, and one more story about Jesus' surprises!

—The *Surprise!* team

FAITH FOCUS

We can choose to seek Jesus.

BIBLE STORY

John 3:1-21

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. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

—Mark 10:14b-16

PRAYER STARTER

God, help us to not be afraid to ask Jesus questions and to listen inside of our hearts to how he answers.



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PARENT NOTES

Day 5: DISCOVERING JESUS ON THE ROAD

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Today, we focused on the story of two people who walk to the small town of Emmaus discussing the troubling events of the past few days. As they walk, they are joined by a third person, who wants to know what is disturbing them. The first two share about how Jesus, who they had hoped was the Messiah, was recently 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.

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 as Jesus was talking. They return to Jerusalem and share that Jesus has risen and they have seen him.

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. Here are conversation starters and next steps for following up with your child today:

1. **"Tell me about the Bible story of the two people walking on the road which you heard today."** Ask follow-up questions or help them fill in the details if they can't remember them all. You can look it up (see right).
2. **"Why do you think the two people didn't recognize Jesus right away?"** There is no correct answer, but you can point out that many times we receive blessings or good things happen to us but we don't notice them right away.
3. **"When do you think Jesus is with you during the day?"** After your child answers, you might point out that during ordinary moments of spending time with friends, taking a walk, eating, or otherwise, God is right beside us.
4. **Pray with your child**, perhaps at dinner or bedtime. You can use the prayer starter to the right to begin. This is also a good time for them to recite their Bible memory verse from the day (right).

We have really appreciated having your child be a part of our experience this year to share in the fun. If you don't already worship with us regularly, we invite you to join us for Sunday Mass. Thanks again for all you do parenting your child and sharing your faith.

—The *Surprise!* team

FAITH FOCUS

We can recognize Jesus with us.

BIBLE STORY

Luke 24:13-35

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. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

—Mark 10:14b-16

PRAYER STARTER

God, help us to recognize how Jesus is with us, especially at those times when we might be feeling scared, angry, or confused.



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