

VBS 2026

GRADES 1-2

Bible Study Leader Guide



SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH KIDS



The word ***gospel*** means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



GOD RULES. The Bible tells us God created everything, including you and me, and He is in charge of everything. (Genesis 1:1; Revelation 4:11; Colossians 1:16-17)



WE SINNED. Since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God’s punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



GOD PROVIDED. God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It’s something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9)



JESUS GIVES. Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God’s family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18)



WE RESPOND. We can respond to Jesus. The ABCs of Becoming a Christian is a simple tool that helps us remember how to respond when prompted by the Holy Spirit to receive the gift Jesus offers.

ADMIT to God that you are a sinner. The first people God created chose to sin and disobey God. Ever since then, all people have chosen to sin and disobey. (Romans 3:23) Tell God you messed up and you are sorry for doing your own thing, and turning away from Him through your thoughts, words, and actions. Repent, turn away from your sin. (Acts 3:19; 1 John 1:9) Repent doesn’t just mean turning from doing bad things to doing good things. It means turning from sin and even from your own good works, and turning to Jesus, trusting only in Him to save you.

BELIEVE that Jesus is God’s Son and receive God’s gift of forgiveness from sin. You must believe that only Jesus can save you, and you cannot save yourself from your sin problem—not even by going to church or reading your Bible. Your faith or your trust is only in Jesus and what He did for you through His life, death, and resurrection. (Acts 16:31; Acts 4:12; John 14:6; Ephesians 2:8-9)

CONFESS your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Tell God and tell others what you believe. If Jesus is your Savior, you are trusting only in Him to save you. Jesus is also Lord, which means He is in charge. You can start following Him and doing what He says in the Bible. You are born again into a new life and look forward to being with God forever. (Romans 10:9-10,13)



If you sense that children are under conviction from the Holy Spirit and would like to respond to the good news, spend some time counseling and praying with them individually. If you sense that a child is not ready to pray and respond in faith and repentance, continue to prayerfully teach him about Christ during the week.



SO YOU'RE A VBS LEADER! ... NOW WHAT?



1. ASK GOD TO MAKE YOUR HEART READY.

- ☐ Study the content on **page 3**.
- ☐ Read the leader devotions at the beginning of each session in this leader guide.
- ☐ Learn about the kids you'll be teaching. (See **pages 4–5**.)
- ☐ Pray! See **page 4** to learn about ways to pray for the kids you'll be teaching.



2. MAKE A PLAN.

- ☐ Ask your VBS director what you need to know.
- ☐ Use this leader guide, a *VBS 2026 Grades 1–2 Bible Study Leader Pack* (9798384537373), and a *VBS 2026 Kids Activity Book* (9798384535041) to prepare a teaching plan. See **page 6** for help planning a session.
- ☐ Gather the supplies you'll need, including any decorations. (See **pages 7–8**.)
- ☐ Keep praying.



3. TEACH!

- ☐ Relax and enjoy the chance to build relationships with your kids.
- ☐ Be flexible. Adjust your plans to make this the best experience possible for you and your kids.



4. CONTINUE THE CONNECTION.

- ☐ Use the tips on **page 9** to help you and your church stay connected to kids.

Don't be
overwhelmed!
Take things one
step at a time,
and VBS will be
a blast!



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NEED A LOW PREP OPTION?

From a sick lead teacher to a higher-than-expected attendance count, lots of things can cause you to change your VBS plans at the last minute. If you're looking for an activity that requires simple supplies and little to no preparation, look for this icon! It can help you quickly identify a low prep activity!

ILLUMINATION STATION™

Culture claims to know about Jesus, but many people are in the dark about who He really is. Some might see Jesus as just a person from history or a good man or a good teacher—but He is more than that! This summer, VBS will shine a light on the truth of who Jesus really is.

Meet us at Illumination Station for the brightest week of the year. Focus on Jesus at Spotlight Bible Study and bask in the colorful glow of sunlight streaming in at Suncatcher Recreation. Twirl in the glittering refracted light of Mirror Ball Music and pass through strands of twinkling lights on the way to Kaleidoscope Crafts. Turn it all the way up for Neon Snacks and bring it all the way down for Glow-in-the-dark Missions. Kids will explore all the ways light brightens, illuminates, reflects, and reveals while discovering that Jesus is the light who brings hope to a dark world! Like the disciples, kids will be challenged to answer Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" They will discover it's not a matter of opinion. Jesus is who Scripture says He is—the perfect, proven, and powerful Son of God.

Light up your summer at Illumination Station and shine a light on Jesus!

VBS MOTTO

Jesus is the Light of the world.

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

Jesus is the Messiah and Savior.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Our sin keeps us from fully knowing the truth about who Jesus really is. Jesus came as the light to shine in a world darkened by sin. Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection show us who He really is—the perfect and powerful Son of God who came to be our Savior.

VBS SCRIPTURE

Jesus spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life." *John 8:12*

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. *John 8:12 (KJV)*

DAY 1: JESUS IS GOD'S PROMISED SON

Jesus Asked Who People Thought He Was (Matthew 16:13-20)

Jesus asked His disciples who people said that He is and who the disciples said that He is. Simon Peter said Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus said Peter was blessed because God had revealed the truth to him. Jesus said Peter would share the good news about Jesus and start His church.

DAY 2: JESUS IS GOD'S PERFECT SON

The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:1-11; John 1:29-34)

God sent John the Baptist to get people ready for Jesus. Jesus told John that He wanted to be baptized because God said it was right so John baptized Jesus. God's voice came from heaven. "This is My Son," the voice said. "I love Him, and I am very pleased with Him!"

DAY 3: JESUS IS THE POWERFUL SON OF GOD

Jesus Performed Miracles (Matthew 15:29-39)

Large crowds came and Jesus healed sick people in the crowd. Jesus wanted to provide food. The disciples had 7 loaves of bread and a few small fish. Jesus broke the food into pieces. There was enough for everyone to eat until they were full and there were 7 large baskets of leftovers! Jesus fed 4,000 men plus women and children that day.

DAY 4: JESUS IS THE PROVEN SON OF GOD

Jesus Died and Rose to Life (Mark 14:43–16:7)

Jesus was arrested, put on trial, and nailed to a cross. After Jesus died, He was buried in a tomb. Some women went to the tomb. When they got there, they saw that the stone had been rolled away. They went in but did not find Jesus' body. Instead, a man dressed in a white robe told them Jesus is alive!

DAY 5: JESUS IS GOD'S PLAN FOR FORGIVENESS

Peter Preached About Jesus (Acts 2)

Peter told a crowd that God had proven who Jesus was by doing miracles, wonders, and signs through Him. The people were very sorry for their sins. Peter told them to repent—turn from disobeying God to obeying God—and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. That day about 3,000 people responded to Peter's message, repented, and were baptized.

CHARACTERISTICS OF 1ST & 2ND GRADERS

During VBS, kids have the opportunity to see how a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is crucial. They can learn that they are able to trust Jesus every step of the way. To help you lead kids of this age to begin and grow their relationship with Jesus, here are a few things to keep in mind.

First and Second Graders ...

- shift quickly from one activity to the next and are extremely active. They benefit from a variety of high-, moderate-, and low-energy activities. They use their entire bodies to learn. They benefit from learning experiences that incorporate all senses.
- love discovering things and having opportunities to be creative. They benefit from activities like solving simple codes, playing games, or retelling the Bible story through drama.
- are learning to view Jesus as a friend and are beginning to feel the need to trust Jesus as Savior. They benefit from teachers who lovingly share information about what becoming a Christian means without putting pressure on them to make an immediate decision. Children should be reassured that it's OK if they don't feel the Holy Spirit leading them to trust Jesus right now.
- are limited in their ability to think abstractly. They benefit from teachers who explain things clearly in simple terms without the use of abstract object lessons or analogies. They understand better when directions are short and simple.
- are focused on their own needs and moving toward independence. They benefit from simple rules and routines that are consistent. However, they like opportunities to make simple choices.
- are sensitive and desire approval. They can experience sudden mood swings. They benefit from positive words and encouraging facial expressions. They respond to teachers who listen to them and are patient with them during trying times.
- Note: Consider these resources to help you learn more about kids' learning stages:
 - *Ages and Stages: A Discipleship Framework for Church and Home* (9781087722122)
 - *Every Age, Every Stage: Teaching God's Truth at Home and Church* (9781535988193)

PRAYING FOR YOUR 1ST & 2ND GRADE KIDS

- ☐ Praise God for this opportunity to teach kids the good news about Jesus.
- ☐ Pray that God will give you insights about what the kids in your group need.
- ☐ Ask God to help your kids pay attention despite the possible distractions at VBS.
- ☐ Pray that God will help you explain difficult concepts to young kids and kids who are new to church.
- ☐ Ask for specific connection points with each child in your class.
- ☐ If you have received a list of kids who pre-registered, pray for them each by name. Pray also for the kids whose names you don't know yet but God knows.
- ☐ Pray that the Holy Spirit will stir kids' hearts as they hear the gospel.
Pray that God will draw kids to Himself.

TEACHING TIP

To become more familiar with first and second graders, consider watching television programming aimed at this age group, visiting the children's section of a bookstore, and walking down the toy aisles of a local department store.

MAKE VBS GREAT FOR ALL KIDS!

Your VBS is filled with kids—kids with different abilities, kids who’ve never been to church, kids who come maybe 3–4 times a year, and of course, kids you see every Sunday! With such a wide array of kids, the challenge is how to make sure that all kids feel welcomed and engaged. Here are a few ways to do just that!

ADAPTATIONS FOR KIDS UNFAMILIAR WITH CHURCH

Play name games. Every day. Hearing that someone knows his name can help a new kid feel at ease. Helping him make friends who also know his name—even better.

Explain expectations. Take time to talk about what the day will look like, what rotations kids will go to, or how they will be moving around campus.

Be patient with kids who don’t know “church” rules, such as staying quiet while someone is praying, focusing during Bible story time, following safety guidelines, and so forth. Don’t embarrass any child. Speak one-on-one when guidance is necessary. (For instance: instead of calling inappropriate language “bad words,” just remind kids that “we don’t say those words here.”)

Stay away from “church-ese.” Speak their language. Define church words often. Some won’t know who Jesus is, what sin is, what it means to be born again, or what it means to be baptized.

Teach Bible skills as if no one has ever heard them so a child doesn’t feel like the odd one out. This is especially true for older kids. Many will not know how to find a specific Bible book or verse. Some may not even truly know what a Bible is.

Remind kids of details. Take time daily to remind kids of what was learned during previous sessions. This will help new kids as well as those who might struggle with remembering from day to day.

ADAPTATIONS FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Make environmental changes so that those with special needs are able to complete the task.

- Move floor activities to a tabletop so kids with mobility issues or in wheelchairs can more easily participate.
- Increase the font size of handouts or posters to improve visibility for those with vision limitations.
- Use a clear color contrast for print such as a black background with white print or a white background with black print.

Adapt activities to allow kids the opportunity to participate with a level of achievement.

- Provide pool noodles to extend reach for kids with limited mobility to reach things like posters on the wall (point to the ____) or to use in simple tag games like “Duck, Duck, Goose.”
- Offer options that would include the child such as being the timekeeper or scorekeeper.
- Provide a large clip (like a chip bag clip) to aid in holding cards.

Modify content for the kids.

- Provide a visual schedule (icons or pictures to represent the day’s sequence of events). Hang this on the focal wall or another easily visible location.
- Use picture cues whenever possible for learning and review.

Provide a buddy for a kid who requires assistance because of a disability.

- The buddy can assist one-on-one with the kid.
- The buddy can monitor safety at all times for the kid.
- The buddy can reteach or redirect during a Bible story or activity.
- The buddy can make accommodations to the environment for the kid as needed (such as moving chairs out of the way for a wheelchair to have table access).



Looking for more tips for guiding kids’ behavior? Visit lifeway.com/vbs, then click on **Resources > Illumination Station > Helps** for a free download called “Tips for Guiding Behavior.”

HOW TO PLAN A VBS session

1. Read over each session. Decide which activities will best fit your group, your time allotment, and the supplies you have available.
2. Mark the portions of the session you plan to include (see below), then read and re-read those segments until you know them well. Consider writing an abbreviated outline to keep with you during VBS to help you remember what's next.
3. Collect the supplies you need for each day of VBS. Consider using separate boxes or bins for each day, and one for everyday supplies. (See pages 7–8.)
4. Relax and enjoy the chance to build relationships with your kids.
5. Be flexible. Adjust your plans to make this the best experience possible for you and your kids.

Consider this info about the way this leader guide is organized.

- Each session has a three-page section labeled “Teach the Bible Study.” This is a 30 minute core Bible-teaching time that is divided into smaller portions. This is laid out to take you through an ideal session of VBS, but it is completely customizable. You can choose what you want to include!
 - Start It—An opening activity to kick off your session.
 - Learn It—When you will teach the day's Bible story. **If there's time for nothing else, make sure you include this.** The Bible story is printed in this leader guide and on the back of the day's Bible story picture. Note that this year, some words are in bold. If you have kids at the younger edge of your age group or a shortened time, you can tell only this part of the story. If you have older kids and plenty of time, tell the entire story. These words are written with kids in mind and are meant for you to use! But still plan to open your Bible as you tell the story. Kids need to see that this event really happened and is written about in God's Word.
 - Know It—A time to learn the VBS theme verse: John 8:12. Activities will help kids progressively memorize the verse throughout the week.
 - Live It—An application activity to help kids see how the truths they've learned work in real life.
 - End It—A brief time to wrap up the session.
- Additional Activity Options are included at the end of each session in case your Bible study time is longer than 30 minutes or if you will have two Bible study times (opening and closing). Consider planning a few of these activities to keep in your back pocket in case the schedule changes or you have some extra time.
 - The first two activities are general application activities.
 - The third activity is a Bible skills activity to help kids get more comfortable reading God's Word for themselves.
 - The fourth activity will help kids learn the bonus verse for the day, if you choose to use it.

DECORATING TIPS

Some of the week's activities (marked with this icon) are designed to work in a semi-darkened room. While this may not be possible in all settings, you may be able to cut down on interior light by covering a few windows with dark paper or poster board. For accountability and safety, always leave your room door open, or if the door has a window, keep it uncovered. Use a string or two of Christmas lights in your room decor so you can turn off the overhead light without creating total darkness.

Additionally, the results of some activities may depend on the equipment you are using or the strength of your flashlight. Test activities in the room where you will be teaching and make adjustments as needed. Workarounds are provided in the teaching procedures for areas where low light is not possible.

If you are using lighting sources please check for potential choking hazards and heat elements that could burn the skin or eyes or be a fire hazard. Be cautious using flashing lights as they may trigger certain medical conditions such as seizures, migraines, and so on. Avoid using strobe lights.

SUPPLIES

Decorations

Consider a few of these options to decorate your room. Keep it simple so kids can focus on learning without distractions.

- VBS 2026 Bible Study Location Sign (9798384538608)
- VBS 2026 Wall Art (9798384538592)
- VBS 2026 Floor Prints (9798384538219)
- VBS 2026 Visual Pack (9798384538585)
- VBS 2026 String Flags (9798384538226)
- VBS 2026 Whirleys (9798384538233)
- VBS 2026 Glitter Beach Balls (9798384539810)
- VBS 2026 Cups (9798384538059) to hold pens and supplies
- VBS 2026 Supersized Backdrop (9798384538561)
- More ideas in the *VBS 2026 Decorating Made Easy* book (9798384536987)

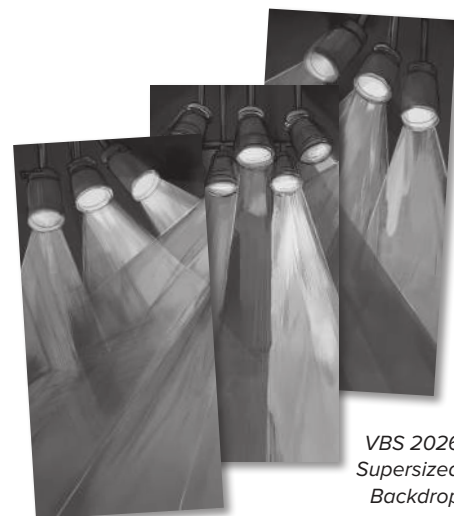
Everyday Supplies

(These items needed every day in VBS are only listed here and do not appear in each day's specific supply listing.)

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ VBS 2026 Kids Activity Books (9798384535041)
- ☐ VBS 2026 Grades 1–2 Bible Study Leader Pack (9798384537373), including the Music for Kids CD found in the pack
- ☐ VBS 2026 Memory Makers (9798384538141)
- ☐ Music device
- ☐ Pencils, pens, crayons, colored pencils and markers (washable and permanent)
- ☐ Glue and tape (masking, painter's, packing, and duct)
- ☐ Scissors (adult use and child-safe)
- ☐ Paper (printer and construction)
- ☐ Basket for holding Memory Makers each day
- ☐ Allergy alert
- ☐ Timer

Day 1

- ☐ Pack items 1, 6–9, 15–17
- ☐ Several flashlights
- ☐ Black paper
- ☐ Crayola® Bold & Bright Construction Paper Crayons
- ☐ Dice (2)
- ☐ Mavalus® tape or adhesive putty
- ☐ Gallon-size ziplock bag
- ☐ Yellow cardstock
- ☐ **The Big Question Shadow Puppets** (*Application Activity #1*)
 - Craft sticks
 - Light source such as a spotlight or bright flashlight
 - Blank area of a wall or door
- ☐ **Glow-in-the-dark Messages** (*Application Activity #2*)
 - 3-by-3-inch sticky notes
 - Thin paint brushes
 - Glow-in-the-dark paint or neon highlighters
 - Paper or tablecloth
 - Aprons or old shirts
 - Black light flashlight
- ☐ **Lighting Up Bible Books** (*Bible Skills Activity*)
 - 2 flashlights
 - 10 index cards
- ☐ **It's in the Bag!** (*Bonus Verse Activity*)
 - Glow sticks (enough for each child to have one)
 - Gift bag



VBS 2026
Supersized
Backdrop

Supplies for Days 2–5 on page 8 >>

Day 2

- ☐ Pack items 2, 6–8, 10, 18–21
- ☐ Strip of blue paper to create a “river” long enough for kids to sit beside (low prep option: blue construction paper)
- ☐ A few silver markers
- ☐ 4 or 5 sheets of bright yellow paper
- ☐ 3 or 4 sheets of black paper
- ☐ **Flash(light) Cards** (*Application Activity #1*)
 - Skewers (leader use only)
 - LED flashlights (4)
 - Black construction paper
 - Foam core board
- ☐ **Perfect or Imperfect?** (*Application Activity #2*)
 - Play dough
 - Several simple items kids could try to make from play dough, such as an apple, a small vase, a baseball, or a spoon
 - Allergy alert
- ☐ **How Can I Find It?** (*Bible Skills Activity*)
 - No additional supplies needed
- ☐ **All in Order Now** (*Bonus Verse Activity*)
 - Plain index cards

Day 4

- ☐ Pack items 4, 6–8, 12, 14, 23–25
- ☐ Assorted items that reflect, make light, represent something that makes light, or light up (see page 33)
- ☐ Battery-operated tea lights (1 per kid)
- ☐ Note cards
- ☐ Mavalus® tape or adhesive putty
- ☐ Vellum
- ☐ Craft knife (leader use only)
- ☐ Flashlight
- ☐ **Empty Grave Cards** (*Application Activity #1*)
 - Brads
- ☐ **Starlight Game** (*Application Activity #2*)
 - 10 cups
- ☐ **Puzzle Over It** (*Bible Skills Activity*)
 - No additional supplies needed
- ☐ **Light it Up** (*Bonus Verse Activity*)
 - Battery-operated tea lights (1 per kid)
 - 3-by-5-inch index cards cut in half

Day 3

- ☐ Pack items 3, 6–8, 11, 22
- ☐ Light source
- ☐ Glow sticks (optional)
- ☐ Paper clips
- ☐ **Miracle or Not a Miracle** (*Application Activity #1*)
 - Enough milk to cover the bottom of a bowl
 - Food color in bright colors
 - Liquid dish soap
 - Shallow bowl
 - Allergy alert
- ☐ **Electric Circuit** (*Application Activity #2*)
 - No supplies needed
- ☐ **Glowing Bible Books** (*Bible Skills Activity*)
 - Glow sticks (1 per kid)
 - Bag
 - Two tall cups
 - Hole punch
- ☐ **“I’m In Charge”** (*Bonus Verse Activity*)
 - Flashlight

Day 5

- ☐ Pack items 1–8, 13–14, 26–27
- ☐ Clear space for a game
- ☐ Battery-operated tea lights (1 per kid)
- ☐ Flashlight
- ☐ Red cellophane
- ☐ **I Can Tell!** (*Application Activity #1*)
 - Cardstock
- ☐ **Share the Light** (*Application Activity #2*)
 - Optional: battery-operated tea lights (1 per kid)
- ☐ **Light Up Ball Bounce** (*Bible Skills Activity*)
 - VBS 2026 LED Flashing Ball (9798384539803) (option: bright yellow tennis ball)
- ☐ **Light Limbo** (*Bonus Verse Activity*)
 - Strong flashlight

CONTINUE VBS AT HOME

Research shows the important opportunities VBS gives adults to connect with and invest in kids and families. (You can read more about the research yourself in *It's Worth It: Uncovering How One Week Can Transform Your Church*. [9781535952736]). You've spent this week intentionally investing in the kids in your class! So how do you continue connecting with kids after VBS is over?

There's no one right way to do this, but a few ideas include greeting kids in the hallways at church, volunteering with your church's ongoing kids ministry, and participating in your church's follow-up efforts so you can build relationships with kids and their families. Be on the lookout for times these families go through challenges in life and be there to support them, along with your church body.

At the end of VBS, you may also consider writing a note to each kid in your class on a *VBS 2026 Note Card* (9798384538325) or *Postcard* (9798384538639). Tell kids what you're praying for them and call out gifts you see that God has given them. Remind them that God has a special plan for their lives.

Below are several resources that can be paired with your note to send the VBS content home with kids. Encourage kids to use these resources to share the gospel with friends and family members.

- *VBS 2026 Kids Activity Book* (9798384535041)—Whether or not you used this during VBS, send a copy home with kids! This book is filled with fun games and activities. Kids will also find a Bible story summary, Bible verse references, and information about the gospel. Encourage kids to use this to engage with the VBS Bible content for themselves.
- *VBS 2026 Memory Maker* (9798384538141)—These six tags help kids follow along during the Bible study time. Even more important, the tags help kids make a memory they can take home with them. Kids and preschoolers will use the same tags, adding them to a muslin bag each day, along with other keepsakes collected during VBS. Kids can carry home Memory Makers to share Bible content and fun memories with family and friends.
- *VBS 2026 Parent Guide* (9798384538745)—This is a tool for parents to use with their kids. It includes activities for every type of learner to help families connect with the VBS biblical content. And it features some surprises that can only be revealed with light! The guide also includes a gospel presentation with the ABCs of becoming a Christian.
- *VBS 2026 Kids Fun Bundle* (9798384538554)—This bundle contains a Kids Activity Book, a Kids Wrap, and a Backpack. Kids can create lasting memories at VBS and use the backpack to carry them home. And it's one-size-fits-all!
- *Outreach Bible for Kids CSB or KJV* (9781087782904 or 9781087787176)—This is a great way to ensure that kids have a Bible at home. An added bonus is the kid-friendly gospel presentation and topical concordance that are included.
- *Illumination Station Devotional: Shining a Light on Jesus* (9798384545927)—This fact-filled devotional explores the theme of light to help kids know the Light of the world—Jesus! In each devotion, you'll find activities and fun facts about the ways light—from fire to lightning—brightens and impacts the world around us. And the Scriptures and devotions will help you see how Jesus is the Light who brings hope to the darkness.
- *VBS 2026 Music for Kids CD* (9798384537533)—This CD has the VBS theme song "Illumination Station" as well as daily songs that go with the five days of VBS. Kids will learn the music during Bible Study, Worship Rally, and Music Rotation and will love having a CD of their own to share with their families! If parents in your church don't have CD players, they can use this QR code to access the music.



DAY 1: JESUS IS GOD'S PROMISED SON

Spotlight Question

Who is Jesus?

Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Son of God.

Bible Verse

Jesus spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life." *John 8:12*

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. *John 8:12 (KJV)*

Today's Point

Jesus is God's promised Son.

Bible Story

Jesus Asked Who People Thought He Was
(Matthew 16:13-20)



Leader Devotion

Think for a moment about a teacher who significantly impacted and brightened up your life. You may have identified this teacher because of how he or she made you feel loved, valued, and understood. This week, you have an opportunity to be that kind of teacher—one who builds meaningful relationships with children, helping them feel loved and accepted in ways they may have never experienced before. Take a moment now to stop and pray, asking God to use you to make an eternal impact on the lives of the children you teach. Continue to do so again each day of VBS.

Beyond building relationships, one often-overlooked trait of exceptional teachers is their ability to ask great questions. Great questions captivate attention, inspire deep thinking, and foster renewed curiosity and wonder. They can also reveal gaps in understanding, provide opportunities for assessment, or highlight a student's mastery of a subject.

Jesus exemplified this trait as a master teacher. His use of engaging questions was a hallmark of His teaching. Consider these examples from the New Testament, where Jesus asked thought-provoking and soul-searching questions:

1. "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" (Mark 4:40)
2. "Why do you break God's commandment because of your tradition?" (Matthew 15:3)
3. "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and don't do the things I say?" (Luke 6:46)
4. "Do you want to get well?" (John 5:6)

Let's shine the spotlight on two of the most significant and revealing questions Jesus ever asked His disciples. After spending time with His disciples in a boat, they traveled to Caesarea Philippi—a place known for its pagan gods. Against this backdrop of pagan influence, Jesus pressed His disciples for answers to these two questions:

1. Who do people say that the Son of Man is?
2. But you, who do you say that I am?

Scripture records the disciples answering the first question, but the second question is responded to specifically by Peter. Peter declared, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Have you ever wondered why Peter was the first disciple to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah? Surely, there was a more faithful and less controversial disciple who could have spoken up rather than the flawed and impulsive Peter.

Jesus knew Peter's weaknesses. He knew Peter would deny Him three times, yet He washed Peter's feet anyway. (See John 13.) He knew Peter would fall asleep in the garden of Gethsemane, yet He blessed Peter when God revealed to him that Jesus was the Messiah. (See Matthew 16; 26.) Jesus knew every detail of Peter's story—his failures, doubts, and triumphs—and He still chose to love and use Peter in powerful ways.

Jesus did not write Peter off as unreliable or deem him unworthy of being used for His purposes. Instead, He entrusted Peter with the opportunity to preach at Pentecost and lead His church. (See Acts 2.) Peter's story is a reminder that God sees potential where others see character flaws, and He calls us to love, lead, and serve in ways that often do not make sense to others.

Illuminate Your Heart

- Jesus asks each of us the same question. Take this opportunity to answer it for yourself. "But you, who do you say I am?"
- It may be easy to make a declaration of words, but it is much harder to live out our belief in Jesus as our Messiah. Peter certainly struggled to walk out the words he declared. Thank God for His redemptive love for each of us and ask Him to use you this week to proclaim the good news of Jesus to each boy and girl in your care.

BONUS VERSE

You are the Messiah, the
Son of the living God.
Matthew 16:16

Thou art the Christ, the
Son of the living God.
Matthew 16:16 (KJV)

LEADER PACK ITEMS USED TODAY:

1, 6–9, 15–17

NOTES

START IT PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 6: "Illumination Station Banner"
- ☐ VBS music
- ☐ Several flashlights

SPECIAL NEEDS ADAPTATION

Allow a child who has difficulty moving quickly to use a shortened pool noodle to tap a light spot as you move it near her.

LEARN IT PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 1: "Day 1 Bible Story Picture"
 - Item 6: "Illumination Station Banner"
 - Item 7: "Illumination Station Banner Add-ons"
 - Item 16: "Who Do People Say"
- ☐ Tape
 - Cut apart and post the letters from "Who Do People Say" around the room, low enough for kids to reach them.

SPECIAL NEEDS ADAPTATION

If kids will struggle to unscramble the letters, set up a center with alphabet stamps and stamp pads. Create strips of paper with *John*, *Elijah*, and *Jeremiah* written on them. Kids can use the stamps to copy the three names.



Start It (6 minutes)

1. Play "God's Promised Son" and greet kids as they arrive.
2. Welcome the group to Spotlight Bible Study. Call attention to the title on the banner (item 6) as you read it aloud. Explain to kids that *illumination* comes from the word *illuminate*, which has two different meanings: (1) "to light something up, like turning on a light in a room," or (2) "to make something clear or to explain it." Note for kids that they will be learning about both kinds of illumination in Spotlight Bible Study as they find out more about making things clear and about making things bright.
3. Invite kids to spread out around the room. Explain that leaders will shine flashlights onto the floor, moving the lights around while kids try to jump onto the spots of light. After a couple of minutes, stop play by turning off the flashlights. Instruct kids to play this time by trying to stay off the spots of light. After one or two minutes, instruct kids to be seated.
4. Mention that some people may say they know about Jesus, but many people still don't know who Jesus really is. Tell kids that some people think of Jesus as merely a person from history while others might consider Jesus to be just a good man or a good teacher. Emphasize that Jesus is more than that because He is God's Son! Explain that during VBS your group will try to "shine a light on who Jesus really is."



Learn It (10 minutes)

1. Call attention again to the "Illumination Station Banner" (item 6). Note for kids that the picture seems rather dark, but that they can begin illuminating or lighting up the banner as they add pieces to it each day of VBS. Ask kids the Day 1 Spotlight Question: "Who is Jesus?" Invite a volunteer to attach the Day 1 add-on to the banner in the spot marked with a 1. Point to the add-on as you say, "This add-on illuminates, or lights up, the picture." Challenge kids to listen to today's Bible story for a clear answer to the question "Who is Jesus?"
2. Call attention to the letter signs posted around the room. Form three groups of children and assign each group a shape of letter to find around the room and bring back to the group area. Wait as kids find the letters.
3. Assist kids in unscrambling their sets of letters to form the words *John*, *Elijah*, and *Jeremiah*. Encourage kids to quietly point to the correct set of letters as they hear who the disciples answered that some people thought Jesus was. (*John*, *Elijah*, *Jeremiah*) Mention that the disciples in the story were people Jesus invited to follow Him while He lived on earth.
4. Open your Bible to Matthew 16 and tell the following Bible story in your own words. If you teach younger children or those unfamiliar with Bible stories, consider telling the story using only the words in bold letters.

Jesus Asked Who People Thought He Was

The first people, Adam and Eve, sinned and disobeyed God. Ever since then, everyone has sinned. In the first part of the Bible, the Old Testament, God promised to send someone to save us from our sins. God sent Jesus to keep that promise.

One day, Jesus asked His disciples a question.

"Who do people say that I am?" Jesus asked.



The disciples told Jesus that people had a lot of ideas. **Many people believed Jesus was a prophet: someone who told people special messages from God.**

John the Baptist was a prophet whom God sent to prepare people for Jesus' coming. But John had died. Some people believed Jesus was John, come back to life.

Other people talked about prophets from long ago, in the Old Testament. They thought Jesus might be Elijah or Jeremiah come back to life after hundreds of years.

"But you," Jesus asked them, "Who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter, one of the disciples, answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Jesus said, "Peter, you are blessed because God has revealed the truth about who I am to you." Jesus said Peter would share the good news about Jesus and start His church.

Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Messiah, God's promised Son.

Matthew 16:13-20

5.  Ask kids who Jesus is. Guide them to read aloud from the Day 1 banner add-on (item 7), "Jesus is God's promised Son." Explain that Peter realized who Jesus really is. Note for kids that Peter knew Jesus was not a prophet, not John the Baptist, not Elijah, and not Jeremiah. Jesus is God's Son. God had promised to send Jesus to offer us forgiveness and save us from our sins (Anything we think, say, or do that does not please God). And God kept His promise! Remark that Today's Point (on the add-on) makes clear, or illuminates, who Jesus really is!

Know It (3 minutes)

1. Call attention to the "Theme Verse Poster" (item 8) but point out that each word on the poster is covered with black paper. Invite kids to work together to illuminate the verse.
2. Form two groups and give each group a die. Call on a child in the first group to gently toss the die and tell the number of spots on the top of it. A child from the second group will remove, in order, the number of papers shown on the top of the die. Lead both groups to read together the uncovered words two or three times. Ask a child from the second group to toss the die, a child from the first group to remove that many papers, and the whole group to read from the beginning of the verse to the next black paper. Keep alternating groups until the entire verse is uncovered. Thank kids for helping to illuminate the verse.
3. Explain to kids that Jesus is the Light who illuminates for all people what is right and how to live. Note that He can do this because He is the promised Son of God.

HELPFUL INFO

Messiah—God's chosen Savior. Old Testament prophets told of a coming Messiah who would be Israel's Savior. God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. Jesus alone saves us.

Disciple—Means "learner" or "pupil." The people Jesus called to follow Him during His earthly ministry are called disciples.

Why are some parts bold? These stories have been designed to help you be flexible! For younger kids or a limited amount of time, tell only the part in bold. If you have older kids and plenty of time, tell the entire story.

SHARING THE GOSPEL

The  identifies an opportune time to share the gospel as led by the Holy Spirit.

KNOW IT PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 8: "Theme Verse Poster"
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Black paper
- ☐ Crayola® Bold & Bright Construction Paper Crayons
- ☐ Dice (2)
- ☐ Mavalus® tape or adhesive putty
 - Cut a piece of black paper to cover each word of John 8:12 on the "Theme Verse Poster."
 - Tape papers in place over each word using something that will remove easily without tearing the poster. Number papers in order using the crayons.

SPECIAL NEEDS ADAPTATION

For kids who struggle with fine-motor skills, use a variety of sizes of dice. Consider including a *Giant Inflatable Game Cube* (9781087779812).

LIVE IT PREP

- ❑ Leader pack
 - Item 6: “Illumination Banner”
 - Item 7: “Banner Add-on” for Day 1
- ❑ 1–3 flashlights

END IT PREP

- ❑ Leader pack
 - Item 6: “Illumination Station Banner”
 - Item 7: “Illumination Station Banner Add-ons”
 - Item 15: “Daily Window Icons”
- ❑ VBS 2026 Kids Activity Books
- ❑ VBS 2026 Memory Makers
- ❑ Pencils and markers
- ❑ Permanent marker
- ❑ Gallon-size ziplock bag
- ❑ Tape
- ❑ Yellow cardstock
- ❑ Scissors
- ❑ Black paper (optional)
 - Assemble the banner flashlight and window with icons according to the instructions on items 6–7 and 15.

ACTIVITY BOOK ANSWERS

PAGE 3

- Isaiah 11:2—He would be wise and understanding
- Isaiah 35:6—He would heal people who couldn’t walk or talk
- Isaiah 61:1—He would bring good news
- Matthew 1:21—He would save people from sin



Live It (6 minutes)

1. Explain to boys and girls that Peter used the title *Messiah* in today’s Bible story when he was talking about who Jesus is. Note for kids that *Messiah* means “Christ” or “anointed one” and was Peter’s way of saying He knew Jesus was the promised Son of God.
2. Invite kids to form a circle. Hold a flashlight and remind kids that the Spotlight Question for the day is “Who is Jesus?” Explain that the answer to the question is “Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Son of God.”
3. Instruct kids to repeat the answer using a deep voice, then a high squeaky voice, and then a robotic voice. Explain that kids will need to remember those words as they play a game.
4. With kids standing scattered about the room, tell the group you will point the flashlight onto the shoes of a child and ask, “Who is Jesus?” Note for kids that the child should respond, “Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Son of God.” Once kids are familiar with the answer, walk to a child, shine the light on her shoes, and ask “Who is Jesus?” After the child responds correctly, give her the flashlight and let her walk to another child of her choice, shine the light at his shoes, and ask “Who is Jesus?” Once the child responds, he takes the flashlight and walks to another child. Play continues until each child has had a turn with the flashlight. If any child has trouble remembering exactly what to say, quietly tell one phrase at a time and let the child repeat it aloud.
5. To make the game more challenging, consider adding two more flashlights to the game. Kids with flashlights will all be asking the question at the same time but to different kids.

End It (5 minutes)

1. Distribute the activity books and pencils. Let kids write their names on the inside front covers using the light bulb colors to code their names. Guide kids to open their books to page 3. Call attention to the different candle shapes on the pages. Let kids work to match shapes and find out what God said His promised Son would be like. Point out that Jesus, the Messiah, was exactly like what God promised.
2. Share with kids that every day in VBS, the group will have time to pray. Explain that prayer is talking with God and that God can hear prayers that people think in their minds as well as those they say with their mouths! Mention that praying to God is a way to be illuminated (understand better) about what God is like and what He wants people to do or be. Suggest kids close their eyes during prayer time to help them concentrate and keep their hands still so they don’t disturb others who are also praying. Suggest kids silently ask God to help them know more during VBS about who Jesus is. Pause as kids think their prayers. Suggest kids think of one or two things they are thankful for and to thank God for them. Add a soft amen after a few moments.
3. Use the banner flashlight to illuminate the speech bubble with a question mark in the ziplock bag on item 6. Distribute the Day 1 Memory Maker tags. Point out that kids can look at the question mark on today’s tag, which matches the banner, and remember the question Jesus asked His disciples. Talk about the Memory Maker and ways it can help kids recall the Bible story and what they have learned about who Jesus is today. Explain that the Memory Maker will help kids remember that they are discovering the truth of what the Bible says about who Jesus is. The tags will also help kids remember what they have learned when others try to tell them things that are not true about Jesus.



The Big Question Shadow Puppets

Application Activity #1—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 1: "Day 1 Bible Story Picture"
 - Item 17: "Shadow Puppets"
 - Cut out the shadow puppets. Tape each one to a craft stick, leaving part of the stick below the puppet to serve as a handle.
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Craft sticks
- ☐ Tape
- ☐ Light source such as a spotlight or bright flashlight
- ☐ Blank area of a wall or door

1. Suggest to kids they illuminate today's Bible story by using shadow puppets to tell today's Bible story.
2. Talk about who was in the Bible story. (*Jesus, Peter, other disciples*) Ask kids to tell what question Jesus first asked. (*"Who do people say that I am?"*) Let volunteers tell who the disciples said other people thought Jesus was. (*John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah*) Ask what Jesus' second question was and let kids recall how Peter answered that question. (*"Who do you say that I am?" "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*)
3. Distribute the puppet shapes. Show kids how to hold the puppets with the craft stick handles and allow them to decide who each puppet represents. Decide who will hold the Jesus puppet as well as who will hold the Peter puppet. Note for kids that other kids can hold the third puppet and be the other disciples who take turns calling out the names John the Baptist, Elijah, and Jeremiah.
4. Dim the lights and shine the spotlight onto a blank space on the wall. Direct kids to sit on the floor facing the blank wall. Instruct kids to hold their puppets up, one at a time, in front of the spotlight. Experiment with how near or far kids need to sit to the wall for the puppet shadows to show up clearly. Be sure each child knows which person his puppet represents and what the puppet should say.
5. Explain that you will read today's Bible story (use pages 12–13 in this leader guide or the back of item 1 as a reference) while the kids hold up their puppets at the right time. Present the puppet show.
6. Allow kids to trade parts and present the puppet show again as time allows.
7. Urge kids to share today's Bible story with others to illuminate for others who Jesus is.

Glow-in-the-dark Messages

Application Activity #2—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ 3-by-3-inch sticky notes
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Thin paint brushes
- ☐ Half-sheets of construction paper
- ☐ Glow-in-the-dark paint or neon highlighters
- ☐ Paper or tablecloth to cover the work area
- ☐ Aprons or old shirts to wear as smocks
- ☐ Black light flashlight

LEADER TIPS

If you use yellow glow-in-the-dark paint on yellow sticky notes, the message will really stand out when you shine the black light on it. Neon highlighters only glow under black light.

1. Ask kids how they might feel if mom promised to take the family to the park on Saturday but then on Saturday decided the family needed to stay home. Ask how kids might feel if a friend promised to let them play with his new toy but then changed his mind. Remark that God promised to send a Savior and He kept His promise by sending Jesus. Point out that God always keeps His promises.
2. Explain that today kids can make messages they can illuminate showing who Jesus is.
3. Instruct kids to each fold a piece of construction paper in half and to write on the outside of it these words: *Who is Jesus?*
4. Talk with kids about things the disciples had heard people say about Jesus from today's Bible story. Ask what Peter said about Jesus.
5. Guide kids to use glow-in-the-dark paint or neon highlighters to write a message on the sticky notes, telling who Jesus is. Assist kids in writing messages such as *God's Promised Son, Messiah, and Christ*. Allow painted messages to dry before placing them inside the folded paper and closing it.
6. Dim the lights and let kids unfold their papers to reveal their messages! (If you have a black light, let kids see the messages illuminated under that light, too.)



LEADER NOTE

See page 6 for safety tips and practical considerations when dimming the lights.

Lighting Up Bible Books

Bible Skills Activity—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Bible
 - ☐ 2 flashlights
 - ☐ 2 sheets of plain paper
 - ☐ 10 index cards
 - ☐ Marker
 - ☐ Tape
 - Write *Old Testament* on one sheet of paper and *New Testament* on the other. Attach the papers to a wall or place them on the floor.
 - On each index card, write in large letters a different Bible book from this list: *Genesis, Exodus, Psalms, Proverbs, Jonah, Matthew, Mark, Luke, Romans, Revelation.*
1. Hold the Bible and explain that the Bible is God’s Word. It illuminates for people how much God loves them and why He sent, Jesus, the Savior.
 2. Open the Bible to the table of contents and show how the page is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament. Note for kids that the Old Testament tells about God’s plan to send Jesus and what happened before Jesus was born. The New Testament tells about when Jesus came, what He did on earth, and what happened after that.
 3. Form two groups. Explain that each person in a group will have a turn to look at the name of a Bible book and to decide whether the book is found in the Old Testament of a Bible or in the New Testament. Mention that two kids at a time (one from each group) will see the Bible book name. Each child will make a guess about which testament the book is found in, and shine the flashlight on the plate he believes is right. Note for kids that guessing the answer is okay because it is a way to start learning about the books in the Bible.
 4. Invite a child from each group to stand side by side about 4–6 feet from the signs, each holding a flashlight. Show a Bible book name card and read the name aloud. When you say, “Start,” the two kids will shine their lights on the paper showing their choices. Announce the correct answer. If both kids answered correctly, whether they were first or not, each group earns a point.
 5. Praise kids for what they are learning about using the Bible.

It’s in the Bag!

Bonus Verse Activity—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 9: “Day 1 Bonus Verse Poster”
 - ☐ Bible
 - ☐ Glow sticks (enough for each child to have one)
 - ☐ Gift bag
 - ☐ Black permanent marker
 - Use the marker to make a long stripe on two or three glow sticks. Activate glow sticks and place them all in the bag.
1. Point out the “Day 1 Bonus Verse Poster” (item 9). Read the verse aloud. Ask kids whether any words in the verse are unfamiliar to them. Explain that words such as *Messiah* or *Christ* refer to Jesus and explain more about who Jesus is.
 2. Present the bag of glow sticks and invite each child to take one from the bag. Instruct kids to look for a long line made in black on the glow sticks. Explain that any child who has one of those glow sticks gets to lead the group in saying the verse. Call on a child with one of the special glow sticks to lead the group in reading the verse. Assist early readers as needed or allow them to choose a friend to read the verse.
 3. Collect the glow sticks in the bag. Pass the bag again, letting each child choose a stick, being careful not to look inside the bag as they choose.
 4. Let the kids look to see which kids have the special glow sticks. Let each one take a turn leading the group to read the Bible verse.
 5. As time allows, collect the sticks again and let the kids choose again. When time is up, pass the bag and let kids keep the glow sticks they pick from the bag. Lead kids in reading the verse aloud again. Note for kids that this verse is what Peter answered Jesus when asked who he thought Jesus was—and Peter was right!

DAY 2: JESUS IS GOD'S PERFECT SON

Spotlight Question

Was Jesus just an ordinary man?

Jesus is the perfect Son of God who came to be the Savior of the world.

Bible Verse

Jesus spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life." *John 8:12*

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. *John 8:12 (KJV)*

Today's Point

Jesus is God's perfect Son.

Bible Story

The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:1-11; John 1:29-34)



Leader Devotion

Children are often drawn to the tangible act of baptism before fully grasping its meaning and symbolism. As one of the two church ordinances that make theology visible and tangible, baptism is a powerful representation of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. However, while baptism comes after salvation, some children mistakenly associate it with salvation itself rather than recognizing it as an outward expression of their faith.

As we have opportunities to teach children about baptism, it is good to illuminate the fact that Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist served at least three key purposes, none of which involved salvation. Jesus did not need to repent or be saved from His sin because He was without sin. (See 2 Corinthians 5:21.) Instead, Jesus' baptism affirmed Him as the Son of God, marked the beginning of His public ministry, and set an example for believers.

Matthew 3:13-17 provides clear evidence to answer today's Spotlight Question: Was Jesus just an ordinary man? Jesus is the perfect Son of God, who came to be the Savior of the world. When Jesus asked John the Baptist to baptize Him, John pushed back, recognizing Jesus' greatness and even suggesting that John should be baptized by Jesus instead. Jesus' response to John revealed His identity as the Son of God. However, it was not just the words of Jesus that affirmed Jesus as God. All three persons of the Trinity made themselves known at Jesus' baptism. The Spirit of God descended like a dove and God's voice from heaven declared, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased" (verses 16-17).

Following the baptism of Jesus, Matthew 4 recounts the temptation of Jesus that occurred just before the public ministry of Jesus began and the disciples were first called to follow Him. Matthew 4:1 indicates it was the Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights before the temptations began. God had a purpose for the baptism of Jesus as it demonstrated obedience to His plan for redemption and salvation. Notably, temptation followed His obedience—it was not a consequence of disobedience but rather a testimony of His unwavering faithfulness to live out His purpose.

Finally, the baptism of Jesus provides an example for all believers to follow. Through His baptism, Jesus modeled submission to God and provided a picture of what His death, burial, and resurrection would mean to all who follow Him.

The baptism of Jesus powerfully declared His identity as the perfect Son of God and His obedience to the Father's plan. Though sinless, Jesus humbly set an example for us. The voice from heaven and the presence of the Holy Spirit affirmed that He was no ordinary man—He is the perfect Son of God and the Savior of the world.

Illuminate Your Heart

- Have you followed Christ's example of submission by being baptized? If not, pray about setting up a meeting with a church leader.
- Is your focus on the perfect Son of God? If you are distracted and looking elsewhere, decide now to turn back to Him. He is eager to receive you. If your eyes are still on Him, worship Him afresh for what He has done for you.
- As children hear today's Bible story and reflect on Jesus' baptism, help them understand that baptism does not save them but is an important and meaningful act of obedience that follows their decision to ask for forgiveness of their sins and place their trust in Jesus.

BONUS VERSE

A voice came from heaven:
"You are my beloved Son;
with you I am well-pleased."
Mark 1:11

There came a voice from
heaven, saying, Thou art my
beloved Son, in whom I am
well pleased. *Mark 1:11 (KJV)*

LEADER PACK ITEMS USED TODAY:

2, 6–8, 10, 18–21

NOTES



Start It (4 minutes)

1. As you greet kids, instruct them to sit along the sides of the paper “river.” Welcome kids back to Spotlight Bible Study. Explain that today’s Bible story takes place beside and in a river. Invite kids to take turns making a few silver marks in the river to look like waves in the river. Explain that kids will need to take turns with the silver markers, each child making 2–3 wave marks and then passing the marker to the next child.
2. As kids are passing the markers and making waves, ask them to tell their ideas of what perfect means. After a few answers, thank the kids for their responses. Remark that *perfect* often means something is exactly right, complete, or with no mistakes.
3. Ask kids to use their hands to form a perfect circle and hold it out in front of them. Hold up your own “perfect” circle. Remark that the circles are good circles but not perfect circles and that the longer they try to hold the circle, the more tired they will become. Explain that during Spotlight Bible Study kids will be learning that Jesus is God’s perfect Son and that no one is perfect besides Jesus.



Learn It (10 minutes)

1. Invite kids to be seated along the river again. Call attention to the “Illumination Station Banner” (item 6). Lead kids in reading from the banner the long word they learned on Day 1: *illumination*. Let kids practice saying the word. Ask them to tell what the word means. Emphasize that *illuminate* means both (1) “to light something up, like turning on a light in a room,” and (2) “to make something clear or to explain it.” Remind kids that during VBS, they are shining a light on the truth of who Jesus is. Recall with the kids the add-on from Day 1, especially noting the words that remind them of something they have learned about Jesus. Mention that on Day 1 of Illumination Station, kids learned what people said about Jesus. Remind kids that some people thought Jesus might be John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah but that Peter knew Jesus was really God’s promised Son.
2. Say: “On Day 1, we learned what people said about Jesus, but today we will learn what God said about Jesus.” Let a child add the Day 2 add-on (item 7). Tell kids that as you tell the Bible story, they may draw quietly on the paper pictures of things they hear in the Bible story. Note for kids they must draw quietly and keep from distracting others during the story. Distribute pens, pencils, or thin markers. Mention that today’s Bible story takes place alongside and in a river.
3. Open your Bible to Matthew 3. Display the “Day 2 Bible Story Picture” (item 2) as you tell the Bible story. Show and read the “Light Bulb Definitions” (item 18) signs as you tell the Bible story.

START IT PREP

- ☐ Strip of blue paper to create a “river” long enough for kids to sit beside (Retain after use for 2 additional activities this session.)
- ☐ A few silver markers
- ☐ Option: For a lower prep option lay down a line of blue construction paper across your teaching area.

LEARN IT PREP

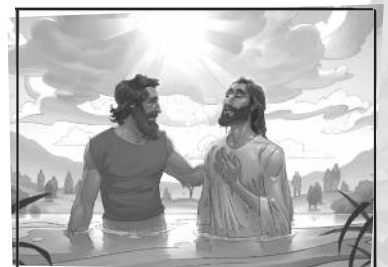
- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 2: “Day 2 Bible Story Picture”
 - Item 6: “Illumination Station Banner”
 - Item 7: “Illumination Station Banner Add-ons”
 - Item 18: “Light Bulb Definitions”
- ☐ Pens, pencils, and/or thin markers
- ☐ Bible
- ☐ “River” or blue paper pieces from “Start It”
- ☐ Option: Ask an adult man to record God’s words about Jesus from Matthew 3:17. Play the recording when you come to that part of the Bible story. Later explain that the recording was a man speaking God’s words from the Bible.

The Baptism of Jesus

When John the Baptist was alive, he had a very important job. God sent John to get people ready for Jesus—the Savior of the world. (Read the Savior light bulb.)

People heard John’s message and started to repent of their sin. (Read the repent light bulb.) **They wanted to stop disobeying God, so they asked God for forgiveness.** Then John baptized them. (Read the baptize light bulb.) **He lowered them in the water and brought them back up to show that they had asked God for forgiveness.**

John preached, “Someone is coming who is greater than I am—someone who is so important that I’m not worthy to untie His sandals. I baptize people with water, but He will baptize people with the Holy Spirit.”



The someone greater John was talking about is Jesus.

Jesus went to see John the Baptist at the Jordan River.

Jesus told John that He wanted to be baptized. But John didn't think he should baptize Jesus. "I need You to baptize me," John said. John was confused. He baptized people who admitted their sins, but Jesus never sinned!

Jesus said, "Allow Me to be baptized. God says this is right." So John agreed, and he baptized Jesus.

As soon as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens opened and the Spirit of God came down on Jesus like a dove. **God's voice came from heaven. "This is My Son," the voice said. "I love Him, and I am very pleased with Him!"**

John knew who Jesus was. John called Jesus "the Lamb of God, the One who takes away the sin of the world." (*Read the Lamb of God light bulb.*)

Jesus was more than just an ordinary man. He is the perfect Son of God who came to be the Savior of the world.

Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:1-11; John 1:29-34

HELPFUL INFO

Savior—God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. Jesus alone saves us.

Why are some parts bold?

These stories have been designed to help you be flexible! For younger kids or a limited amount of time, tell only the part in bold. If you have older kids and plenty of time, tell the entire story.

KNOW IT PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 8: "Theme Verse Poster"
- ☐ 4 or 5 sheets of bright yellow paper
- ☐ 3 or 4 sheets of black paper
- ☐ "River" or blue paper pieces from "Start It"
- ☐ Tape
 - Tape the yellow and black sheets around the room, ensuring the colors are mixed and far apart. If needed, lay sheets on the floor or in chairs.

LEADER TIP

For extra fun, add some pieces of paper to the floor and let kids hop between them as in "The Floor Is Lava."

4. Ask: "Who said, 'This is My Son?' (*God*) Who was God talking about when He said, 'This is My Son?'" (*Jesus*)
5. Continue reviewing the story by asking the review and discussion questions from the back of the "Day 2 Bible Story Picture" (item 2).
6. Ask kids to tell you about any drawings they made on the river that connect to the story. Affirm even loose connections and use them to remind kids what happened in the story.

Know It (5 minutes)

1. Call attention to the "Theme Verse Poster" (item 8). Remind kids who attended VBS for Day 1 that they already started learning the verse. Invite all kids to read the verse aloud together.
2. Point out both the yellow and black sheets of paper around the room. Explain that the group will begin reading the verse again, but that when they say the word *light* (point to the word on the poster), kids will run to touch any yellow paper on the wall. Kids will then continue saying the verse until they come to the word *darkness*. They will then run to any black paper on the walls. Kids continue the verse until the word *light* is spoken again. Kids must run to a different yellow paper and finish the verse before returning to their spots along the river to say the Bible reference.
3. Let kids all move at one time to each of the signs as they repeat the verse. Play a second round, allowing kids to repeat the verse and move to the signs at their own paces, being careful not to run into other kids as they move. Be sure kids are repeating the verse as they move from sign to sign.



Live It (6 minutes)

1. Ask kids whether they think they could live perfect lives without ever doing something they should not do. Remark that the Bible says only Jesus has ever been perfect, having never disobeyed God. In fact, the Bible says that no one can live a perfect life except Jesus. (Romans 3:23; Hebrews 4:15) Say: "Jesus was not ordinary. He was extraordinary!" Note for kids that God knows people are not able to live perfect lives like Jesus did and because of that God sent Jesus to be the Savior to save people from the consequences of their sins.
2. Distribute activity books and direct kids to page 5. Assist kids as needed in unscrambling the letters from darkest to lightest. Remind boys and girls that Jesus was not an ordinary person but was extraordinary.
3. Allow a volunteer to open each marked Bible to one of the verses marked on page 5. Read the verses aloud to kids and discuss how each verse shows that Jesus is extraordinary!
4. For some additional examples, ask kids if they can heal people who cannot see, if they can feed 5,000 people with their lunch, if they can walk on water, or if they can cause a storm to stop. Remark that Jesus did every one of those things and those things make Jesus extraordinary.

LIVE IT PREP

- ☐ VBS 2026 Kids Activity Books
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Strips of paper
 - Mark 4 different Bibles, each at a different reference: Luke 5:24; John 13:34; 2 Corinthians 5:21; and 2 Timothy 2:13.

SHARING THE GOSPEL

The identifies an opportune time to share the gospel as led by the Holy Spirit.



End It (5 minutes)

1. Place the "Sunbeam Prayer" (item 19) on the floor with children seated all around the item. Explain that each sunbeam has on it a category, such as *Family*. Point out that this category is to remind kids to pray for their families and things their families need or to thank God for gifts He has given their families. Name the other categories and briefly explain what kids might want to pray for or about regarding those suggestions. When children have made their choices of what categories to pray for, ask them to fold their arms and sit quietly as others make their choices. Mention that kids will pray silently and may choose other categories as they pray until you say, "Amen." Encourage boys and girls to keep their hands still so they will not disturb other children as they pray. Sit quietly for a minute or two. Say, "Amen."
2. Use the banner flashlight to illuminate the waves that are the Day 2 icon. Distribute today's Memory Maker tags. Mention that the icon represents a river. Call for a volunteer to tell what happened beside the river (*people listened to John the Baptist preach*) and what happened in the river. (*Jesus was baptized*.) Urge kids to use their pictures of a river to tell family members or friends how a river was important in the Bible story and how Jesus is God's perfect Son.
3. Lead kids to repeat the words of John 8:12 as they leave Spotlight Bible Study. Encourage them to return for Day 3 of VBS.

END IT PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 6: "Illumination Station Banner"
 - Item 7: "Illumination Station Banner Add-ons"
 - Item 19: "Sunbeam Prayer"
- ☐ VBS 2026 Memory Makers
- ☐ Banner flashlight from Day 1

SPECIAL NEEDS ADAPTATION

Suggest that kids select a finger to represent each category they choose to pray for and count off each prayer on said finger.



Flash(light) Cards

Application Activity #1—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 20: “Flash(light) Cards”
- ☐ Skewers (leader use only)
- ☐ LED flashlights (4)
- ☐ Black construction paper
- ☐ Foam core board
 - Place each “Flashlight Card” (item 20) over a sheet of black construction paper. Set both on a piece of craft foam. Poke a skewer through both paper layers at each dot to create a series of small holes in the black paper.

1. Guide kids to read the text of Mark 1:11 with you.
Ask: “Whose voice came from heaven? Who was the voice speaking about?” (*God was speaking about Jesus.*)
2. Form four groups. Without offering any clues, give each group a punched piece of black paper and challenge kids to decide what the dots represent. If kids have trouble puzzling it out, explain that each set of dots represents a word from today’s story.
3. Guide each group to guess which “dotted” word they are holding, then provide flashlights. Let kids experiment with the lights to illuminate the words on the wall. (Depending on the strength of the flashlights, kids may have to hold the paper close to the wall or shine light on one letter at a time.)
4. After a few minutes, ask each group to describe how its word connects to the Bible story. Review the Bible story as you assist and gently correct kids’ answers.

LEADER TIP

Test this activity in the room and with the equipment you will be using. Make adjustments as necessary. You may need to dim the lights for kids to see the words. See page 6 for safety tips and practical considerations when dimming the lights.

Perfect or Imperfect?

Application Activity #2—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Play dough
- ☐ Several simple items kids could try to make from play dough, such as an apple, a small vase, a baseball, or a spoon
- ☐ Allergy Alert
 - Post an allergy alert mentioning the ingredients of your play dough so kids and parents are aware.

1. Ask kids to recall what the word *perfect* means. Be sure boys and girls realize that *perfect* means “something or someone that is exactly right, complete, or with no mistakes.”
2. Show kids the items you gathered. Invite kids to each take a small amount of play dough and to copy the item they choose using the play dough.
3. After a couple of minutes, allow kids to show their play dough items. Ask the group if they made any perfect copies. Let kids choose an additional item to mimic. Ask whether any copies they made are perfect.
4. Praise kids for how close they came to making perfect objects but note that none of the play dough items is exactly like the original. Remind the girls and boys that Jesus is the perfect Son of God. In fact, Jesus was God in human form. He never disobeyed God by sinning. He can do what God can do. He can be everywhere just like God is. He can hear the prayers of everyone who prays to Him even if it is all at once.
5. Challenge kids to say, “Jesus is God’s perfect Son” when you ask the question, “Who is Jesus?” Ask the question two or three times in a row, allowing kids time to answer each time.



How Can I Find It?

Bible Skills Activity—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 21: “How Can I Find It?”
 - Cut apart the “How Can I Find It?” shapes.
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Scissors

1. Hold a Bible as you explain that since the Bible is so large and has so many parts called books (66 of them!), people have a plan to help find different parts of the Bible. Comment that following the plan below can “illuminate,” or make clear, how to find things in the Bible.
2. Explain that the information for finding a Bible verse is called a Bible reference. Select the pink shapes from item 21. Present the *John* circle and show the Bible book name printed on it. Explain that a Bible verse reference always begins with the name of a Bible book. Open the Bible to the table of contents and let kids look in the list for the Bible book name from the circle. Note whether the book is found in the Old Testament or the New Testament. Turn to that book in the Bible.
3. Show the 8: triangle piece. Note the number and point out the two dots after it. Explain that the number with the two dots after it tells what chapter number to find in the book of John. Show in a Bible how the chapter numbers are usually printed differently than other numbers. Locate the chapter number noted on the triangle piece.
4. Present the square with a 12. Note there are no dots after these numbers. Show how verse numbers look in the Bible, usually smaller numbers than chapter numbers. Help kids find the verse number in the chapter. Note that kids have located the VBS theme verse in the Bible!
5. Present a set of shapes in another color and help kids follow the same plan: circle/book, triangle/chapter, and square/verse. Repeat with the third color as time allows. Explain that once kids know the book name, chapter number, and verse number, they can find any verse in the Bible.



All in Order Now

Bonus Verse Activity—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 10: “Day 2 Bonus Verse Poster”
- ☐ Plain index cards
- ☐ Marker
 - Print each of the words of your desired translation of Mark 1:11 on a different card.

1. Read aloud the Bible verse for the group from pack item 10. Remark that the words spoken by the voice in this verse are God’s own words. Ask kids the name of God’s beloved Son. (*Jesus*) Point out that God was speaking just after John baptized Jesus. Ask how God felt about Jesus. (*well-pleased*)
2. Present the set of word cards. Challenge the kids to work together to put the words of the Bible verse in order, using the displayed verse as needed. Lead kids in reading the verse aloud again. Remind kids that this verse is what God spoke when Jesus was baptized.
3. Instruct kids to look up to the ceiling. Remove one card from the word cards. Let kids look back at the verse and tell what word is missing. Repeat together the entire verse, filling in the missing word. Ask kids to look behind them while you remove another word card. Let the kids look at the cards and decide what else is missing. Continue as with the first card. Keep going until all cards have been removed and kids are repeating the verse without clues.
4. Remove the “Day 2 Bonus Verse Poster” from display. Put the word cards out in mixed up order. Challenge kids to put the word cards in the right order without the display.
5. If time allows, let volunteers take a turn repeating the verse from memory or by reading the verse from the poster.

DAY 3: JESUS IS THE POWERFUL SON OF GOD

Spotlight Question

Was Jesus just a teacher?

Everything Jesus said and did showed that He is the powerful Son of God.

Bible Verse

Jesus spoke to them again: “I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.” *John 8:12*

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. *John 8:12 (KJV)*

Today’s Point

Jesus is the powerful Son of God.

Bible Story

Jesus Performed Miracles (Matthew 15:29-39)



Leader Devotion

Matthew 15:29-39 provides compelling evidence that Jesus was more than just a teacher—He is the powerful Son of God. Let’s shed some light on this passage. This account takes place on a mountain near the Sea of Galilee, where large crowds gathered, bringing people who were in desperate need of healing.

Bringing those in need up a mountain to the feet of Jesus must have required physical effort and determination. Perhaps some people had already heard about the four friends who lowered a man who was paralyzed through a roof to receive Jesus’ healing power (Mark 2:1-5). Regardless, their actions reflected their faith in Jesus’ ability to heal.

The details of how Jesus healed each of them are left out. Scripture simply states, “They put them at his feet, and he healed them.” It was not unusual for Jesus to heal multiple people in one setting, as the Gospels record several similar occasions (Luke 4:40, Matthew 9:35, Mark 6:56).

Following this incredible display of healing, another miracle occurred—one that impacted everyone present. Jesus was moved by compassion because the people had been with Him for 3 days and had nothing to eat. The disciples pointed out the obvious challenge: they were in a remote place with little access to food. When Jesus asked how much food they had, the disciples responded with just 7 loaves of bread and a few fish—hardly enough to feed more than 4,000 hungry people. Yet, as they were about to witness, in the hands of Jesus, a little is more than enough.

After Jesus took the loaves and fish, He gave thanks and then began breaking the bread to be given to the people by the disciples. The result? Matthew 15:37, “They all ate and were satisfied. They collected the leftover pieces—seven large baskets full.” Jesus was no ordinary teacher; He is the powerful Son of God. He could do things no one else could, and the disciples often had a front-row seat to the miracles Jesus performed.

What must it have been like to see these miracles unfold—to watch people be healed and to see over 4,000 people fed from just 7 loaves and a few fish? In both instances, Jesus responded to a need by involving people in His work. In this event, Jesus did not go looking for people to heal. People took the initiative to come to Him. For the hungry crowd, Jesus used what was given to Him by the disciples to meet the needs of the multitudes.

As you prepare to teach children about the powerful Son of God, also look for ways to share this amazing truth in everyday conversation with your best friend or your hair stylist or your kid's baseball coach. Be prepared to give personal examples of how Jesus has proven to be powerful in your life. Never underestimate what God may want to do through your efforts to share the gospel with the people around you both inside and outside of VBS.

Illuminate Your Heart

- What are you doing to bring people to Jesus? Are you willing to give what you have when there are needs around you?
- Pray for the children and families who are being brought to the feet of Jesus this week. Ask God to show you the people in your sphere of influence who you may need to bring to VBS this week.

Notes

BONUS VERSE

Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." *Matthew 28:18*

Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. *Matthew 28:18 (KJV)*

**LEADER PACK ITEMS
USED TODAY:**
3, 6–8, 11, 22



START IT PREP

- ☐ VBS music
- ☐ Sheets of paper
- ☐ Sharpened pencils
- ☐ Light source
- ☐ Timer

SPECIAL NEEDS ADAPTATIONS

Tape the paper to a small piece of foam core board and allow a kid to poke golf tees through it to steady the paper and make poking easier.

**Start It** (4 minutes)

1. Play the “Illumination Station” theme song as you welcome kids back to Spotlight Bible Study. Encourage kids to sing along with the music as they gather around you.
2. Distribute sheets of paper and pencils. Explain that when you give the signal to begin, kids will begin poking holes in their papers using the pencils. Urge kids to poke holes carefully so they don’t tear the paper between the holes. Comment that kids will have 30 seconds to poke their holes, but they can take their time making the holes because how many holes they make is not important.
3. Wait until the kids are ready and give the signal to begin as you time the 30 seconds. Call, “Stop,” at the end of time. Let kids show their papers to the kids on either side of them. Direct kids to hold their papers up to the light and to look at the light through the holes they made. Ask a few kids to tell about how many holes they made in the paper. Suggest the group take another 30 seconds to make more holes in their papers. If any child needs another sheet of paper, give it to him before beginning the timer. Time kids again. Let kids look at the light through their papers. Mention that the light illuminates the holes. Guide kids to place their papers with holes behind them while they listen to the Bible story. Mention that kids will then use the papers with the holes to help them understand something important about today’s Bible story.

**Learn It** (10 minutes)**LEARN IT PREP**

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 3: “Day 3 Bible Story Picture”
 - Item 6: “Illumination Station Banner”
 - Item 7: “Illumination Station Banner Add-ons”
- ☐ Bible

HELPFUL INFO

Disciple—A “learner” or “pupil.” The people Jesus called to follow Him during His earthly ministry are called disciples.

To give glory—To praise God and talk about His importance and shining majesty.

Why are some parts bold? These stories have been designed to help you be flexible! For younger kids or a limited amount of time, tell only the part in bold. If you have older kids and plenty of time, tell the entire story.

1. Review both the Day 1 and Day 2 add-ons on the “Illumination Station Banner.” Invite different children to read aloud the points for Days 1 and 2. Remind kids they can know who Jesus is because the Bible tells about Him.
2. Invite a volunteer to read aloud Today’s Point for Day 3 as you attach the add-on to the banner. (*Jesus is the powerful Son of God.*) Suggest kids listen to find out more information about Jesus.
3. Display the “Day 3 Bible Story Picture” (item 3). Tell kids the picture shows what an artist thinks Jesus may have looked like. But no one knows exactly what He looked like because they had no cameras, movies, or other electronics to take pictures of people during Bible times. Allow a volunteer to point out the person in the picture who represents Jesus. Challenge the kids to listen to the Bible story to find out what is happening in the picture.
4. Open your Bible to Matthew 15 as you tell the following Bible story in your own words.

Jesus Performed Miracles

Jesus and His disciples were traveling in an area where Gentiles lived. Gentiles are people who are not Jews, and during Jesus’ time on earth most of them did not follow God.

One day Jesus went up a mountain and sat there. Large crowds of people came including people who could not walk, people who could not speak or see, and people with many other illnesses. Jesus healed them. He could do this because He is God’s Son. The crowd was amazed to see these people healed. They gave glory to God for healing the people!

Jesus felt sorry for the people in the crowd and had compassion on them. He told the disciples, “These people have been here for three days, and they don’t have anything to eat. I don’t want to send them away hungry.”

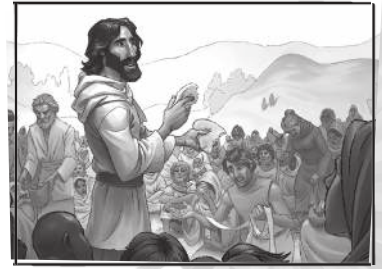
The disciples said, “There’s nothing here. Where could we get enough food to feed so many people?”

Jesus asked, “How many loaves of bread do you have?”

“Seven,” the disciples said, “and a few small fish.”

Jesus commanded the crowd to sit down, took the 7 loaves and the fish, thanked God for them, and broke them into pieces. He handed the pieces to the disciples, who gave them to the crowds. Even though Jesus started with very little food, there was enough for everyone to eat until they were full. And there were 7 large baskets of leftovers! Jesus fed 4,000 men plus women and children that day.

Jesus was more than just a teacher. He could do things no one else could do because He is the powerful Son of God.



Matthew 15:29-39

5. Ask boys and girls to hold up their pages with holes poked in them and to look toward the light through the holes. Ask how much light is coming through the holes now. Mention that even if they made hundreds of holes, they have not made as many holes as there were people whom Jesus fed with just a few fish and a little bit of bread. Suggest they try to imagine how many more holes they would need to make to show 4,000 people! Note for kids that feeding so many people with just a small amount of food was a miracle, something only God could do. The fact that Jesus could do it shows He is God’s powerful Son!
6.  Explain that something else Jesus did that no one else could do is that He came to save us from our sins. Only Jesus could live a perfect life and then die to take the punishment we deserve for disobeying God. And He did!

SHARING THE GOSPEL

The  identifies an opportune time to share the gospel as led by the Holy Spirit.



Know It (5 minutes)

1. Point to each word of the “Theme Verse Poster” (item 8) as you read it aloud in the translation of your choice. Ask kids to pretend to hold flashlights that shine beautiful blue lights and to shine their flashlights on the word *light* in the verse. Suggest kids change their pretend flashlights to shine green lights and shine the lights on the word *darkness* on the poster display. Continue, using different shades of colored lights in the flashlights and directing those lights to different words in the verse. Ask who the verse is talking about being the light of the world.
2. Invite kids to use their pretend flashlights (or real glow sticks) to illuminate each word on the banner as they repeat the verse aloud together.

KNOW IT PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 8: “Theme Verse Poster”
- ☐ Glow sticks (optional)
- ☐ Option: Let kids take turns tossing rings made from glow sticks onto a sheet of neon paper about 6 feet from a “Start” line. Kids whose rings land on the paper take turns leading the group to say the verse together.

LIVE IT PREP

- ☐ No supplies needed

LIVE IT EVENTS

- ☐ A man is made well just by someone saying, "Be well."
- ☐ A sick person gets well after taking medicine.
- ☐ A group of people collect food to feed a family.
- ☐ Someone feeds thousands of people with just a little bit of food.
- ☐ Someone paints a beautiful picture.

SPECIAL NEEDS ADAPTATION

Place a tape line down the center of the teaching area and allow kids to move to one side for "Miracle" and the other side for "Not a Miracle."

**LEADER PREP**

Don't get derailed if a kid names a fictional character as the most powerful person or thing they know. Now is not the time to explain that someone is or isn't real. You may make a blanket statement at the end of the activity that some people kids named really lived and others are just from stories but no one is more powerful than Jesus. And He is definitely real!

END IT PREP

- ☐ VBS 2026 Kids Activity Books
- ☐ VBS 2026 Memory Makers
- ☐ Banner flashlight from Day 1
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Paper clips
- ☐ Strips of paper
- ☐ Bible with these references bookmarked in it:
 - Mark 4:39-40—spoke and stopped a storm
 - Mark 6:49-50—walked on water
 - Matthew 8:5-8,13—healed a servant from a distance
 - Luke 17:12-14—healed 10 people with leprosy at once
 - Luke 5:4-6—provided a huge catch of fish
 - Matthew 28:5-6—rose from the dead

**Live It (6 minutes)**

1. Explain to kids that *disciple* means "learner." Mention that Jesus' 12 special learners were called disciples because they spent several years learning from Him. Comment that the disciples learned many things by staying close to Jesus, watching what He did, and listening to what He taught. Point out that much of their learning about Jesus came from seeing Jesus perform miracles and hearing Him teach. They learned that He is the powerful Son of God.
2. Ask kids to think of the most powerful thing or person they know. Allow volunteers to tell their answers, but after each one, remark: "But Jesus is even more powerful than that!" After several volunteers have given their answers, say: "There is nothing Jesus cannot do. He is more powerful than anything you can think of. He is more powerful than anyone you can think of. Jesus is powerful because He is God's Son."
3. Ask what kids think a *miracle* is. After kids' responses, respond that a *miracle* is something only God and Jesus can do. Comment that some people try to make it look like they can do miracles, like a magician might try to trick people. Note that those things are not miracles since only God can do miracles.
4. Ask kids to stand. Tell the group you will name an activity and if you name a miracle they can shout, "Miracle!" If the activity is not a miracle, kids will whisper, "No, no, no." Use the events in the margin.
5. Mention that Jesus did a miracle each time He made someone well just by speaking to them. Note that Jesus did a miracle when He walked on top of water, another when He stopped a storm, and another when He fed a crowd with just a small amount of food. Tell kids that Jesus actually fed large crowds twice using just a small amount of food. Explain that in today's Bible story Jesus fed more than 4,000 people, but the Bible says that Jesus also fed a crowd of more than 5,000 people with just two fish and five loaves of bread. Note for kids that doing miracles was a way Jesus showed He is the powerful Son of God.

End It (5 minutes)

1. Distribute the activity books. Instruct kids to find "A Place in the Sun" on page 7. Call on one child to hold a pencil in the center of the sun picture with a paper clip looped around the point while another spins the paper clip. Read for kids the Bible reference where the paper clip lands. Allow another child to open the Bible you prepared to the matching Bible reference. Read the verses aloud for the group. Ask what amazing thing about Jesus is told in the verse. Continue in the same way, letting other kids take turns holding the pencil, spinning the spinner, and opening the Bible to match other Bible references to bookmarks in the Bible.
2. Use the banner flashlight to "illuminate" the bread and fish icon. Ask kids to recount what these remind them of from today's Bible story as you distribute today's Memory Maker tags. Say: "Nothing is as powerful as God and His powerful Son, Jesus. Jesus could do many mighty miracles because He is God's Son."
3. Explain that thinking about the miracles Jesus did can make a person want to praise Jesus and thank Him for doing such wonderful miracles that help people know better who He is. Invite kids to think their prayers as you pray out loud. Mention that God can hear all their prayers and yours at the same time! Pray, thanking Jesus that He still uses His power to help people in many ways.

Miracle or Not a Miracle

Application Activity #1—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Enough milk to cover the bottom of a bowl
- ☐ Food color in bright colors
- ☐ Liquid dish soap
- ☐ Shallow bowl
- ☐ Allergy alert
 - Post an allergy alert mentioning that your group will be using food color and milk.

LEADER TIP:

Large group of kids? Form groups of about 5–6 kids. Provide extra ingredients and let each group do its own experiment, with leader supervision.

1. Remind kids that miracles are something only God and Jesus can do. Ask kids to name miracles Jesus did since He is the powerful Son of God. Expect answers such as healing, walking on water, or feeding a crowd. Remark that people sometimes call something a miracle when it is not a miracle.
2. Suggest kids watch the experiment and decide whether it is a miracle or not.
3. Let a child pour milk into the bowl. Allow three or four kids to take turns adding a drop or two of different colors of food coloring. (Small amounts of food coloring are best.) Be sure all kids can see the food coloring and the milk in the bowl. Be sure kids are watching the milk as another child adds one or two drops of liquid dish soap. The reaction of the milk mixture to the dish soap will last for one to two minutes. Encourage kids to keep watching until the milk stops reacting.
4. Mention to kids that one definition of *illuminate* is “to make something clear or to explain it.” Say: “Let’s illuminate—or explain—this activity.” Invite kids to think about the activity to decide whether it is a miracle or not. Ask: “Was this amazing?” (*Some kids may answer yes and others answer no.*) Remark that miracles are usually amazing, but many things that are amazing are not miracles, like getting an unexpected gift. Ask: “Could you mix food coloring, milk, and soap to make this yourself? Could other people make it?”
5. Remind kids that miracles are things only God and Jesus can do. Mention that Jesus could walk on water without anyone’s help and no one else can do that without help. That makes walking on water a miracle. Encourage kids to name other things they know only God and Jesus can do.



Electric Circuit

Application Activity #2—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ No supplies needed

1. Explain to kids that electric lights must have electricity to make them glow and shine. Note for kids that electricity must have an unbroken flow in order for the power to work. Suggest kids play a game with an unbroken flow to illuminate parts of today’s study.
2. Guide kids to form one large circle and to hold hands with the people on either side of them. Comment that kids will send a charge to a person beside them by gently squeezing the person’s hand. Note that the person who felt the squeeze will use their other hand to squeeze the person’s hand on the opposite side. Remark that kids will squeeze like that all the way around the circle, completing the circuit. When the person who started the circuit feels the squeeze come back around to her, she calls out “Jesus is God’s powerful Son!”
3. Play the game several times, beginning with a different person each time and alternating sending the electricity to the left or to the right.
4. If your group is large, form two groups and let the groups compete to finish first.
5. Ask kids to tell different ways Jesus showed He is God’s powerful Son.



Glowing Bible Books

Bible Skills Activity—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Bible
 - ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 22: “Glowing Bible Books”
 - ☐ Glow sticks (1 per kid)
 - ☐ Tape
 - ☐ Bag
 - ☐ Two tall cups
 - ☐ Permanent marker
 - ☐ Hole punch
 - Cut out tags from item 22. Punch holes where marked.
 - Activate glow sticks and attach each “Glowing Bible Books” tag to a different glow stick like you would a straw. Place glow sticks in a bag. If you have more kids than Bible books, set extra glow sticks aside for the end of the activity.
 - Write *Old Testament* on one cup and *New Testament* on the other.
1. Remind kids that the Bible is divided into two main parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Show the two parts of the Bible and ask kids which testament is larger. (*Old Testament*) Call attention to the two labeled cups with the titles “Old Testament” and “New Testament.”
 2. Remark that learning to use the Bible can help kids all through their lives as they learn more about Jesus.
 3. Show the glow sticks and the tags on them. Explain that kids will take turns choosing a glow stick from the bag, reading the tag on the glow stick, and looking in the table of contents of a Bible to find whether the Bible book is found in the Old Testament or the New Testament. Then the child who chose the glow stick will place it in the correct cup to show the testament that contains that book. Lead kids in taking turns choosing a glow stick and putting it in the correct cup. If time allows, place the sticks back in the bag and play again.
 4. End by distributing a glow stick to each child in the group. Remind kids that learning to use the Bible illuminates for them what Jesus is like. The Bible helps us know Jesus better.



“I’m In Charge”

Bonus Verse Activity—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 11: “Day 3 Bonus Verse Poster”
 - ☐ Flashlight
1. Direct attention to the “Day 3 Bonus Verse Poster” (item 11). Read the verse aloud with the kids. Note for kids that God gave Jesus authority over everything there is. Explain that there is nothing that Jesus is not in charge of. Explain that Jesus is perfect and people can trust Jesus to do what is best with everything in the whole universe!
 2. Play “I’m In Charge” by letting one child hold the flashlight and say: “I’m in charge. I command you to clap your hands twice (or another action).” The whole group does the assigned action.
 3. The child “in charge” will shine the flashlight at another child’s feet and say, “Do you choose 1 or 2?” That child will make a choice and read either the first part or the second part of Matthew 28:18 from pack item 11. Assist early readers as needed. Then he is in charge, and taking the flashlight, says: “I’m in charge. I command you to ...” and adds the action he wants the group to do before asking another child to choose between 1 and 2. Continue in this way until time is almost up.
 4. Lead half the group to read the first part of Matthew 28:18 and the rest to read the second half. Let groups switch parts and repeat the verse again. Remind kids that God has put Jesus in charge of everything in the universe and Jesus is the powerful Son of God.

SPECIAL NEEDS ADAPTATION

For kids who are shy or non-verbal, record several commands on a cell phone or other recording device. Help kids press play when it is their turn. Alternatively, create a choice board with pictures of two or three options and allow a kid to point at his chosen command.

DAY 4: JESUS IS THE PROVEN SON OF GOD

Spotlight Question

Was Jesus just someone who lived a long time ago?

Jesus lived, died, and rose to life again to be our Savior, now and forever.

Bible Verse

Jesus spoke to them again: “I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.” *John 8:12*

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. *John 8:12 (KJV)*

Today’s Point

Jesus is the proven Son of God.

Bible Story

Jesus Died and Rose to Life
(Mark 14:43–16:7)



Leader Devotion

Do you remember the first time you heard the story of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection? If you grew up in a Christian home, it may be difficult to recall that moment, and you may have never questioned whether Jesus was more than just a man who lived a long time ago. For some children in your Vacation Bible School, this week may be the first time they encounter the life-changing truth of Jesus’ resurrection and the salvation He offers each of us.

If it is hard to imagine children in your classroom not knowing about Jesus, consider this: Over the past 25 years, 40 million people have stopped attending church.¹ As a result, church membership in America has dropped below 50 percent.² This means we can no longer assume that every child in Vacation Bible School is attending church regularly or has even heard the true story of Jesus. What if you are the first person to tell them the truth of the gospel? How does that impact the way you prepare for this session?

It’s not just children who have never heard about Jesus and who need convictional teaching this week—it’s also people who have heard about Him but are surrounded by a world that questions and devalues the life of Jesus. To navigate an increasingly post-Christian world, children need a biblical worldview that upholds the Bible as absolute truth. A 2022 study by George Barna found that only 18% of 13- and 14-year-olds listed the Bible as their primary source of truth³ and 61% “either believe Jesus Christ sinned or may have sinned while He was on earth.”⁴ It is important that we continually point children to the Bible as the source of all truth and show them the evidence found in the Scriptures to support Jesus as the proven Son of God.

Throughout this week, children will be having “light bulb moments” as they are learning who Jesus is and how His life provides proof that He was more than just a teacher who lived a long time ago. Jesus did things no one else could do, like heal people who were sick or who had physical disabilities, provide sight to people who were blind, and turn a small amount of food into more than enough to feed the multitudes! He spoke with an authority no one had heard before. The ultimate proof came through the resurrection—the undeniable evidence that He is who He claimed to be.

Illuminate Your Heart

- How have you experienced Jesus personally? Thank Him for being present in your life.
- There could be no greater privilege than to tell children about the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Pray for the children in your care who may be hearing this story for the first time. Ask God to speak through you as you tell the good news of Jesus.

Notes

BONUS VERSE

When the centurion ... saw the way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" *Mark 15:39*

When the centurion ... saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. *Mark 15:39 (KJV)*

LEADER PACK ITEMS USED TODAY:

4, 6–8, 12, 14, 23–25

FOOTNOTES

1. Jim Davis, Michael Graham, and Ryan P Burge. *The Great Dechurching: Who's Leaving, Why Are They Going, and What Will It Take to Bring Them Back?* (Zondervan, 2023), 5.
2. Jefferey Jones, "U.S. Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time," *Gallup*, March 29, 2021, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx>.
3. George Barna, *Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind and Soul* (Arizona Christian University Press, 2023), 27. (hereafter cited as *Raising Champions*).
4. *Raising Champions*, 28.



Start It (6 minutes)

1. Play “Illumination Station” as kids arrive. Now that most kids know the song, let them sing along with the recording. Welcome kids back to Spotlight Bible Study.
2. Explain to kids that they can play a game of “I Spy” as you give clues of things to “spot” in your VBS area. Point out that after you give a clue, any child who thinks she spies what the item is may raise one hand. Mention that you will call on a child with a hand raised. That child will say “I got it!” and then get the item for which you gave clues. If a child chooses an incorrect item for the clues you gave, call on another child to answer. Try to give the child who guessed incorrectly another opportunity to find an item. Be sure kids respond by saying, “I got it!” before they name the item. Give clues such as “I spy an item that turns a light on and off” or “I spy an item that is bright and shiny.”
3. Remind boys and girls that one meaning of the word *illuminate* or *illumination* is “to make something clear or to explain it.” Comment that sometimes people use the phrase *light bulb moment* when they finally understand something. They might even say, “I got it!” Urge kids to listen for light bulb moments people in the Bible story had.

Learn It (9 minutes)

1. Direct attention to the “Illumination Station Banner” (item 6) and the first 3 add-ons (item 7). Note for kids that God wants people to know and understand who Jesus really is. Comment that God wants people to know that Jesus is more than just someone who lived a long time ago. Challenge kids to find out today what Jesus did that showed He is more than just a person who lived in history.
2. Note for kids that some people in today’s Bible story had some light bulb moments when they finally understood more about Jesus as God’s Son. They discovered proof that Jesus was the Messiah, God’s proven Son. (Consider reminding kids of the definition of Messiah from page 13.) Add the Day 4 banner add-on to the banner. Urge kids to listen for the proof that Jesus is the Messiah.
3. Distribute battery-operated tea lights. Instruct kids to try two times to turn on and turn off their tea lights. Tell kids to turn off the lights as they listen to the Bible story but to turn them quickly on and back off when they hear two important words in the Bible story: *cross* and *tomb*. (Words are italicized in the story to help you pause when you reach them.)

Jesus Died and Rose to Life

Jesus did so many things that showed He is the powerful Son of God—things no one else could do. He healed people who could not see. He healed people who couldn’t walk or talk. He made a tiny amount of food into enough to feed more than 4,000 people. He also said things that the religious leaders did not agree with. People saw and heard these things and began to follow Jesus. The religious leaders did not like Jesus because of the things He was doing and teaching. Jesus taught that He was God’s Son, so they wanted to stop Him.

Jesus was arrested, put on trial, and nailed to a *cross*. While Jesus was on the *cross*, many people were nearby. Some people yelled insults at Him saying, “He saved others, but He cannot save Himself. If You are the Son of God, come down from the *cross*.” There were soldiers and religious leaders along with Jesus’ mother and other friends who were watching. **When Jesus died, a Roman army officer who had been watching Jesus said, “This man really was God’s Son!”**

START IT PREP

- ☐ VBS music
- ☐ Assorted items that reflect, make light, represent something that makes light, or light up such as a *VBS 2026 LED Flashing Ball* (9798384539803), battery-operated tea lights, flashlights, unbreakable mirrors, star shapes, reflective tape, a plastic light bulb, a lantern, aluminum foil, or moon shapes. Provide multiples of items as needed.
- ☐ Place the items around the room where most are not obvious. Be sure to place duplicate items in separate locations.

LEARN IT PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 4: Day 4 Bible Story Picture”
 - Item 6: “Illumination Station Banner”
 - Item 7: “Illumination Station Banner Add-ons”
- ☐ Battery-operated tea lights (1 per kid)

SPECIAL NEEDS ADAPTATION

Consider providing larger tap lights for kids who struggle with fine-motor skills.

LEADER TIPS

- One battery-operated tea light per kid will be used twice more in this session, and twice in session 5, but if you choose not to buy this many, adaptations are provided.
- During Learn It, suggest kids make a cross shape with their two pointer fingers when they hear the word *cross*. Guide them to make a cave shape with one hand and a rock shape with the other to represent the word *tomb*.



HELPFUL INFO

Religious leaders—Leaders who were supposed to help people know and follow God.

Savior—God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. Jesus alone saves us.

Why are some parts bold?

These stories have been designed to help you be flexible! For younger kids or a limited amount of time, tell only the part in bold. If you have older kids and plenty of time, tell the entire story.

After Jesus died, a man named Joseph of Arimathea (AR ih muh THEE uh) asked for permission to bury Jesus. He wrapped Jesus' body in linen cloths and **placed Him in a tomb. The tomb was like a large cave cut into a rock. A large stone was rolled over the opening of the tomb.**

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, some women went to the tomb. When they got there, they saw that the stone had been rolled away. They went in but did not find Jesus' body. Instead, there was a man dressed in a white robe who said, "Don't be afraid. Jesus is not here. He has risen! Go and tell His disciples."

Jesus is not just someone who lived a long time ago. He has always existed. He came to earth to pay the price for our sin and He is alive today! This is important for us because He lived, died, and rose to life again to be our Savior, now and forever.

Mark 14:43–16:7

4. Ask kids to tell light bulb moments people had in the Bible story. Expect answers such as the Roman officer saying that Jesus really was God's Son or the women finding Jesus' tomb empty. As kids recall other light bulb moments, be sure they include things such as the women realizing the stone was rolled away from the tomb and a man in the tomb telling the women that Jesus had risen/come back to life.
5. Comment that Jesus really did live a long time ago but He is still alive today. Note for kids that people do not see Him walking around in His earthly body because He has gone to heaven. Mention that Jesus really did die on the cross. He was not sleeping and He had not fainted. He really died. Explain that the biggest light bulb moment was when Jesus came back to life! Note that everyone who saw Jesus after His death was surprised. Comment: "Jesus went back to heaven, but the reason Jesus lived, died, and rose again was so He could be our Savior, now and forever."

KNOW IT PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 8: "Theme Verse Poster"
- ☐ Battery-operated tea lights from Learn It (1 per kid)
- ☐ Note cards
- ☐ Mavalus® tape or adhesive putty

LEADER TIP

If you don't have a tea light for every kid, provide one or two tap lights. Place on chairs or small tables between kids and the verse and allow whoever spots the missing word first to run forward and tap the light.

Know It (4 minutes)

1. Read the "Theme Verse Poster" (item 8) together. Invite kids to read the verse aloud along with you.
2. Make sure kids still have tea lights from "Learn It" or redistribute them. Instruct kids to stand so their backs face the poster, holding their lights, and make sure their lights are off. Cover one of the words in the first half of the Bible verse. Allow kids to turn back toward the poster and to turn on their tea lights as soon as they know what word is covered in the Bible verse. Call on a volunteer to tell the missing word. Lead kids in reading the complete verse aloud together.
3. Tell kids to turn their backs to the poster again with their tea lights off. Cover a different word in the verse. Let kids turn to the poster, decide what word is covered, and switch on their tea lights. Call on a child with a lit tea light to tell the missing word. The group reads the entire verse together again.
4. During each of the next rounds, cover another word until the entire verse is covered. Remind kids that Jesus is the Light mentioned in the verse.

Live It (7 minutes)

1. Ask kids the Spotlight Question. (*Was Jesus just someone who lived a long time ago?*) Read the “Illumination Station Banner Add-on” (item 7) for Day 4 from the “Illumination Station Banner” (item 6). Remark that saying, “Jesus is the proven Son of God,” means that people can see proof that Jesus is the Son of God and that He is our Savior. Let kids tell facts about Jesus from today’s Bible story. Be sure they include that Jesus really died, really came back to life, and really went to heaven so He could be the Savior for every person.
2.  Hold up the “Gospel Poster” (item 14). Shine the flashlight from the back of the poster through the hole on the first light bulb icon. Read (or tell in your own words) the information from the back of the poster about becoming a Christian. Present each icon in order, adding illumination from a flashlight as you proceed.
3. Tips for sharing the gospel:
 - Explain to kids that asking God for forgiveness for sin is between them and God. No one else can do it for them.
 - Explain that kids can ask God to forgive them of their sin of wanting their own way instead of God’s way.
 - If kids have questions about becoming a Christian, answer simply and with Bible verses when you can. Be sure kids understand these words: *sin*, *sinner*, *repent*, and *Savior*. Avoid the temptation to rush kids into making decisions to trust Jesus right away. Allow kids time to think and consider what they have done that needs to be forgiven and how they might ask God to forgive them. Guide them to consider whether they are ready to repent.
 - Kids may not yet be ready to share with anyone else what they are feeling. Explain to kids that taking time to think and decide is okay. Let kids know that God wants to hear from them about how they think and feel even if they are not quite ready to repent and change. Encourage boys and girls to talk to God about their thoughts and feelings as they decide whether they are ready to trust Jesus as Savior now or if they need more time. Tell kids that talking to God is one of the best things they can do as they begin thinking about God’s forgiveness of sin and what repentance means.
 - Mention that you will be available to answer any questions kids may have. Make time throughout the day to stop and answer if kids have questions.

LIVE IT PREP

- ☐ Leader pack:
 - Item 6: “Illumination Station Banner”
 - Item 7: “Illumination Station Banner Add-ons”
 - Item 14: “Gospel Poster”
- ☐ Vellum
- ☐ Craft knife or scissors (leader use only)
- ☐ Tape
- ☐ Flashlight
 - Assemble the “Gospel Poster” as described on the pack item. See pack item for a simple, low-prep option.
 - Pray for God’s help as you present to kids how they can become Christians. Ask the Holy Spirit to be present and to work in kids’ hearts during this important presentation.

SHARING THE GOSPEL

The  identifies an opportune time to share the gospel as led by the Holy Spirit.

LEADER TIP

Talking about salvation with a child can be a private conversation, but do not be alone with a child. Always have another adult within eyesight. When possible, involve a child’s parents or guardians in this important conversation!



SPECIAL NEEDS ADAPTATION

Provide a sheet of paper divided into 6 squares. Label each square with a heading from the Gospel Poster (item 14). The last square will say ABC. Guide a kid to draw a picture in each square that reminds him of that heading as you teach through the poster. Suggest that kids use the finished pictures to share the gospel with their friends.

END IT PREP

- ☐ VBS 2026 Kids Activity Books
- ☐ VBS 2026 Memory Makers
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Banner flashlight from Day 1



End It (4 minutes)

1. Remind kids that prayer is talking and listening to God. Explain that the group will have a prayer time thanking God for sending a Savior. Note for kids that after you pray your prayer, any child who wants to say a prayer thanking God for anything may take a turn to pray. End the prayer by asking God to help boys and girls know when the time is right for them to trust Jesus as their Savior.
2. Distribute activity books and pencils. Guide kids through the “I Have a Beam” activity on page 11, answering questions about the events from today’s Bible story and about God’s plan to forgive people when they ask.
3. Use the banner flashlight to illuminate the cross and tomb icon. Relate the icon to today’s story as you give each child a Day 4 Memory Maker tag. Remind kids they can know Jesus is the proven Son of God, the One who is the Savior.

Empty Grave Cards

Application Activity #1—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 23: “Empty Grave Card”
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Brads
- ☐ Crayons or colored pencils
 - Make a copy of the “Empty Grave Card” (item 23) (1 tomb and 1 stone) for each child you expect.

1. Review today’s Bible story by asking kids what might have made Jesus’ followers sad and what probably made them very happy again. (*sad—Jesus dying, happy—Jesus came back to life*) Ask kids how many other people have ever died and come back to life, never to die again. (*None!*) Remind kids that Jesus’ resurrection helped people know for sure that Jesus is the Savior God sent.
2. Ask boys and girls who went to Jesus’ grave (tomb) on the third day after Jesus died. (*some women*) Ask what the women discovered. (*Jesus was gone! He had risen from the dead.*)
3. Distribute a tomb and a stone from the “Empty Grave Card” (item 23) to each kid. Invite the kids to cut out the big stone and place it on top of the door to the tomb. Instruct kids to punch the brad through both pieces of paper, turn the paper over, and close the brad loosely on the back.
4. With the paper stone on top of the empty grave, ask kids what the women expected to be in the tomb. (*Jesus’ body*) Instruct kids to move the large stone downward to reveal the inside of the tomb. Ask: “Who was actually in the tomb?” (*A man in a white robe who told them Jesus is alive!*)
5. As time allows, kids may color their creations or practice using their cards to tell the story of what people expected to see in the tomb and what they really saw—that Jesus is alive!



Starlight Game

Application Activity #2—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Items 24: “Starlight Game Pieces”
- ☐ 10 cups

1. Spread the game pieces (item 24) before the group. Place the question strips closer to kids and mix up the answers in a separate spot. Explain that some of the pieces are questions and others are answers.
2. Ask a volunteer to choose one of the question pieces and to read it aloud. Assist as needed. Challenge the other players to find the matching answer by trying to match the starlight shape on the question strip to the starlight shape on the answer strip.
3. After all the matches have been made, let kids put each question and answer in a different cup with no part of the star shapes showing. Arrange the cups in two rows of five. Let another child rearrange the cups in five rows of two. Let another child change the arrangement back to two rows of five, but in a different order from before. Mention that the cups are now thoroughly mixed up! Check to be sure no stars are showing after all the mixing.
4. Lead kids to take turns choosing a strip from a cup and reading what is on the strip. The same kid takes another strip and decides whether the two strips are a set or not. If the strips do not match, the player returns the strips back to the same cups they were in. Play moves to another player who chooses two strips, trying to make a match. If a child makes a match, he keeps the strips until the end of the game. Kids continue to take turns choosing strips until all matches have been made.
5. Remark that today’s Bible story took place long ago and during that time Jesus did many things to show He is God’s Son. Note for kids that most people still did not understand that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior God promised. Comment that Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection proved to many, many people that Jesus is God’s Son, the promised Savior.



Puzzle Over It

Bible Skills Activity—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 25: “Puzzle Over It”
- ☐ Bibles (1 for every 1–3 children, if possible)
- ☐ Scissors
 - Cut apart “Puzzle Over It” (item 25).

1. Remind kids of the “I Got It!” game they played earlier in the session. Tell kids they can play a different type of “I Got It!” game using their Bibles.
2. Form pairs or groups of three. For young kids or kids who are new to Bible skills, provide an adult to help each group when they struggle. Explain that you will name an assignment for kids to do using their Bibles. When a group finishes its assignment, the kids shout, “We got it!” Tell kids the group who is first to complete the assignment chooses one puzzle piece. Note for kids that play continues with different assignments.
3. Give assignments one at a time:
 - Find in the Bible one of the Gospel books. (*Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John*)
 - Find the very first verse in the Bible. (*Genesis 1:1*)
 - Find the last book in the Bible. (*Revelation*)
 - Find the beginning of the New Testament. (*Matthew 1:1*)
 - Locate the Theme Verse. (*John 8:12*)
 - Find a book that starts with the letter *E*.
 - Find a book with a number in its name.
4. When kids have collected all the puzzle pieces, encourage all groups to work together to complete the picture and say the motto together. “Jesus is the Light of the world.” Praise kids for learning to use their Bibles.
5. Lead kids to shout, “We got it!” together.

Light it Up

Bonus Verse Activity—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 12: “Day 4 Bonus Verse Poster”
- ☐ Battery-operated tea lights (1 per child)
- ☐ 3-by-5-inch index cards cut in half
- ☐ Pens or thin markers

1. Lead kids to read the verse from pack item 12. Explain that each child will choose 2 or 3 important words from Mark 15:39 and will write each chosen word on a different note card. Allow a few moments for kids to make their choices and to write them on their cards.
2. When kids are ready, distribute the tea lights. Mention that the group will read the verse aloud again but this time kids will turn on their tea lights each time they hear one of their chosen words. Let kids look over the verse to find their chosen words and let them turn their tea lights on and off to be sure kids know how they work.
3. Begin repeating the verse slowly to allow kids time to turn their lights on and back off, but be sure kids are actually repeating the verse with you.
4. Ask kids whether the activity was easy or hard. If they respond that it was hard, suggest the group read the verse together more slowly. If kids respond that it was easy, suggest they try doing the activity without being able to see the displayed verse.
5. If time allows, let kids swap cards with someone and repeat the activity.
6. Praise kids for working to learn a new Bible verse.

LEADER TIP

If you don't have a tea light for every kid, guide kids to sit in a circle with 1 or 2 tap lights in the middle. Kids can lean forward and turn a light on or off when they hear their chosen words.

DAY 5: JESUS IS GOD'S PLAN FOR FORGIVENESS

Spotlight Question

Why do I need to respond to Jesus?

Jesus is the only way to receive God's forgiveness.

Bible Verse

Jesus spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life." *John 8:12*

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. *John 8:12 (KJV)*

Today's Point

Jesus is God's plan for forgiveness.

Bible Story

Peter Preached About Jesus (Acts 2)



Leader Devotion

This week, the focus has been on helping children discover the answer to a spotlight question each day. These questions have laid the foundation for children to consider Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

Today's kids will hear the message Peter preached that immediately led over three thousand people to see their need for a Savior. So now the spotlight will turn to each child with a deeply personal question: **Why do I need to respond to Jesus?**

Recognizing and believing Jesus is a great teacher, a powerful performer of miracles, and a compassionate servant leader is easy for most of us. The Bible is full of events that lead us to those conclusions. However, James 2:19 reminds us, "You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe—and they shudder." Unless we also acknowledge our desperate need for Him as our Savior—the One who willingly died for our sins and offers forgiveness—we miss the good news of who He truly is. Without Him, we deserve the punishment of death for our sins. In Him, we find grace, redemption, and forgiveness only He can bring.

Children need to understand why they need forgiveness to know why they need to respond to Jesus. Recognizing personal sin is one of the signs a child is ready to decide to follow Jesus. Children must know what sin is and the problem it causes for their relationship with God. Children often define sin as a wrong choice like disobeying parents, cheating on a test, or fighting with a sibling. While those wrong choices are sin, the result of that sin makes them unable to have a relationship with a holy and perfect God. A simple definition of sin that children can easily understand is "anything we think (point to your head), anything we say (point to your mouth), or anything we do (hold out your hands) that does not please God." When children understand the impact of their sin—it separates them from God—they are often ready to answer today's spotlight question: Why do I need to respond to Jesus?

For over one hundred years, the purpose of Vacation Bible School has been to share the gospel with children so that they can understand their need for forgiveness and respond to Jesus. There is no other program, ministry, or movement that has been as effective at reaching children with the gospel than VBS. The Holy Spirit may be drawing children in your care to salvation this week. God gives us the privilege and honor of being in relationship with the children He is calling to salvation.

Illuminate Your Heart

- Have you experienced the Holy Spirit piercing your heart in conviction and leading you to repentance? (See Acts 2:37.) When was the last time you were grieved over your sin?
- Spend some time in prayer for each of the children in your care. Ask God to help them understand their need for Jesus and give them the courage to step out in faith to receive the forgiveness Jesus offers to each of them.

Notes

BONUS VERSE

Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. *Acts 2:38*

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. *Acts 2:38 (KJV)*

LEADER PACK ITEMS USED TODAY:

1-8, 13-14, 26-27



START IT PREP

- ❑ Clear space for a game

LEARN IT PREP

- ❑ Leader pack
 - Item 5: "Day 5 Bible Story Picture"
 - Item 6: "Illumination Station Banner"
 - Item 7: "Illumination Station Banner Add-ons"
- ❑ Bible

SPECIAL NEEDS ADAPTATION

As a review, lead kids to make a picture dictionary of some or all of the new words they have learned throughout VBS. Kids can fold pages in half to make a book, then stick a label with a word pre-written on it onto a page. Kids can then draw pictures to explain the definitions.

Day 1

Illuminate—1) To light something up or 2) to make something clear or to explain it.
Sin—Anything we think, say, or do that does not please God.

Day 2

Baptize—To lower someone in the water and bring him back up to show that he has received God's gift of forgiveness and decided to follow Jesus.

Day 3

Miracle—Something only God or Jesus can do.

Disciple—A "learner" or "pupil." The people Jesus called to follow Him during His earthly ministry are called disciples.

Day 5

Forgiveness—To refuse to punish someone who has hurt you or sinned against you.

Repent—To turn from sin and our own good works and turning to Jesus trusting only in Him to save us.

**Start It (4 minutes)**

1. Welcome kids to VBS, noting for them that today is the last day of Illumination Station. Invite kids to attend your church on Sunday to continue learning more about God, Jesus, and the Bible. Be sure kids know there are classes for them and classes for other members of their families.
2. Guide kids to play "Come to Me." Call for a volunteer to stand in the middle of the room with her eyes open. Instruct all other kids to spread out around the room and cover their eyes. Allow the child in the middle to quietly move to another part of the room. She then begins saying very quietly, "Come to me." The other kids continue to keep their eyes closed but they begin moving toward the voice, trying to get to the speaker. Caution kids to move slowly and carefully to avoid bumping into each other. The child speaking cannot move around but does continue to often say, "Come to me." When a kid reaches the speaking child, he sits down and watches other kids try to locate the speaker.
3. Remark that Jesus invites, or calls, people to come to Him. Point out that that's what your group has been doing at VBS: learning who Jesus is and how to have a relationship with Him. Explain that today kids will learn more about how to respond to Jesus' invitation to come to Him.

**Learn It (9 minutes)**

1. Remind boys and girls that they have learned something different about who Jesus is every day of VBS. Allow different individuals to point to and read the Days 1–4 "Illumination Station Banner Add-ons" already on the banner (items 6 and 7). Emphasize how the statements point us to different aspects of who Jesus is. Each one is correct and true. Jesus is God's Son and can do all that God can do.
2. Attach today's add-on to the banner, reading it aloud as you do. Ask kids what they think forgiveness is. Allow a moment of thought before asking kids to answer. After kids' responses, explain that *forgiveness* is "to refuse to punish someone who has hurt you or sinned against you." Explain that when God forgives people, He also chooses not to remember their sin. Note for kids that to receive God's forgiveness, a person must ask God to forgive him and must repent or turn away from his or her sin. Point out that *repent* doesn't just mean turning from doing bad things to doing good things. It means turning from sin and even from your own good works and turning to Jesus, trusting only in Him to save you.
3. Show the "Day 5 Bible Story Picture" (item 5). Note for kids that Peter is shown in this picture telling people about Jesus and how Jesus can forgive them for their sins. Challenge the kids to listen for how Peter told the people they could respond to Jesus.
4. Open your Bible to Acts 2. Tell the following Bible story in your own words. If you teach mostly first graders or early second graders, think about telling the Bible story using only the words in bold print.

Peter Preached about Jesus

There was an important religious festival seven weeks **after Jesus was raised from the dead. Followers of Jesus were all together in one place** and God had just given them the ability to speak in many different languages to tell people about Jesus. People were confused about what was happening.

Peter and the other disciples stood up in front of the crowd. **Peter said that God told a prophet years ago that this would happen. Peter shouted, “Listen! God proved who Jesus was by doing miracles, wonders, and signs through Him.” Peter reminded the people that they saw Jesus do these things that no one else could do. God knew the people would betray Jesus and kill Him. God sent His Son, Jesus, to earth to die and take the punishment for our sins.**

Peter continued, “God raised Jesus back to life again, which we all saw. Now He sits at the place of highest honor in heaven, right beside God. So let it be clearly known that God has made this Jesus, whom you killed, to be both Lord and Messiah.”

When the people heard this, they were very sorry. They asked Peter and the other disciples, “What should we do?”

Peter replied, “Each of you must repent—turn from disobeying God to obeying God—and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins.” Peter continued preaching for a long time. That day about 3,000 people did what Peter said. They responded to his message, repented, and were baptized.

Everyone who hears the good news about Jesus will respond in some way. How we respond to Him is important because Jesus is the only way to receive forgiveness for our sins.

Acts 2

5.  Remark that everyone who hears the good news about Jesus will respond in some way, but how people respond to Him is important because Jesus is the only way to receive God's forgiveness for our sin.
6. Show the “Day 5 Bible Story Picture” (item 5) again. Ask what Peter told the people they could do to respond to Jesus. (*turn from sinning and turn to God; be baptized to show they had received God's forgiveness*) Ask the review and discussion questions from the back of the Bible story picture as time allows. Allow time for kids to ask any questions they may have about salvation and the gospel.

Know It (3 minutes)

1. Commend kids for working during VBS to learn the theme verse. Challenge kids to repeat the verse aloud with you by memory if they can, but tell kids that looking at the displayed verse when they need help is perfectly okay for them to do. Read the verse together.
2. Distribute the tea lights. Ask kids how many times the word *light* appears in John 8:12. Point out the word *darkness* in the verse and mention that light drives away darkness. Urge kids to repeat the Bible verse with you, turning on their tea lights when they hear the word *light* and keeping them on until they hear the word *darkness*. Point out that kids will turn the light on one other time during the verse. Allow a child to point out on the “Theme Verse Poster” the second time the word *light* appears in the verse. Lead kids to repeat the verse turning their tea lights on and off at appropriate times. Do the activity several times.
3. Remove the poster. Allow kids who want to repeat the verse from memory to do so. Some kids may want to repeat the verse alone while others will want to have a partner as they say the verse. Gather the tea lights.



HELPFUL INFO

Messiah—God's chosen Savior. Old Testament prophets told of a coming Messiah who would be Israel's Savior. God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. Jesus alone saves us.

Why are some parts bold? These stories have been designed to help you be flexible! For younger kids or a limited amount of time, tell only the part in bold. If you have older kids and plenty of time, tell the entire story.

SHARING THE GOSPEL

The  identifies an opportune time to share the gospel as led by the Holy Spirit.

KNOW IT PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 8: “Theme Verse Poster”
- ☐ Battery-operated tea lights (1 per kid)

LEADER TIP

If you don't have a tea light for every kid, instruct kids to make “blinky lights” with outstretched hands and wiggling fingers when they hear the word *light* and to make fists when they hear the word *darkness*.

SPECIAL NEEDS ADAPTATION

Provide larger tap lights for kids who struggle with fine-motor skills.

LIVE IT PREP

- ❑ Leader pack
 - Item 7: “Illumination Station Banner Add-ons”
 - Item 14: “Gospel Poster”
- ❑ Flashlight

SHARING THE GOSPEL

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LEADER TIP

Talking about salvation with a child can be a private conversation, but do not be alone with a child. Always have another adult within eyesight. When possible, involve a child’s parents or guardians in this important conversation!

END IT PREP

- ❑ Leader pack
 - Items 1–5: “Days 1–5 Bible Story Pictures”
 - Item 6: “Illumination Station Banner”
 - Item 7: “Illumination Station Banner Add-ons”
- ❑ VBS 2026 Activity Books
- ❑ VBS 2026 Memory Maker
- ❑ Red cellophane
- ❑ Banner flashlight (from Day 1)
- ❑ Scissors
 - Cut a small square of red cellophane for each kid.

Live It (8 minutes)

1.  Highlight the banner add-on for Day 5. Remark that everything kids have learned about who Jesus is points to the reason God sent Jesus to earth. God sent His Son, Jesus, to earth to die and take the punishment for our sins. The words Peter preached to the crowd told all these things to help people understand how to become followers of Jesus.”
2. Show the “Gospel Poster” (item 14). Invite a child to stand behind the poster and shine the flashlight through the top “light bulb,” illuminating the first statement. Briefly explain the point, using the information on the back of the “Gospel Poster” as needed. Call on other volunteers to illuminate other statements on the poster. Explain that when Peter preached, he presented some of the same information to help the people to whom he preached know that Jesus is God’s plan for forgiveness.
3. Tell kids that if they have questions about Jesus or about becoming a Christian, you or other VBS teachers will be glad to talk with them. Mention that kids might also choose to talk with their parents or the church’s pastor.



End It (6 minutes)

1. Call for a volunteer to pray, thanking God for sending Jesus. Invite a different volunteer to thank God for VBS as a way to learn more about Jesus. Ask a teacher (or pray yourself) to thank God for loving people enough to send Jesus to earth.
2. Show, one at a time, the Bible story pictures (items 1–5) and let kids tell what they recall about each Bible story represented. Remark that each Bible story was about Jesus. Read each of the banner add-on titles to give kids a broad picture of God’s plan for Jesus.
3. Distribute activity books. Guide kids to turn to page 13 and use the red cellophane to discover an important statement about Jesus.
4. Use the banner flashlight to illuminate the speech bubble with an exclamation point on the banner (item 6). Distribute today’s Memory Maker tags to kids. Ask how the icon from the banner and tags can help kids recall the important things Peter had to say in today’s Bible story. Suggest to kids they use the Memory Makers to tell their families about Jesus and how God promised to send Him as our Savior. He was promised; He is perfect, powerful, proven; and He is God’s plan for forgiveness.
5. If time allows, assist kids in completing the bonus activities on pages 14–16 of the books.



I Can Tell!

Application Activity #1—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 6: “Illumination Station Banner”
 - Item 7: “Illumination Station Banner Add-ons”
 - Item 26: “I Can Tell!” Hang Tag”
 - ☐ Scissors (leader use and child safe)
 - ☐ Markers or crayons
 - ☐ Cardstock
 - Copy item 26 on cardstock for each child you expect. Option: Make extra copies and allow kids to keep one and give another away. Cut each tag apart but do not cut them out.
 - Optional: To make sturdier door hangers, kids can trace the outline of the door hanger on lightweight cardboard and continue as suggested below.
1. Remark that Peter wanted to illuminate, or make clear, the news that Jesus is our Savior and the only way to receive God’s forgiveness. Note that Peter preached about Jesus and how people could have forgiveness through Him. Suggest that kids can also help others know more about Jesus by making door hangers for their own doors and/or by giving door hangers away to others.
 2. Distribute “I Can Tell!” Hang Tags” and scissors. Ask kids to tell things they could share about Jesus from what they have learned during VBS. Expect answers such as “Jesus is God’s Son,” “Jesus is perfect,” “Jesus is powerful,” “Jesus is God’s plan for forgiveness,” “Jesus lived, died, and came back to life to be our Savior,” as well as others. If kids need help, direct their attention to the banner add-ons on the “Illumination Station Banner” (items 6–7). Instruct kids to write messages about Jesus they want to share on their hang tags.
 3. Lead kids to decorate their door hangers and to then cut them out. Demonstrate how the hanger fits on a doorknob. If a kid will be giving a hang tag away, let her write the name of the person she wants to have it on the back.
 4. Option: Ask kids to hold their door hangers and to silently pray for the person to whom they will give the hang tag.

Share the Light

Application Activity #2—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 27: “Share the Light Lanterns”
 - ☐ Scissors
 - ☐ Tape
 - ☐ Crayons, colored pencils, or markers
 - ☐ Optional: Distribute battery-operated tea lights (1 per kid) and let kids place their lanterns over the lights.
1. Remind boys and girls that Jesus told others that He is the Light of the world. Comment that Jesus was not shining a candle but was making clear that He was the Savior that would save people from their sins.
 2. Invite kids to make paper lanterns to remind them that Jesus is the Light of the world.
 3. Follow these instructions:
 - Distribute the “Share the Light Lanterns” pages and scissors. Instruct kids to cut off the strip at the bottom of the page and color their lanterns as desired.
 - Fold down the middle along the solid line. Cut on the dotted lines from the folded edge.
 - Unfold the paper and roll the paper so that the short ends touch, forming a cylinder. Tape in place.
 - Gently press down from the top until the cylinder looks like a lantern.
 - Tape the small paper strip from the bottom of the page to the top of the cylinder, text down, forming a handle.
 4. Remark to kids that lanterns give off light when they have a fire or bulb in them. (Note however that the only light source for these lights is a battery-powered tea light!) Challenge kids to place their lanterns where their whole family will be reminded that Jesus is the Light of the world.

SPECIAL NEEDS ADAPTATION

For kids who struggle with fine-motor skills, complete some lanterns ahead of time. Provide large stickers to allow kids to decorate their lanterns.



Light Up Ball Bounce

Bible Skills Activity—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ VBS 2026 LED Flashing Ball (9798384539803) (or another non-strobing ball) Option: Use a bright yellow tennis ball and name Bible books until it stops bouncing, rather than flashing.
- ☐ Paper
 - Write the names of the first 5 New Testament books on separate sheets of paper.

1. Place the construction paper sheets on a wall or on the floor in order. Tell kids the words on the papers are the names of the first five New Testament books. Pronounce the words as you point to them in order. Explain that the first four books each tell of Jesus' life on earth and the last one tells what happened after Jesus went back to heaven and the church began. Let kids pronounce the names along with you a few times.
2. Drop the ball and challenge kids to work together naming the five Bible books in order before the ball stops lighting up. If the group did not complete the task, lead them to keep trying.
3. When the group easily completes the task, challenge them to see how many times they can name the five books in order before the ball stops.
4. As time allows, let kids take individual turns to name the books while the ball lights up.

Light Limbo

Bonus Verse Activity—10 minutes

PREP

- ☐ Leader pack
 - Item 13: "Day 5 Bonus Verse Poster"
- ☐ Strong flashlight
- ☐ Painter's tape
 - Place a length of tape on a wall, horizontal to the floor and about 5 feet up from the floor. Measure down 6 inches and place another length of tape horizontal to the floor. Keep going, placing tape lengths about every 6 inches, down to about a foot above the floor.

1. Call attention to the "Day 5 Bonus Poster" (item 13) and read it aloud to kids. Ask if anyone remembers who from today's Bible story said these words. (*Peter, when the people asked how to respond to Jesus*)
2. Dim the lights and explain that in a game of limbo, participants must try to get under a rope without touching the rope. Note that in the game, the person who can go lowest without touching the rope is the winner. Point out that in this game, the "rope" will be a ray of light! Position a leader with the flashlight about 6 feet from the wall with the tape pieces. She should shine the flashlight beam straight across to the top tape mark. Be sure the ray of light is straight, not sloped up or down.
3. Kids line up and take turns going under the ray of light as they repeat the bonus verse. If they make it without breaking the ray of light, they go back around and get in line again. If the person breaks the ray of light, he is out of the game but may help the next child going under the light by saying the Bible verse along with him. On the next round of play, the ray of light drops to the next tape line. Be sure to keep the light beam straight across as kids try to "limbo" under the beam while saying the Bible verse. Any kid who is touched by the light beam is out while other kids keep going until only one person is left playing. If time allows, play the game again.
4. Encourage boys and girls to remember this Bible verse to remind them that Jesus is the only way to receive God's forgiveness.

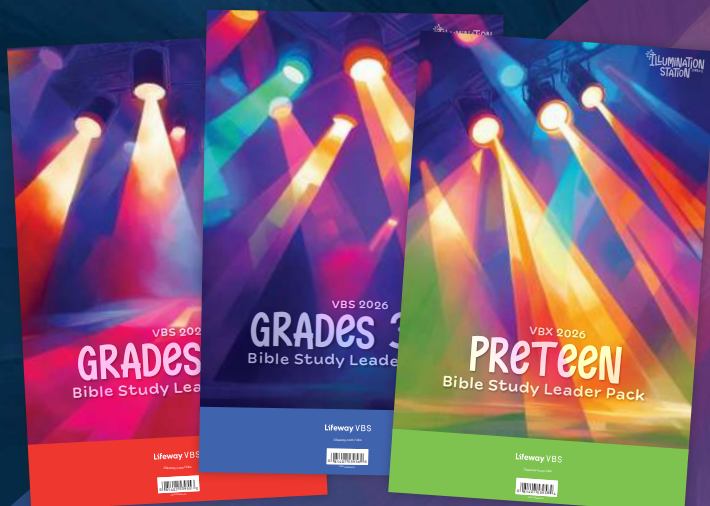


LEADER NOTE

See page 6 for safety tips and practical considerations when dimming the lights. Test the distance from the wall with your flashlight ahead of time and adjust as needed for the strength of your light beam. If you cannot dim your lights, tape a yellow crepe paper streamer to the wall and hold the other end, calling it a "light beam."

ILLUMINATION STATION JOHN 8:12

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