

VBS 2026

SPECIAL FRIENDS

Leader Guide

Sharing THE GOSPEL with Learners

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.



1 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)



2 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)



3 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)



4 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)



5 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 that 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.

SPECIAL FRIENDS LEADER GUIDE VBS 2026



PRINTABLE RESOURCES

Printable resources are available by downloading them using the following instructions:

1. Go to my.lifeway.com/redeem and register or log in.
2. Enter this unique code to download all printable items:
Q4MW87WGRHQB
3. Follow the directions to download your resources on any compatible device.

This code can be redeemed one time.
For customer support, please call 866.627.8553.

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We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter; and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review Lifeway's doctrinal guideline, please visit lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

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Overview

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.

TEACHING PLANS FOR KIDS

DAY 1 Jesus is God's Promised Son

Bible Story: Jesus Asked Who People Thought He Was

Today's Point: Jesus is God's promised Son.

Day 2 Jesus is God's Perfect Son

Bible Story: The Baptism of Jesus

Today's Point: Jesus is God's perfect Son.

Day 3 Jesus is the Powerful Son of God

Bible Story: Jesus Performed Miracles

Today's Point: Jesus is the powerful Son of God.

Day 4 Jesus is the Proven Son of God

Bible Story: Jesus Died and Rose to Life

Today's Point: Jesus is alive!

Day 5 Jesus is God's Plan for Forgiveness

Bible Story: Peter Preached About Jesus

Today's Point: Jesus is God's plan for forgiveness.

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!

TEACHING PLANS FOR STUDENTS/ADULTS

DAY 1 Jesus is God's Promised Son

Bible Story: Jesus Asked Who People Thought He Was

Today's Point: Jesus is God's promised Son.

Day 2 Jesus is God's Perfect Son

Bible Story: The Baptism of Jesus

Today's Point: Jesus is God's perfect Son.

Day 3 Jesus is the Powerful Son of God

Bible Story: Jesus Performed Miracles

Today's Point: Jesus is the powerful Son of God.

Day 4 Jesus is the Proven Son of God

Bible Story: Jesus Died and Rose to Life

Today's Point: Jesus is the proven Son of God.

Day 5 Jesus is God's Plan for Forgiveness

Bible Story: Peter Preached About Jesus

Today's Point: Jesus is God's plan for forgiveness.

Bible Verse

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."

John 8:12 (paraphrase)

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)

ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDE

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

PRINTABLES

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Learner Certificate

Prayer Cards

Prospect Cards

Response Cards

Shareable Music Links

Sharing the Gospel

BIBLE STORY PICTURES

PRINTABLES

Bible Story Pictures, Days 1–5

Coloring Pages, Days 1–5

KIDS ITEMS PRINTABLES

See page 13 for complete list.

STUDENTS/ADULTS

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Printables and Audio

PRINTABLES are available following these download instructions:

1. Go to my.lifeway.com/redeem and register or log in.
2. Enter this unique code to download all printable items:
Q4MW87WGRHQB
3. Follow the directions to download your resources on any compatible device.

This code can be redeemed one time. For customer support, please call 866.627.8553.

AUDIO VBS 2026 songs can be purchased on discs or as downloads. See page 6 for ordering information or go to lifeway.com.

CHOOSE YOUR FORMAT

BE READY FOR ANYTHING

Planning is crucial.

Recognize and plan for all types of situations.

- Not every person with special needs will fit neatly in a self-contained group or function successfully in an inclusive environment. Prepare to offer both options if possible.
- Enlist a team of workers. You will need teachers to lead activities during Bible study, teachers to provide one-on-one assistance during rotation activities (both in and out of your room), teachers to prepare activities in advance for learners who need independent activities, and extra teachers to be on call to fill in if someone must be absent.
- Do not place adult learners with special needs in the same room with children.
- The needs of parents and caregivers often go unmet. Pray that they will enjoy their moments of respite while their loved ones attend VBS.

Most churches use one of these three options when planning VBS for people with special needs. As you prepare, determine which approach would best meet the needs of learners and plan accordingly.

INCLUSION

Learners who have special needs attend a typically graded group along with their age-group peers and participate in the same activities. They may rely on the assistance of a one-on-one helper for some activities, or, on occasion, they may complete an independent learning activity.

SELF-CONTAINED CLASS

In these settings the teacher-student ratio is lower, activities are planned for individuals or small groups, concepts are simplified, and everything moves at a slower pace.

If this option will work best for your church, see the list of resources on pages 6–7 and 11 in this leader guide to find helps for music, decorating, Worship Rally, missions, snacks, recreation, and crafts.

COMBINATION APPROACH

Learners spend a portion of their day in a self-contained setting (perhaps for Bible study) but participate with their peer groups in rotations for crafts, music, missions, snacks, and recreation.

QUESTIONS

Use this leader guide to provide the Bible study portion of your VBS for children, students, and adults with special needs. Here are the answers to three important questions.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE IN FORMAT BETWEEN KIDS AND STUDENT/ADULT?

Sessions for **kids** (see pages 13–48) are designed in a pick-and-choose format similar to *Bible Studies for Life: Kids Special Buddies*. Select one activity under each topic heading, or make accommodations for each child as needed. Allow kids to work at their own pace even if it means multiple supervised activities are happening at the same time.

Sessions for **students and adults** (see pages 49–83) are designed in a linear format. As time allows, begin on the first page of the session and follow the suggestions from Start It to End It. Bonus activities may be used as needed to meet the needs of individuals, small groups, or the group as a whole.

WHERE IS THE MUSIC?

The *VBS 2026 Music for Kids CD* and the *VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers CD* are available for use in any classroom. See page 6 for ordering information.

WHERE ARE THE PRINTABLES AND WHICH ONES DO I NEED?

Any printable visuals you need to complete Bible study activities in this leader guide are available by following the “Printable Resources” instructions on page 1. You should print only the items you plan to use.

Most, but not all, of the PDFs included in the Printable Resources are available in Multi-age VBS Leader Packs. Purchasing the packs will reduce the number of items you will need to print. An added benefit of purchasing a pack is that the pack items are often larger and are printed on heavier paper than the ones you might print from the downloadable files.

For **kids**, everything but the Motto Poster can be found in the *VBS 2026 Multi-age Preschool Bible Study Leader Pack* (9798384537496).

For **students/adults**, some of the suggested items come from the *VBS 2026 Multi-age Preschool Bible Study Leader Pack* (9798384537496), however the majority come from the *VBS 2026 Multi-age Kids Bible Study Leader Pack* (9798384537397).

Resources

DECORATING

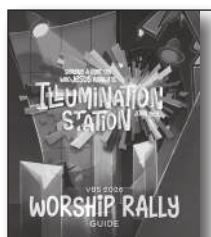
VBS 2026 Decorating Made Easy

includes supply lists, photos, clip art, and step-by-step decorating instructions.
9798384536987



WORSHIP RALLY PACK

Stage a self-contained worship experience in your room with the *VBS 2026 Worship Rally Pack*. You'll find daily videos, song motions, lyric videos, skits, pledges, and more.
9798384537595



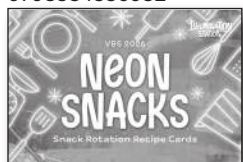
RECREATION

The *VBS 2026 Recreation Rotation Leader Cards* supply ideas for cooperative games.
9798384536925



SNACKS

The *VBS 2026 Snack Rotation Recipe Cards* include sure-to-please snack ideas.
9798384536932



Use these products to enhance the Bible study sessions contained in the leader guide. View the entire catalog at lifeway.com/vbs.

MUSIC



Teach kids and adults this year's songs and choreography with the *VBS 2026 Music Rotation Leader Guide with DVD*.
9798384536918

Songs on the *VBS 2026 Music for Kids CD* include the theme song "Illumination Station" plus an additional song for each day. Use the CD in your groups and send one home with each participant to enjoy all summer.

9798384537533 (pkg. of 5)

Also available digitally at lifeway.com.



The *VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers CD* contains short, easy-to-sing songs that help children express what they have learned about Jesus at VBS. Songs include "Illumination Station" plus an additional song for each day.

9798384537540 (pkg. of 5)

Also available digitally at lifeway.com.



Note: See "Shareable Music Links" from the

"Administrative Items" Printables (see page 3) for information that can help families find VBS music on various streaming platforms.

VBS 2026 NAME TAGS

These durable, breakaway-lanyard name tags will last all week. Package contains lanyards and name tags. 9798384538073 (pkg. of 20)



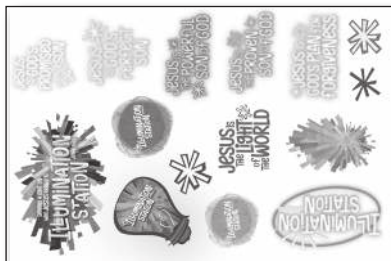
VBS 2026 STICKER NAME TAGS

Self-adhesive name tags are ideal for kids and adults with special needs who prefer not to wear a lanyard name tag. They also make great-looking labels for art projects. 9798384538301 (pkg. of 10 sheets)

RESOURCES

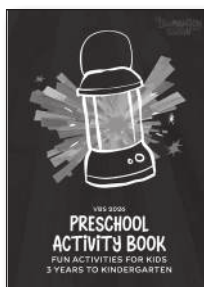
VBS 2026 THEME STICKERS

Fun VBS theme stickers are great for crafts, decorating room items, or sending home as favors. 9798384538158 (pkg. of 10 sheets)



VBS 2026 PRESCHOOL ACTIVITY BOOK

This book can be used throughout the week to reinforce Bible learning in the **Kids** section of this leader guide and also includes activities for families to do at home. (Provide one for each child.) 9798384537014



VBS 2026 KIDS ACTIVITY BOOK

This fun book provides activities and tips to be used with **students/adults** Bible study and gives them fun resources to take home at the end of the week. (Provide one for each student/adult learner.) 9798384535041



VBS 2026 MEMORY MAKER

Provide one Memory Maker bag and a set of Memory Maker tags for each participant. Each daily tag has a key phrase and an icon to remind learners of the simple, essential truths learned from the day's Bible story. Each package contains five sets. 9798384538141 (pkg. of 5 sets)

VBS 2026 Gospel Wristbands

Give wristbands to kids, students, or adults to remind them of how much God loves them and how He sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world. 9798384538257 (pkg. of 10)

CRAFTS

The VBS 2026 *Crafts Rotation Leader Guide* includes three fun craft ideas for each day. 9798384536895



MISSIONS

The VBS 2026 *Missions Rotation Leader Guide with DVD* includes daily video segments about missionaries. 9798384536901



WHEN IS A PERSON WITH SPECIAL NEEDS READY TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

There is no doubt that God loves every person and invites all to be a part of His kingdom.
(Read the story of Jesus and the children in Matthew 19:13-15.)

Kids, students, and adults with developmental special needs may not understand complicated “church words.” However, all are able to understand and feel the love God has for them and express their response in a personal and often joyous manner. Rather than assume or imply that people with special needs are “safe” or will automatically spend eternity in heaven, take care to give developmentally appropriate guidance in taking steps to lead individuals toward a personal relationship with Christ.

A SAMPLE PRAYER TO RECEIVE CHRIST AS SAVIOR AND LORD:

*God, I am sorry for
making wrong choices
sometimes. I love
Jesus! He is Your Son. I
want Jesus to help me
obey You all my life.
Amen.*

Some kids, students, and adults with special needs will be able to verbally repeat a prayer. Others will close their eyes and concentrate on the words as a parent or teacher says them.



SIGNS OF READINESS

People with special needs show their readiness to become a Christian in different ways. Some will be excited when conversation turns to how much God loves them. Others will say or sign how much they love Jesus. When you sense a child, student, or adult is ready to talk about becoming a Christian, there is no need to oversimplify the steps. Remember, it is your job to teach learners about God, the Bible, and what it means to become a Christian. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring a person to Christ.

Use “Sharing the Gospel” from the “Administrative Items” Printables (see page 3), but avoid long descriptions of sin. Instead, you might describe sin as “wrong choices.” Explain that being a Christian means that a person believes Jesus is God’s only Son. (Mention that John 3:16 says that God loved the world in this way: He gave His one and only Son.) It means that the person makes wrong choices sometimes and wants Jesus to help him make right choices. (Remember, a nonverbal person can answer yes or no questions with a shake of the head.)

When you sense a person is ready to pray to become a Christian, talk with his parents, guardians, or caregivers. If they are Christians and are comfortable doing so, let them lead the person in prayer (see margin). When you feel a person has had a genuine salvation experience, that person may be baptized and become a member of your church. Be sure to encourage the family to speak with the pastor prior to the person making a public profession of faith. What a day for rejoicing!

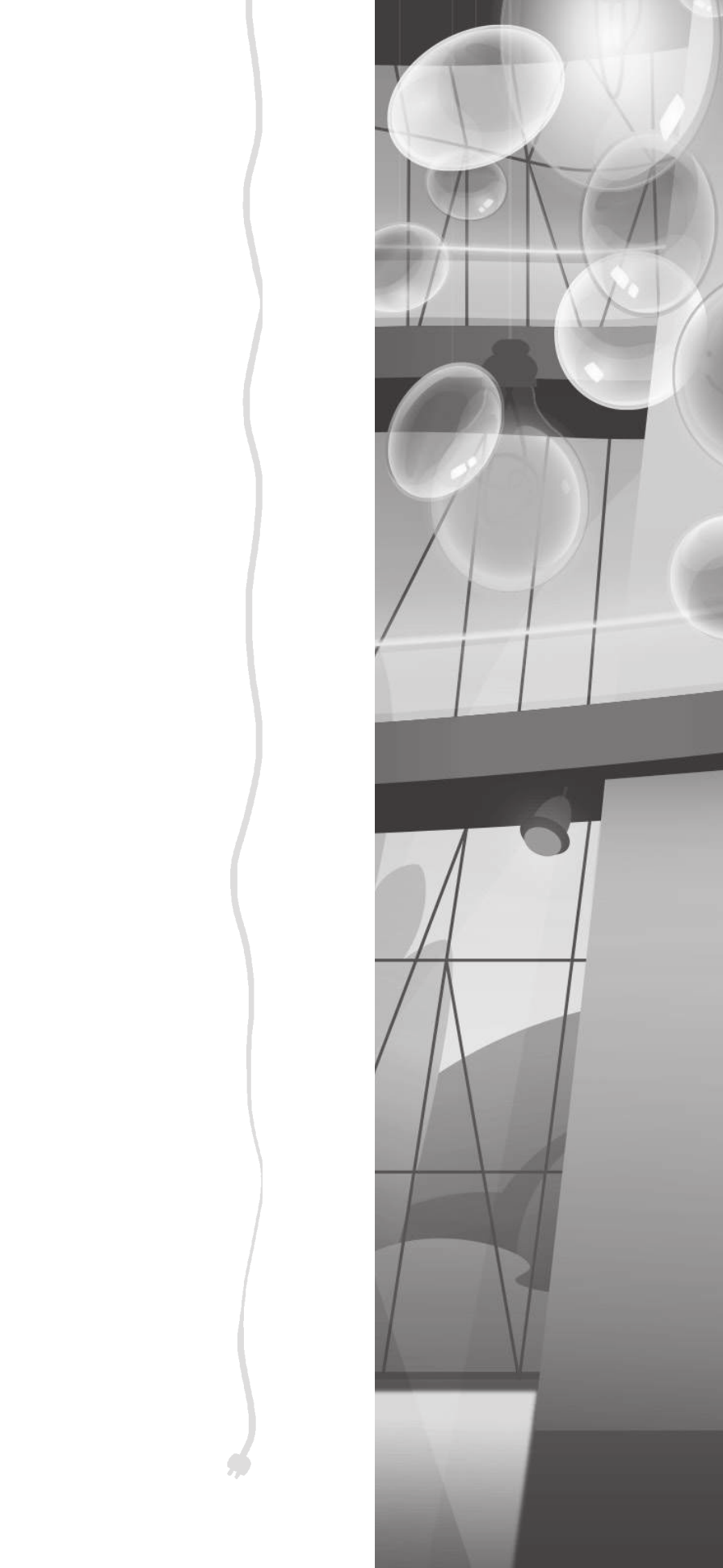
MAKE A SPIRITUAL IMPACT

Children, students, and adults with special needs can make the life-changing decision to become a Christian when the gospel is presented to them in a manner that supports their individual learning styles and specific developmental abilities.

The *VBS 2026 Special Friends Leader Guide* uses the same Bible content as the mainline VBS curriculum, presenting the gospel through Bible stories and activities designed to give people with learning differences a foundation for spiritual growth and development.

Take note of these specific resources and activities that intentionally focus on what it means to be a Christian and how a person can become a Christian. Use them as directed in the leader guide, but be ready to use them when the Holy Spirit guides a learner to ask spiritual questions or when a learner indicates a desire to make a decision for Christ.

- Leader Guide page 8:
When Is a Person with Special Needs Ready to Become a Christian?
- Leader Guide page 41:
Invite Children to Respond
- Leader Guide page 77:
Invite Learners to Respond



PRAYER STRATEGIES

Pray for the many people who will be involved in VBS at your church. Ask them to pray for you!

- Ask God to give the VBS Director and your Pastor wisdom as they lead and guide this evangelistic event.
- Pray for smooth schedules and a hedge of protection around these leaders and your church's VBS.
- Ask God to help members of the Support Teams to view their work as important in advancing His kingdom.
- Pray that the Pastor and the VBS Director will have wisdom and insight in presenting the gospel in an age-appropriate manner.
- Ask God to give the Worship Rally leaders the stamina needed to conduct a high-energy program.
- Pray for the music leaders to capitalize on learners' love of music to reinforce biblical truths. Ask God to allow the words of the music to penetrate the hearts of each child, student, or adult.
- Pray that the missions leaders will demonstrate a passion for missions. Ask God to help learners develop a passion for being missionaries wherever they go.
- Ask God to give the craft leaders the words and direction needed to reinforce each Bible story as learners work. Pray for the leaders to be sensitive to each person's skill level.
- Pray for the safety of all leaders and participants as they enjoy recreation. Ask God to use this time to build relationships and good sportsmanship.
- Pray for those who are coordinating, preparing, and serving snacks to do so with a cheerful heart.
- Pray for leaders to have the stamina, wisdom, and patience they need to care for the learners as they reflect the love of Jesus.
- Pray for leaders to be spiritually, mentally, and physically prepared to lead learners to Christ as they are directed by the Holy Spirit.
- Tip: Print copies of the "Prayer Cards" from the "Administrative Items" Printables (see page 3). Distribute the cards to willing members of your church who will commit to pray for VBS as a whole and your Special Friends group in particular.

PREP FOR THE THEME

Use these ideas for decorating your room. Be sure decorations will not be a distraction from learning.

Focal Wall Suggestions

- As you determine how to set up your Bible study area, you may want to select one wall as your focal wall to display teaching items from the “Printable Resources” downloaded using the redemption code (see page 3) or from the related multi-age leader packs (see page 5). Keeping the focal wall simple with only teaching items will help eliminate distractions while teaching biblical truths.
- Prepare to change out the teaching items as they are called for each day.

Activity-based Decoration

- Find decorating ideas in *VBS 2026 Decorating Made Easy* (9798384536987).
- Decorate rooms and hallways with *VBS 2026 Wall Art* (9798384538592).
- Decorate floors with *VBS 2026 Floor Prints* (9798384538219).
- Place the *VBS 2026 Supersized Backdrop* (9798384538561) on a wall to complete the scene.
- Hang *VBS 2026 Visual Pack* (9798384538585) posters on other classroom walls.
- Drape *VBS 2026 String Flags* (9798384538226) and *VBS 2026 Whirleys* (9798384538233) from the ceiling.
- Place *VBS 2026 Glitter Beach Balls* (9798384539810) around the teaching area.
- Use small containers or *VBS 2026 Cups* (9798384538059) to hold pens and supplies.
- To help learners find the Bible Study location, use a *VBS 2026 Bible Study Location Sign* (9798384538608).
- If you are using lighting sources such as battery-operated tea lights, spotlights, or projectors, 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.



VBS 2026 Supersized Backdrop



VBS 2026 Decorating Made Easy

WHAT DO I DO WHEN VBS IS OVER?

Be sure to gather accurate contact information from each family. Follow up with a visit, phone call, or postcard to invite the learner and the parents to church.

Pray for each child, student, and adult who has attended VBS. Pray for God's Holy Spirit to work in the lives of all those who were involved in VBS.

Tip: Reproducible copies of the "Prospect Card" pictured on this page are available in the "Administrative Items" Printables (see page 3).

Names and ages of children who visited VBS	

Parent or Guardian's Name	_____
Address	_____
Phone	_____
Date of Contact	_____
Method of Contact	_____

ONGOING CURRICULUM

These two resources can help meet the ongoing Bible study needs of children and adults who have special needs.

SPECIAL BUDDIES

Bible Studies for Life: Special Buddies is designed for children in grades 1–6 who have developmental special needs. A new Bible story is presented every two weeks to allow time for extended activities or repetition of meaningful activities over the two-week span.

Visit lifeway.com to order the *Special Buddies* family of products:

Special Buddies Leader Guide (005080591)

Special Buddies Kids Activity Pages (005080592)

3s–Pre-K Leader Pack (005075165)

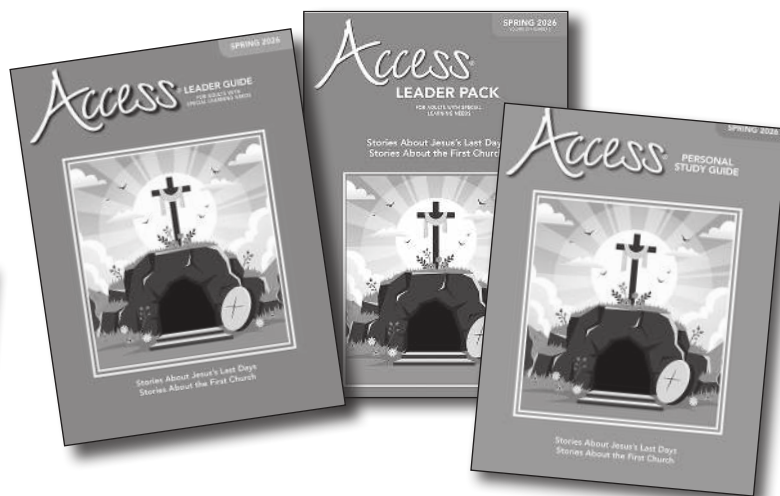
ACCESS

Access is designed to introduce Bible concepts to adults who have special learning needs. Visit Lifeway.com to order the *Access* family of products:

Access Leader Guide (005075010)

Access Leader Pack (005074988)

Access Personal Study Guide (005075009)



Teaching PLANS for Kids

DAILY TEACHING PLANS

Day 1: Jesus Is God's Promised Son.....	14
Day 2: Jesus Is God's Perfect Son.....	21
Day 3: Jesus Is the Powerful Son of God.....	28
Day 4: Jesus Is the Proven Son of God.....	35
Day 5: Jesus Is God's Plan for Forgiveness	42

GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL FRIENDS VBS FOR KIDS

- Never mix adults with special needs with children. Their needs are different and should be met separately.
- Enlist a minimum of 1 leader for every 1–2 children. Plan for at least 1 male and 1 female to assist other leaders with toileting and personal care needs.
- **Note: The teaching plans are designed in a pick-and-choose format similar to *Bible Studies for Life: Special Buddies*.** Select one activity under each topic heading, or make accommodations for each child as needed. Allow kids to work at their own pace even if it means multiple supervised activities are happening at the same time.
- No specific time limits are suggested for Bible study activities. Some groups will be able to complete one activity from each section while others may tell the Bible story and complete a few supplementary activities. Please adapt the teaching plans to meet the specific needs of your learners.
- Establish a behavior management plan in advance. Use positive reinforcement and redirection tactics when needed. Set up a quiet zone for kids who need to take a break from the group. Keep parent/caregiver contact information close at hand. Do not hesitate to call for assistance if a situation arises that threatens the safety of a learner or the entire class.

TEACHING TIP

Need more activities? Flip through the Teaching Plans for Students/Adults. Use any that you like!

BIBLE STUDY PRINTABLE RESOURCES: KIDS ITEMS

- Spotlight Wall (Days 1–5)
- Spotlight Wall Add-ons (Days 1–5)
- Bible Verse Poster (Days 1–5)
- Motto Poster (Days 1–5)
- Bible Story Pictures (Days 1–5 from the “Bible Story Pictures” folder in the Printable Resources)
- Allergy Alert (Days 1, 2, 3, 4)
- Bible Verse Strips (Days 1–4)
- Word Cards (Days 1–5)
- Disciple Match (Days 1, 5)
- Disciple Names (Day 5)
- “I Spy” Pictures (Days 1, 2, 5)
- “Jesus Puzzles” (Day 3)
- Lacing Cards (Day 1, 5)
- Suncatcher Templates (Day 1)
- Verse Words (Days 2, 3)
- Book: *Jesus Is God's Son* (Days 2, 5)
- Shadow Poses (Days 2, 4, 5)
- Day 3 Sequence Cards (Day 3)
- Faces (Day 4)
- Light Box Ideas (Days 3, 4)
- Spotlight Gameboard (Day 5)
- Spotlight Game Cards (Day 5)



PRINTABLES AND AUDIO

PRINTABLES are available by following the download instructions on page 3.

AUDIO VBS 2026 songs can be purchased on discs or as downloads. See page 6 for ordering information or go to lifeway.com.

JESUS IS GOD'S PROMISED SON



SPOTLIGHT QUESTION

WHO IS JESUS? JESUS IS THE MESSIAH, THE PROMISED SON OF GOD.

TODAY'S POINT

JESUS IS GOD'S PROMISED SON.

BIBLE VERSE

JESUS SAID, "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD."
JOHN 8:12

BIBLE STORY

JESUS ASKED WHO PEOPLE THOUGHT HE WAS

Matthew 16:13-20

One day, Jesus asked His disciples (helpers) a question.

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

The disciples told Jesus that people had different ideas about who Jesus was. Many people thought Jesus could be a prophet named John who had died. They thought maybe John had come back to life. A prophet was someone who told people special messages from God. Jesus was more special than even a prophet.

Jesus asked His disciples, "But who do you say that I am?"

Peter, one of the disciples, answered, "You are God's Son."

Jesus said Peter could only know this because God had helped Peter know. Jesus said that Peter would tell people about Jesus.

Who is Jesus? Jesus is God's promised Son.



Helpful definitions:

disciple—a person who followed and learned from Jesus

prophet—someone who told people special messages from God

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 time to pray and ask God to use you to make an eternal impact in the lives of the children you teach.

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 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 was 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 a 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 the 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.



Printables and Audio

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AUDIO VBS 2026 songs can be purchased on discs or as downloads. See page 6 for ordering information or go to lifeway.com.

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE

STORY PREP

- ❑ “Spotlight Wall” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ❑ “Motto Poster” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ❑ Display banner and motto on the focal wall.

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Option 1

- ❑ Large blank index cards
- ❑ Marker
- ❑ Neon stamp pads
- ❑ Hand wipes
- ❑ Small latex free plastic gloves
- ❑ Flashlight or lantern
- ❑ “Allergy Alert” listing stamp pads (dye) and hand wipes (Printables—Kids Items)

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Option 2

- ❑ Variety of different lights (flashlights, battery tea lights, tap lights, penlights)

Tip: Avoid flashing lights to prevent sensory overload.

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Welcome the children to Illumination Station VBS, a special week of shining a light on the truth of who Jesus really is. Point to the “Spotlight Wall.” Explain that your group will have fun this week watching the wall fill with truths about Jesus.

Say the VBS motto: “Jesus is the Light of the world.”

OPTION 1: DECORATE NAME CARDS

- Write each child’s name on a card. If you do not know the names ahead of time, write names as the children join the class.
- Invite boys and girls to decorate around their names by pressing their fingertips in neon stamp pads and making designs around their names. Instruct children to use hand wipes once they finish their cards. For the child who does not want to put his finger on the neon stamp pad, offer a small latex free plastic glove to put on. Make the glove taunt, but not tight, around the finger the child would like to use. Then, press the gloved finger in the neon stamp pad and onto the card.
- Use a flashlight or a lantern to create a lighted spot on the floor. Invite one child at a time to stand in the spotlight, hold up his card, and take a bow while you introduce him to the rest of the group. If a child is in a wheelchair, move the light to the child or assist with moving the child to the lighted area.
- Comment: “I know who you are by reading your name. I know you are a child who came to VBS. In today’s Bible story, Jesus asked who people said He is.”

Challenge: Give kids an opportunity to tell something about themselves that they want the group to know.

OPTION 2: EXPLORE LIGHTS

- Welcome children to VBS. Before the session begins, take time to get to know the children’s names and introduce new kids to the group. Say: “I am so glad you are here at Illumination Station. We will be learning together.”
- Show several different types of lights such as a flashlight, battery tea lights, tap lights, and penlights. Talk about how the lights are the same and how they are different.
- Say: “We will be using a lot of different lights in VBS. One important rule is that we do not shine lights into people’s eyes or faces. Only shine the lights on their shirts, legs, or shoes.”
- Describe a child with a few characteristics (hair color, hair length, clothing color, shoe type). Encourage children to point to who you are describing. Shine a light on the child’s shirt as you say his name: “Yeah, Max is here today!” Continue until you have described all the children.
- Comment: “Today, we are going to learn who Jesus is.”

STUDY THE BIBLE

Choose one option for telling the Bible story. (See page 14.)

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

OPTION 1: TOUCH TEXTURED WORDS

- Prior to the session, make tactile word cards for the words *disciples* and *Jesus* by writing the words with colored glue or from vinyl or sandpaper and attaching to a card.
- Show and read the word cards. Invite each child to run his finger over each word as he feels, hears, and repeats the words. Say: “People followed and listened to Jesus. Jesus chose 12 men to be His close followers, His disciples.” Challenge children to listen for the word *disciple* in the story and for what Jesus asked His disciples.
- Open your Bible to Matthew 16. Tell today’s Bible story and show boys and girls “Bible Story Picture 1.”
- After telling the story, point to the “Spotlight Wall.” Read the question: “Who is Jesus?” Ask children to answer the question based on what they heard in the story. Point to the wall again as you say, “Jesus is God’s promised Son. God promised to send His Son and He did. Jesus is God’s Son.”
- Pray and thank God for Jesus, His promised Son.
- Show “Bible Story Picture 1.” Invite kids to describe what they see in the picture.

OPTION 2: PLAY A MATCHING GAME

- Display the “Bible Story Picture 1.” Point out Jesus and the disciples.
- Mix up the “Disciple Match” picture cards and place them faceup on the floor or table. If a child is in a wheelchair, consider having all the children sit in chairs around a table rather than on the floor.
- Say: “These are pictures someone drew of Jesus’ disciples. Jesus chose 12 men to be His close followers and helpers. They were His disciples. There are two pictures of each disciple. Let’s find the matching pictures.”
- Call on one child to choose a picture. Call on another child to find the matching picture. Tell them the name of the disciple. Continue until all cards are matched.
- Open your Bible to Matthew 16 and tell today’s Bible story. Tell them to listen for Peter’s name in the story.
- After telling the story, talk about what the disciples told Jesus.
- Find Peter’s picture and shine a light on it. Mention that Peter said that Jesus is God’s Son. Together, repeat the words, “Jesus is God’s Son.”

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

Choose an activity to help children learn and interact with the Bible verse.

OPTION 1: PLAY IN A SAND TRAY

- Lay one or two of the “I Spy Pictures” in a tray. Cover the pictures with a layer of sand. Place a “Bible Verse Strip” in another tray and cover with sand. Make several sand trays, depending on the number of children. Place a large plastic spoon in each tray.
- Say: “Jesus and His disciples often walked on sandy roads. Jesus taught His disciples who He is.”
- Talk about a picture when a child uncovers it. Guide him to hide it again in the sand (in his tray or another tray).

STUDY THE BIBLE

Option 1

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ “Bible Story Picture 1” (Printables—Bible Story Pictures)
- ☐ Large blank index cards or cardstock
- ☐ Items to make raised or texturized words such as colored glue, vinyl, or sandpaper
- ☐ “Spotlight Wall” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ “Spotlight Add-ons” (Printables—Kids Items)

STUDY THE BIBLE

Option 2

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ “Bible Story Picture 1” (Printables—Bible Story Pictures)
- ☐ “Disciple Match” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ Flashlight

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

Option 1

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ “Bible Verse Strip” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ “I Spy Pictures” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ Trays
- ☐ Neon-colored sand
- ☐ Large plastic spoons
- ☐ Highlighter
- ☐ VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers (see page 6 for ordering information)

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

- Read the verse strip when uncovered. Open your Bible to John 8:12. Show the boys and girls where the verse is located in the Bible, highlight it, and read it again. Mark the page with the verse strip.
- Sing “Light of the World” as the boys and girls continue to scoop and search through the sand.

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

Option 2

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ “Bible Verse Poster” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ Variety of different lights (tap lights, penlights, or flashlights)

LIVE IT OUT PREP

- ☐ “Spotlight Wall” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ “Spotlight Wall Add-ons” (Printables—Kids Items)

LIVE IT OUT

Option 1

- ☐ “Lacing Cards” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ Cardstock
- ☐ Hole punch
- ☐ Neon shoelaces

Adapt

- ☐ Plain paper plates
- ☐ Neon washable markers
- ☐ VBS 2026 Theme Stickers (9798384538158)

LIVE IT OUT

Option 2

- ☐ Blank index cards
- ☐ Markers (two colors)
- ☐ Napkins
- ☐ Flashlight

OPTION 2: TURN ON A LIGHT

- Place a tap light, penlight, or flashlight in front of each child. Decide which type of light would be easiest for each child based on his or her needs. Remind children not to shine lights in people’s eyes or faces. Practice turning the lights off and on.
- Tell children that Jesus said many things to help us understand who He is and who God is.
- Open the Bible to John 8:12 and read it (say the paraphrase): “Jesus said, ‘I am the Light of the world.’”
- Display the “Bible Verse Poster” and point to the words as you say them. Repeat the verse several times and encourage children to say the verse with you while turning the light on and off when saying the word *light*.
- Say: “Jesus said He is the Light of the world. That means that Jesus helps us see and know what God is like.”
- Say the verse together again.

LIVE IT OUT

Draw attention to the “Spotlight Wall.” Invite a child to tape the Day 1 Spotlight Question to the wall. Read aloud the question: “Who is Jesus?” Encourage children to think about the question as they do the Live It Out activities.

OPTION 1: LACE CARDS

- Prior to the session, prepare the “Lacing Cards” on cardstock. Use a hole punch to make holes around each picture.
- Lay the cards on a table along with shoelaces.
- Point to Jesus in each picture and talk about what kids will be learning about Jesus this week. Read each of the Points on the sentence lacing cards.
- Demonstrate how to weave a shoelace in and out of the holes of a lacing card. Find the lacing card with *Jesus is God’s promised Son*. Point to the words as you say them.
- Assist kids in getting started with lacing their cards.

Adapt: If a child struggles with fine motor or visual skills, consider gluing a “Lacing Card” to the center of a paper plate and letting the child decorate the plate around the picture with markers and stickers.

OPTION 2: PLAY A NAME GAME

- On individual blank index cards, write each child’s name. Write *Jesus* on a card in a different color. Cover each name with a napkin.

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

- Select one child at a time to pick a hidden name, remove the napkin, and reveal a name. Announce the name. If it is Jesus' name, say: "Jesus is God's promised Son" and shine a light on His name. If it is a child's name, say: "Jesus loves _____ (child's name)" and shine a light toward the child.
- If time allows, play again. Mix up the cards with the goal of trying to find Jesus' name.

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Choose one activity to close the session.

OPTION 1: FILL IN THE BLANK

- Review the Bible verse, John 8:12.
- Repeat the verse again leaving out a key word, "Jesus is the _____ of the world." Help each child prepare to leave by gathering up his belongings. Ask if he knows the missing word. If a child is unsure or nonverbal, shine a light on his hand. Say the word "Light" in the verse for the child to hear.
- Give each child a sticker to encourage him to come back to VBS.

OPTION 2: PRAY AND SING

- Say: "God promised to send His Son. Jesus is God's promised Son."
- Pray and thank God for His Son, Jesus.
- Offer an opportunity for children to pray and thank God for Jesus, too. Allow all volunteers a turn to pray.
- Sing "Who Is Jesus?"

ACTIVITY BOOK

- Distribute a copy of the Activity Book to each child.
- Look at pages 1–2 in the Activity Book. Explain the directions and assist children to complete the activity.

MAKE A MEMORY

- Show the Memory Maker bags. Tell kids they will add items to the Memory Bag throughout VBS.
- Give each child the Day 1 item. Explain that a question mark is used to show that someone is asking a question. Say that kids can remember that Jesus is God's promised Son. Help the boys and girls add the Day 1 item to their Memory Maker bags.
- Collect Memory Makers for later use.



CLOSING ACTIVITY

Option 1

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ Penlight
- ☐ VBS Theme Stickers (9798384538158)

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Option 2

- ☐ VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers

ACTIVITY BOOK

- ☐ VBS 2026 Preschool Activity Book (9798384537014) (1 per child)

Tip: If it is not possible to provide one for each child, purchase a few for the room to use during VBS.

MEMORY MAKERS

- ☐ VBS 2026 Memory Makers (9798384538141) (1 set per child)

LEADER TIP

To avoid frustration with the small Memory Maker bags, consider providing gallon ziplock bags in which to keep kids' Memory Maker collections.

BONUS ACTIVITIES

MAKE A SUNCATCHER

SUPPLIES

- ❑ Bible
- ❑ “Bible Story Picture 1” (Printables—Bible Story Pictures)
- ❑ “Suncatcher Templates” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ❑ Heavyweight paper
- ❑ Clear contact plastic
- ❑ Tissue paper pieces
- ❑ Chenille stems
- ❑ Hole punch
- ❑ Scissors

1. Print “Suncatcher Templates” so each child has either an oval or a rectangle frame. Cut out the inner shaded portion. Cut clear plastic into 6-inch-by-4-inch pieces.
2. For each child, peel backing from contact plastic and lay the sticky side up. Invite her to choose a frame and lay it on the sticky plastic. Trim sticky portions that extend beyond the frame.
3. Tell the child to select and press tissue paper pieces onto the sticky paper.
4. Show “Bible Story Picture 1” and review the Bible story. Comment that Peter said Jesus is God’s Son. Together, say and repeat, “Jesus is God’s Son.”
5. Write the child’s name on the suncatchers. Collect them and have an adult leader work on punching a hole at the top of each one, threading a chenille stem through the hole, and twisting the ends to make a circle hanger.

TIP

- If there are a lot of sticky areas uncovered, lay another piece of contact plastic on the top of the suncatcher to seal it.

KID CONNECTION

I can remember a Bible story about Jesus.

BUILD AND CREATE SHADOWS

SUPPLIES

- ❑ Blocks (wooden, interlocking, or other building materials)
- ❑ Flashlight or small spotlight
- ❑ **Extend:** banner paper, tape, pencils

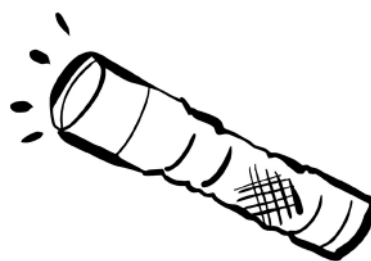
1. Set up a building area on tables by walls. Encourage children to build structures with blocks or other construction materials.
2. Shine a flashlight onto the structure and talk about the shadows on the wall. Encourage children to add or adjust their structures to change the shadows.
3. Work together to figure out how to build a *J*-shaped shadow.
4. Say: “*J* is the first letter of Jesus’ name. Jesus came to help people know about God. Jesus is God’s promised Son.”

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY

- Tape paper to the wall. Lay pencils nearby.
- Help a child position the structure so that the shadow is on the paper. Tell the child he can trace the shadow on the paper with a pencil.

KID CONNECTION

I can hear that Jesus is God’s promised Son.



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.

TODAY'S POINT

JESUS IS GOD'S PERFECT SON.

BIBLE VERSE

JESUS SAID, "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD."
JOHN 8:12

2

BIBLE STORY

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

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

John the Baptist was *baptizing* people. He would lower them in the water and bring them back up to show other people they chose to follow God.

John said, "Someone is coming who is greater than I am—someone who is so important that I shouldn't even untie His sandals." 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 disobeyed God, but Jesus never disobeyed God!

Jesus said, "Let Me be *baptized*. God said this is right." So John *baptized* Jesus.

When Jesus came out of the water, God's voice came from heaven. "This is My Son," the voice said. "I love Him, and I am very pleased with Him!"

Jesus was more than just an ordinary man. He is the perfect Son of God.

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.



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TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Welcome the children to VBS. Play the song “Illumination Station.”

Show the poster and say the VBS motto: “Jesus is the Light of the world.”

OPTION 1: PLAY SPOTLIGHT “I SPY”

- Tape “I Spy Pictures” around the activity space. Tape to walls, chairs, or other places in both higher and lower locations. Make sure the pictures are in front of where the children are sitting so those in wheelchairs or less mobile children will not need to turn to see them.
- Describe one of the pictures. Tell kids to look around the space to find the picture. When they find it, they can point to it. Shine a light on where they are pointing.
- Spotlight the picture of Jesus. Say: “Yesterday we learned that Jesus is God’s promised Son.”
- Spotlight the river picture. Tell kids they will hear a story with a river in it.

Challenge: Chose one volunteer at a time to describe something to find. Tell him that he can “spy” one of the pictures or something else in the activity area.

OPTION 2: MOVE TO THE MUSIC

- Tell children how happy you are to see them at Illumination Station. Mention that they will hear more about Jesus today.
- Teach the following movements to go along with a type of light: twist hand back and forth (*light bulb*), blow on fist (*candle*), and sweep hands back and forth (*lantern*). Show these light sources on the “I Spy Pictures.”
- Play “Who Is Jesus?” Lead kids to move to the music and guide them to do the light source movements with you periodically during the song.
- After the song, review the motto: “Jesus is the Light of the world.” Say: “Jesus came to help people know about God.”
- Mention that today’s Bible story is about the time when Jesus was baptized. He showed us what God wants us to do.

STUDY THE BIBLE

Choose one option for telling the Bible story.

OPTION 1: EXPLORE SENSORY BAGS

- Make sensory bags by filling a bag between one-third and one-half with oil (closer to one-third). Add several tablespoons of blue watercolor paint. Close and seal the bag, squeezing all excess air from the bag. Move the bag to “mix” the oil and watercolor paint. Seal the bag with wide tape. Make a bag for each child.
- On a table, lay each bag on top of the *baptize* “Word Card.” Tell kids to move the contents to see the word under the bag. Read aloud the word and challenge kids to listen for this word in today’s Bible story.

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY PREP

- ☐ VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers
- ☐ “Motto Poster” (Printables—Kids Items)

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Option 1

- ☐ “I Spy Pictures” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ Tape or picture putty
- ☐ Flashlight

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Option 2

- ☐ VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers
- ☐ “I Spy Pictures” (Printables—Kids Items)

STUDY THE BIBLE

Option 1

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ “Word Cards” (Printables—Kids Items)—Make copies of the word *baptize*.
- ☐ Heavy-duty ziplock bags
- ☐ Baby oil or cooking oil
- ☐ Blue watercolor paint
- ☐ Wide transparent tape
- ☐ “Bible Story Picture 2” (Printables—Bible Story Pictures)

Tip: Post an “Allergy Alert” if the children make the sensory bags instead of a leader making them prior to the session.

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

- Let the kids use their bags as fidgets as they listen to today's Bible story. Open your Bible to Mark 1 and tell the story of the baptism of Jesus.
- After telling the story, point to the word card. Ask: "Did you hear the word *baptize*?" Show "Bible Story Picture 2" and ask: "Why is Jesus with John in the water?" Comment: "John baptized Jesus in the river. Jesus was lowered into the water and back up again. Jesus obeyed God when He was baptized. He showed others that He loved, trusted, and followed God."

STUDY THE BIBLE

Option 2

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ "Bible Story Picture 2" (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ Large ziplock bag
- ☐ Clear plastic container or bin
- ☐ Towel
- ☐ Pitcher of water
- ☐ Plastic people figure

OPTION 2: DEMONSTRATE BAPTISM

- Slide "Bible Story Picture 2" into a large ziplock bag and seal. Spread a towel on the floor or a low table. Consider using a low table if a child in the group is in a wheelchair. Lay the ziplock bag on the towel. Set a clear or translucent container on top of the picture. Pour water into the container to a depth of about 2–3 inches.
- Invite one child at a time to touch the water, look into the container at the picture, and tell who they see. Ask her to guess why the people are standing in water in the picture. Tell kids to listen to the Bible story to find out what Jesus and John are doing in the water.
- Open your Bible to Mark 1 and tell today's Bible story about the baptism of Jesus.
- After telling the story, ask the kids to recall why Jesus and John were in the water. Explain that John baptized Jesus because Jesus wanted to obey God and show people what they should do when they decide to follow God.
- Using a plastic people figure, demonstrate how John lowered Jesus into the water and back up again. Invite volunteers to repeat the action with the figure.

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

Choose an activity to help children learn and interact with the Bible verse.

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

Option 1

- ☐ Bibles (1 per child)
- ☐ "Bible Verse Strip" (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ Highlighter

OPTION 1: PASS THE BIBLE

- Prior to the session, place a "Bible Verse Strip" in each Bible to mark John 8:12, the theme verse. Highlight the verse, so the child can easily locate it.
- Place a Bible in front of each child. Demonstrate and tell kids how to gently pick up a Bible. Comment: "We take care of our Bibles because it is the most special and important book ever written. It is God's Word." Then, tell them to open up the Bible and find the "Bible Verse Strip." Next, challenge them to touch the highlighted verse on the page. Move around the room and assist as needed. Read the verse, "Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world.'" Guide each child to close his Bible with the marker in it, pass it to the child sitting next to him, and say the verse together. Repeat these steps a few times.
- **Challenge:** Help children find the Bible book name on the marked page. Next, find the large number 8. Explain that this is a chapter number. Say: "Chapter numbers and verse numbers help us find specific verses in the Bible." For an additional challenge, lead a child to find the verse number 12 in the chapter.

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

Option 2

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ "Verse Words" (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ "Bible Verse Poster" (Printables—Kids Items)

OPTION 2: PUT WORDS IN ORDER

- Put the "Verse Words" in order on the floor or a table. Read aloud the words in order while shining a light on each word. Show kids where John 8:12 is in the Bible.

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

- Mix up the words. Work together to put the words in order. Call attention to the “Bible Verse Poster” for reference or indicate the finger that shows the word order. When the words are in order, read the verse again.
- **Challenge:** Remove one of the word cards and say the verse again with kids supplying the missing word. Remove another word card (or two) and say the verse again.

LIVE IT OUT

Draw attention to the “Spotlight Wall.” Invite a child to tape the Day 2 Spotlight Question to the wall. Read aloud the question: “Was Jesus just an ordinary man?” Encourage children to think about the question as they do the Live It Out activities.

OPTION 1: CREATE WINDOW DESIGNS

- Invite kids to arrange window clings on windows. If you do not have windows in your space, provide hand mirrors or empty picture frames for kids to use with clings and dry erase markers.
- Note the way that the light shines through the clings. If it is nighttime, shine a flashlight onto the clings after they are on the window. Let children draw their own unique designs with dry erase markers.
- Assist kids in writing Jesus’ name on the windows with a dry erase marker. Ask: “What did we learn about Jesus today? Who is Jesus?” Listen to responses. Say Today’s Point: “Jesus is God’s perfect Son.” Explain that Jesus was not an ordinary man. Jesus is the Savior of the world. He never sinned, which means He never disobeyed God.

Challenge: Show “Bible Story Picture 2” and prompt kids to draw a picture of the river using wavy lines. Add two stick figures to represent Jesus and John to show the scene of Jesus being baptized.

OPTION 2: MAKE A BOOK ABOUT JESUS

- Prior to the session, preprint labels with words: *Jesus*, *God’s Son*, *baptize*, *Bible*, and the like for kids with limited fine motor or writing capabilities to use in their books.
- For each child, fold paper in half to create a book. Tell kids they can make books about Jesus by drawing pictures of Him, which can be detailed or a simple stick figure, write or stick words in the book to help them remember who Jesus is, or even use shape stamps to decorate it.
- Read and show “Book: *Jesus is God’s Son*.” Place copies of the book on the table for kids to look at words and pictures as they create their own special book. As needed, assist by helping kids write in their books.
- Review and repeat Today’s Point: “Jesus is God’s perfect Son.”
- Invite kids to show their books to the group.

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Choose one activity to close the session.

OPTION 1: SING AND MOVE

- Play “Shine the Light.”
- Lead children to move with the music and do the motions as indicated in the song.

LIVE IT OUT PREP

- ☐ “Spotlight Wall” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ “Spotlight Wall Add-ons” (Printables—Kids Items)

LIVE IT OUT

Option 1

- ☐ Decorative gel window clings
- ☐ Empty photo frames or hand mirrors (if there are no windows in the room)
- ☐ Dry erase markers
- ☐ Window cleaner
- ☐ Paper towels
- ☐ Flashlight (if it is nighttime)
- ☐ **Challenge:** “Bible Story Picture 2,” dry erase markers

Tips: If there are no windows in the room, consider using acrylic photo frames with a flat bottom to set on the table. This will allow kids to easily sit or stand to draw or place window clings on it. Have window cleaner and paper towels on hand to clean windows after the session.

LIVE IT OUT

Option 2

- ☐ “Book: *Jesus Is God’s Son*” (Printables—Kids Items) Make several copies.
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Neon markers and regular markers
- ☐ Neon stamp pads
- ☐ Shape stamps

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Option 1

- ☐ *VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers*

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

- Repeat the movement song as time permits.
- Ask kids to sit down. Play “I Can Be Like Jesus.” Tell kids to pat their knees as they sing the song.

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Option 2

- ☐ Play parachute or blue sheet
- ☐ Small plush toy
- ☐ *VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers*

OPTION 2: PLAY WITH A PARACHUTE

- Gather kids around a parachute or a blue sheet. Decide if the kids will stand in a circle or sit in chairs, depending on the needs of the kids in the group. Show kids how to hold on to the edges of the parachute and work together to move it up and down to create the look of moving water.
- Play the theme song “Illumination Station” as kids wave the parachute.
- Toss a small plush toy onto the parachute. Work together to move the parachute up and down with the goal of keeping the toy from falling off.
- Stop the game when parents start to arrive. Greet the parents and caregivers. Help gather the child’s personal belongings and take-home items.

Tip: Position a leader in between every two or three kids to help with moving the parachute up and down.

ACTIVITY BOOK

- ☐ *VBS 2026 Preschool Activity Book* (1 per child)
- ☐ Pencils

ACTIVITY BOOK

- Distribute a copy of the Activity Book and a pencil to each child.
- Lead children to turn to page 6. Work together to complete the page.
- Review Today’s Point: Jesus is God’s perfect Son. Comment: “Jesus was the only perfect person who has ever lived. He never disobeyed God.”

MAKE A MEMORY

- Give each child a Day 2 tag. Talk about the picture of the river on the tag.
- Say: “This picture will help you remember that Jesus was baptized. You can remember that Jesus is God’s perfect Son.”
- Help children add the Day 2 item to their Memory Maker bags. Gather the Memory Maker bags.
- Pray, thanking God for Jesus, His perfect Son.



MEMORY MAKERS

- ☐ *VBS 2026 Memory Maker* (1 set per child)

BONUS ACTIVITIES

MAKE PROJECTORS

SUPPLIES

- ❑ Bible Verse Poster” (Printables—Kids Items)
 - ❑ Small paper cups
 - ❑ Wide transparent tape
 - ❑ Permanent markers
 - ❑ *2026 Sticky Foam Shapes* (9798384538134) or other theme-related foam stickers
 - ❑ Flashlights
 - ❑ Scissors
1. Prior to the session, cut out the bottoms of paper cups. Cut wide transparent tape into about 4-inch lengths and stick them on plastic folders.
 2. Invite kids to draw designs or add foam stickers to the tape.
 3. When the child finishes drawing or adding the stickers, peel off the tape and help him place the tape over one end of the cup. Then, project his design on the wall by shining the flashlight through the tube. Shine the design on the “Bible Verse Poster” and say the verse.

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY

- Draw a river on a length of tape and project the picture on the wall.
- Talk about the Bible story. Comment that when Jesus was baptized, God spoke and said that Jesus was His Son.
- Write Jesus’ name on a piece of tape and project it on the wall.

KID CONNECTION

I can think about and remember who Jesus is.

PLAY A SHADOW GAME

SUPPLIES

- ❑ “Bible Story Picture 2” (Printables—Kids Items)
 - ❑ “Shadow Poses” (Printables—Kids Items)
 - ❑ Small spotlight or overhead projector
 - ❑ *VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers*
1. Project the spotlight or overhead projector onto a wall; position far enough back so that kids can create shadows on the wall with their hands or by doing a “Shadow Pose” action. If a child is in a wheelchair, suggest poses that kids can recreate while sitting in a chair.
 2. Play “Illumination Station.” Show a pose and tell kids to repeat the pose.
 3. Stop the music and show another pose. Then, restart the music.
 4. Show “Bible Story Picture 2.” Challenge kids to do a pose like the people in the picture. Talk about the Bible story. Say: “Jesus is God’s perfect Son.”

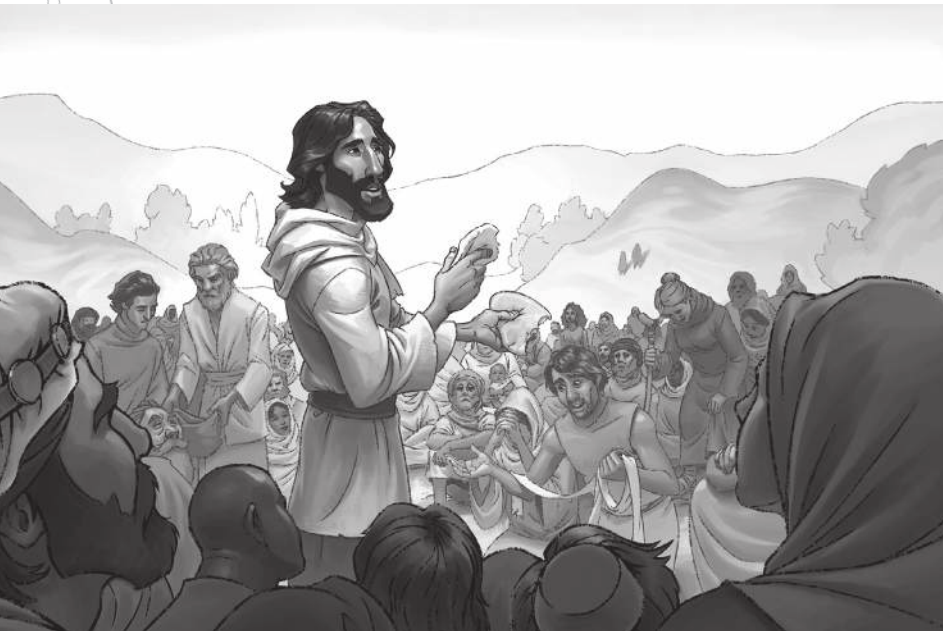
EXTEND THE ACTIVITY

Invite a child to make up a pose for the group to do. Direct a leader to offer an additional pose to accommodate kids who are unable to do the suggested pose.

KID CONNECTION

I can say Today’s Point: Jesus is God’s perfect Son.

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.

TODAY'S POINT

JESUS IS THE POWERFUL SON OF GOD.

BIBLE VERSE

JESUS SAID, "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD."
JOHN 8:12

BIBLE STORY

JESUS PERFORMED MIRACLES

Matthew 15:29-39

One day Jesus went up on a mountain and sat down. A lot of people came to the mountain.

(Lay down the card of Jesus talking to crowd.)

Some people could not walk, talk, or see. Some people were sick in different ways.

Since Jesus is God's Son, He could make the people well. The crowd was surprised to see these people get well. They thanked God for healing the people!

(Lay down the card of Jesus talking to disciples.)

Jesus felt sorry for the people in the crowd. He told His disciples (helpers), "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, "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."

(Lay down the card of Jesus thanking God for bread.)

Jesus told the crowd to sit down. He took the seven loaves of bread and the fish. Jesus thanked God for them, and He broke them into pieces.

(Lay down the card of Jesus breaking bread.)

Jesus handed the pieces to the disciples, who gave them to the people.

(Lay down the card of people eating.)

Even though Jesus started with very little food, there was enough for everyone to eat until they were full.

(Lay down the card of disciples with baskets.)

There were seven 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.



Helpful definition:

Miracle—unusual event only God and Jesus can do

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.

3



Printables and Audio

PRINTABLES are available by following the download instructions on page 3.

AUDIO VBS 2026 songs can be purchased on discs or as downloads. See page 6 for ordering information or go to lifeway.com.

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY PREP

- ❑ *VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers*
- ❑ “Motto Poster” (Printables—Kids Items)

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY Option 1

- ❑ “Allergy Alert” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ❑ Play dough
- ❑ Rolling pin or play dough tools
- ❑ Alphabet stamps
- ❑ Decorative stamps
- ❑ **Challenge:** *Miracle* “Word Card” (Printables—Kids Items)

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY Option 2

- ❑ “Allergy Alert” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ❑ Medium-size box
- ❑ Fabric
- ❑ Feel objects (piece of fruit, small rock, straw, plastic cup)
- ❑ Flashlight
- ❑ Tape

STUDY THE BIBLE Option 1

- ❑ Bible
- ❑ “Day 3 Sequence Cards” (Printables—Kids Items)

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Welcome the children to VBS. Play the song “Illumination Station.”

Show the “Motto Poster” and say the VBS motto: “Jesus is the Light of the world.”

OPTION 1: STAMP PLAY DOUGH

- Post an “Allergy Alert” sign listing play dough. Give each child a ball of play dough. Demonstrate how to flatten it by using your hands or a rolling pin. Assist kids as needed as they flatten their dough.
- Using alphabet stamps, press *JESUS* into the dough. Display the stamped dough in the center of the table. Decorate around the name with other decorative stamps.
- Guide the kids to decorate their dough with the stamps and add Jesus’ name.
- Point to Jesus’ name on the dough. Tell kids they will hear another story about Jesus today in VBS.
- Say: “Yesterday, we learned that Jesus is the perfect Son of God. Today, we will learn that Jesus is powerful. He performed miracles. A miracle is an unusual event that only God and Jesus can do.”

Challenge: Show the *miracle* “Word Card.” Prompt kids to stamp the word *miracle* into a piece of dough.

OPTION 2: FEEL AND GUESS

- Prior to the session, cut flaps or fold flaps in on a medium-size box. Cut a piece of fabric the same size as the box opening. Lay the box on its side and drape the fabric so it hangs down over the opening. Use tape to secure the fabric along the top edge of the opening. Place one of the feel objects inside the box.
- Post an “Allergy Alert” sign listing the feel objects being used.
- Choose one volunteer at a time to reach under the fabric covering the box and feel the object inside. Tell him to think about what it is but not to say it aloud. Ask other children to take a turn feeling the object.
- Lift the fabric and shine the flashlight into the box. Ask kids to tell you what they see.
- Drop the fabric and turn the box to switch the object without the kids seeing it. Ask children to reach into the box and feel the new object. Repeat as time allows. End by using a piece of fruit as the final feel object.
- Show the piece of fruit. Talk about the kinds of foods that kids like to eat.
- Say: “In today’s Bible story, many people were listening to Jesus. They had been there for three days and needed something to eat. They did not eat fruit. Listen to the Bible story to find out what they ate and what Jesus did to help them.”

STUDY THE BIBLE

Choose one option for telling the Bible story.

OPTION 1: SEQUENCE THE STORY

- Explain that today’s Bible story shows how powerful Jesus is. Jesus could perform miracles. A miracle is an unusual event that only God and Jesus could do.

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

- Open your Bible to Matthew 15 and tell today's story. Use the "Day 3 Sequence Cards" as you tell the story.
- After telling the story, mix up the cards and place them on a table or floor so kids can easily see them. Ask: "What happened first in the story?" Point to the first sequence card showing Jesus talking to the crowd. Work together to put the cards in order and lead kids to recall all of the Bible story.
- Help kids identify the miracles that Jesus performed. Say: "Jesus is the powerful Son of God."
- Pray, thanking God for Jesus and the things He did.

OPTION 2: DRAW WITH HIGHLIGHTERS

- Prior to the session, cover the table with banner paper and tape down the edges or provide a white sheet of paper for each child. Arrange a black light to shine on the table where the children will be drawing.
- Display "Bible Story Picture 3" and the *miracle* "Word Card." Ask kids to tell who or what they see in the pictures. Write Jesus' name on the banner paper or individual papers for children to see.
- Suggest kids draw pictures of Jesus and copy the words *miracle* and *Jesus* as they listen to today's Bible story. Demonstrate how to draw a simple stick figure person to represent Jesus as an example for kids who struggle with fine motor skills.
- Open your Bible to Matthew 15 and tell today's Bible story.
- After telling the story, ask kids to tell about their drawings. Read the words written on the paper. Ask: "How did Jesus help the people He met in today's Bible story?" Remind them that Jesus healed people and fed them. He performed miracles. Only God and Jesus can perform miracles. When Jesus did miracles, it showed that He is the powerful Son of God.

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

Choose an activity to help children learn and interact with the Bible verse.

OPTION 1: STAND OR POINT

- Using a penlight, point to the words on the "Bible Verse Poster." Say the verse together.
- Tell kids to stand and sit as they say the verse. Stand on the first word; sit on the second word; stand on the third word; and so forth. If a child has limited large motor movements or is slow in responding to the commands of sit or stand, invite him to hold a penlight and point to each word as it is said.
- Say: "Jesus, the Son of God, came to help people know more about who God is and what God wants people to do." Repeat the verse again, standing and sitting.

OPTION 2: SING AND WAVE

- Prior to the session, tie ribbons onto diving rings, glow bracelets, or shower rings to give kids a better grip when holding and waving ribbons.

STUDY THE BIBLE

Option 2

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ "Bible Story Picture 3" (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ *Miracle* "Word Card" (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ Banner paper or white paper
- ☐ Highlighters (especially yellow and orange)
- ☐ Black light bar or black light flashlight
- ☐ Tape

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

Option 1

- ☐ "Bible Verse Poster" (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ Penlights

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

Option 2

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Ribbons (neon colored)
- ☐ Diving rings, glow bracelets, or shower rings
- ☐ *VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers*

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

LIVE IT OUT PREP

- ❑ “Spotlight Wall” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ❑ “Spotlight Add-ons” (Printables—Kids Items)

- Open a Bible to John 8:12 and read aloud the verse. Show kids where it is located in the Bible by pointing to the book name, chapter number, and verse number.
- Give each child a ribbon to wave. Direct kids to stand or sit with space between them as they wave the ribbons to the song “Light of the World.”
- Comment: “Jesus is the Light of the world because He is God’s Son and the Savior of the world. Jesus made a way for people who believe and trust in Him to go to heaven.”

LIVE IT OUT

Draw attention to the “Spotlight Wall.” Invite a child to tape the Day 3 Spotlight Question to the wall. Read aloud the question: “Was Jesus just a teacher?” Encourage children to think about the question as they do the Live It Out activities.

LIVE IT OUT

Option 1

- ❑ Clear plastic underbed storage container with a clear lid
- ❑ White string lights or puck lights
- ❑ Clear neon plastic cups
- ❑ Permanent marker
- ❑ Acetate sheets or neon paper shape
- ❑ Magnetic blocks

OPTION 1: BUILD ON A LIGHT BOX

Prior to the session, create one or more light boxes using a clear, plastic underbed storage container with a clear lid. Fill the box with white string lights or puck lights. Make sure the plug is outside the box before putting the lid on or cut a hole for the plug. Using a permanent marker, write individual letters *J, E, S, U, S* on clear plastic cups and the words from Today’s Point on an acetate sheet or paper shape: *powerful Son of God*.

- Write *JESUS* on a sheet of paper and place it next to the light box. Challenge kids to find the letters for Jesus’ name on the cups and put them in order. Then, put the words “powerful Son of God” next to Jesus’ name. Invite kids to talk about why Jesus is the powerful Son of God. Remind them of Jesus’ miracles.
- Give each child a pile of magnetic blocks to build around Jesus’ name.
- As they work, review and repeat Today’s Point: “Jesus is the powerful Son of God.”

LIVE IT OUT

Option 2

- ❑ Bible Story Pictures 1–3 (Printables—Kids Items)
- ❑ Rope light
- ❑ Neon tape or heavy tape (painter’s tape if placing the path on the wall)
- ❑ Neon paper or colorful index cards
- ❑ Marker
- ❑ Swim noodle to use as a reaching tool (cut in half or thirds)

OPTION 2: FOLLOW THE LIGHT PATH

- Stretch a rope light in a wavy path on the floor. Write the words of Today’s Point on neon paper, one word per page: *Jesus is the powerful Son of God*. Lay the words along the rope light path, keeping the words in order. If desired, add some blank pages to make the path longer. Tape the lights and pages to the floor. Lay the Bible story pictures at the end of the path. For children who are less mobile or in wheelchairs, create a rope light path on the wall at wheelchair height. Use painter’s tape to attach it to the wall and write the words on colorful index cards or cut the neon paper into smaller cards. Display the Bible story pictures around the taped line.
- Guide kids to take turns stepping from page to page. Help them say Today’s Point as they step from page to page. For kids using the light and cards attached to the wall, use a pre-cut swim noodle to tap the words on the wall while saying them.
- At the end of the path, tell kids to look at the pictures. Ask: “What have we learned about Jesus so far this week?” Talk about the miracles Jesus performed which prove His power.

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Choose one activity to close the session.

OPTION 1: CREATE A CROWD

- As kids wait for parents to arrive, place a box of plastic people figures on a table. Prompt them to line up the figures to create a crowd of people.
- Remind them that crowds followed Jesus because they knew He could do what no one else could do. He could perform miracles. Show the *miracle* “Word Card.”
- When parents arrive, help kids gather up their belongings and thank them for coming to VBS.

OPTION 2: SING AND PRAY

- Review Today’s Point: Jesus is the powerful Son of God.
- Play the song “Things No One Else Can Do.” Then, play the song, sing, and move with it.
- Guide kids to take turns praying a sentence prayer: “Thank You, God, for Jesus. Jesus loves me.” If a child chooses not to pray or is nonverbal, say the prayer filling in his name in place of the word “me.”
- Play the theme song “Illumination Station” as kids prepare to leave. Gather each child’s personal items and take-home items.
- As kids leave, thank them for coming and encourage them to come back tomorrow to learn more about Jesus.

ACTIVITY BOOK

- Turn to page 11 in the Activity Book. Complete the activity, assisting as needed.
- Say: “Jesus could perform miracles because He is the powerful Son of God. A miracle is something only God or Jesus can do. In today’s story, Jesus performed miracles when He made people well and provided food for many people using only a small amount of food.”

MAKE A MEMORY

- Give each child a Day 3 tag. Mention that the picture helps us remember that Jesus was not just a teacher. He is the powerful Son of God.
- Pray and thank God for sending Jesus to be the Savior of the world.
- Lead the children to place their tags in their Memory Maker bags.



CLOSING ACTIVITY

Option 1

- ❑ Plastic people figures
- ❑ *Miracle* “Word Card”
(Printables—Kids Items)

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Option 2

- ❑ *VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers*

ACTIVITY BOOK

- ❑ *VBS 2026 Preschool Activity Book* (1 per child)

MEMORY MAKERS

- ❑ *VBS 2026 Memory Maker*
(1 set per child)

BONUS ACTIVITIES

FILL SENSORY BOXES

SUPPLIES

- ❑ “Bible Verse Strips” (Printables—Kids Items)
 - ❑ “Bible Story Picture 3” (Printables—Kids Items)
 - ❑ 2 or more shallow plastic bins
 - ❑ Child safety scissors and loop adaptive scissors
 - ❑ Colorful straws
 - ❑ Paper punches
 - ❑ Neon paper
 - ❑ Pencils
1. Place one or more “Bible Verse Strips” in a shallow bin and the “Bible Story Picture 3” in another bin. Lay other materials nearby.
 2. Form groups around each bin. Invite kids to cut straws or paper with scissors and punch holes or shapes in paper and add the pieces to the bins. Supervise kids carefully when using straw pieces due to the choking hazard presented. Challenge kids to try to cover the strip or picture with the pieces.
 3. After covering the verse, move the pieces to the edge and say the verse together. Do the same with the picture and review the Bible story by asking kids to tell what they see in the picture. Talk about the miracles that Jesus did when He made people well and fed more than 4,000 people when there was very little food.

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY

- Lead kids to draw pictures of people to add to the box as a reminder that Jesus is powerful and made people well. Suggest kids also draw pictures of bread and fish as a reminder of Jesus’ power to feed many people.

TIP

- Save straw pieces and paper punch pieces for Day 4.

KID CONNECTION

I can recall a Bible story of Jesus’ miracle.

WORK PUZZLES

SUPPLIES

- ❑ “Verse Words” (Printables—Kids Items)
 - ❑ “Jesus Puzzles” (Printables—Kids Items)
 - ❑ Other available wooden puzzles featuring Jesus, a world map, or people (24, 48, or 100 piece to work together)
1. Place the puzzle pieces picture side up on a table. If working a puzzle with 48 or 100 pieces, assign groups with a leader or helper in each. If using wooden puzzles, display the box for kids to see the puzzle picture.
 2. Look at the picture on an assembled “Jesus Puzzle” or wooden puzzle featuring Jesus and find Jesus in the picture. Encourage kids to talk about what they know about Jesus.
 3. When completing the “Verse Puzzle,” help kids put the words of the verse in order. Say the verse together.

TIP

- If kids are struggling to assemble the “Jesus Puzzles,” guide them to turn the pieces over and put them in number order from top to bottom. Then, lead them to flip the pieces over to see the completed puzzle.

KID CONNECTION

I can think about things Jesus did that show He is God’s Son.



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.

TODAY'S POINT

JESUS IS ALIVE!

BIBLE VERSE

JESUS SAID, "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD."
JOHN 8:12

BIBLE STORY

JESUS DIED AND ROSE TO LIFE

Mark 14:43–16:7

Jesus did so many things that showed He is the powerful Son of God—things no one else could do. He made people who were blind be able to see. He healed people who couldn't walk or talk. He fed more than 4,000 people with a small amount of food. People saw and heard about these things and began to follow Jesus. Some people did not like Jesus because of the things He was doing and teaching. They did not believe that Jesus was God's Son, so they wanted to stop Him.

Jesus was arrested, put on trial, and nailed to a cross. When Jesus died, a Roman army officer who had been watching Jesus said, "This man really was God's Son!"

After Jesus died, a man named Joseph of Arimathea (AR ih muh THEE uh) placed His body in a tomb.

Three days after Jesus died and was buried, some women went to the tomb very early in the morning. 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 is alive! Go and tell His disciples."

Jesus is not just someone who lived a long time ago. He has always been with God. This is important for us because He lived, died, and rose to life again to be our Savior, now and forever.

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.

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.



Printables and Audio

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TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Welcome the children to VBS. Play the song “Illumination Station.”

Show the “Motto Poster” and say the VBS motto: “Jesus is the Light of the world.”

OPTION 1: MAKE SHAKERS

- Invite kids to make shakers. Show what is inside a sample shaker. Place the lid on top and shake it.
- Give each child a small plastic bottle with a lid. Guide kids to drop in straw pieces, paper pieces, and beads into the containers. Assist kids who struggle with fine motor skills by providing a funnel on the open bottle to help a child place the objects in the bottle more accurately and efficiently.
- Tell kids they can decorate the outside of their shakers with short lengths of decorative tape. Precut the tape and place the pieces on the edge of a table next to each child. When a child completes a shaker, secure the lid with duct tape.
- Play the song “Who Is Jesus?” Guide kids to shake their shakers on beat with the song as they sing.
- Say: “We have been learning about Jesus during Illumination Station. Today we will hear a very important story about Jesus, so listen very closely.”

Tips: Test the objects prior to the session to verify that they will flow through the opening of the funnel and into the bottles. Supervise kids closely, making sure they do not put any of the straw pieces or beads in their mouths.

OPTION 2: SEARCH FOR PICTURES

- Set up one or more “comfy” areas in the room with cushions, decorative pillows, and lanterns or relaxing light sources while making sure there is plenty of light to see.
- Invite kids to look through gardening magazines or kid-friendly magazines for people or things that are alive. Invite kids to talk about what they see. Point out several pictures of nonliving things. Talk about the difference between living and nonliving.
- Say: “Yesterday, you heard about how Jesus is the powerful Son of God. Today, you will hear how Jesus proves His power over life and death. Jesus is alive!”

Challenge: Provide safety scissors and adaptive loop scissors and encourage kids to cut apart their favorite pictures of trees and flowers, which will be used later in the session.

STUDY THE BIBLE

Choose one option for telling the Bible story.

OPTION 1: SEE AND SAY

- Show “Bible Story Picture 4” and the *tomb* “Word Card.” Say the word together. Point out the tomb in both pictures. Read aloud the definition of the word *tomb*.
- Comment: “In today’s Bible story, you will hear that Jesus died and His body was placed in a tomb. A stone was rolled in front of the tomb to close it. Listen closely to find out if Jesus’ body is still in the tomb.”

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY PREP

- ☐ VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers
- ☐ “Motto Poster” (Printables—Kids Items)

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Option 1

- ☐ Small plastic bottles with lids
- ☐ Neon straw pieces and paper punch pieces from Day 3 Bonus Activity (Fill Sensory Boxes)
- ☐ Neon beads
- ☐ Neon tape
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Duct tape
- ☐ VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers
- ☐ Funnel
- ☐ Make a sample shaker.

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Option 2

- ☐ Cushions, decorative pillows, lanterns or other relaxing light sources
- ☐ Gardening magazines and kid-friendly magazines

Challenge

- ☐ Safety scissors and adaptive loop scissors

STUDY THE BIBLE

Option 1

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ “Bible Story Picture 4” (Printables—Kids Items)”
- ☐ “Word Cards”- *tomb, miracle, disciples* (Printables—Kids Items)”

Adapt:

- ☐ Sentence strips or cards
- ☐ Glitter glue

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

- Open your Bible to Mark 14 and tell today's Bible story.
- After telling the story, point to the "Bible Story Picture" again and ask kids what happened when the women went to the tomb. Say: "Jesus is alive! He was not in the tomb."
- Show the *miracle* "Word Card" for kids to see and say the word together.
- Comment: "God did a miracle, and Jesus rose back to life."
- Say the word *disciple* while showing the *disciple* "Word Card" and talk about the word. Prompt kids to repeat the word. Ask: "What did the man tell the women to do?" Reply: "Go and tell the disciples, Jesus' helpers, that Jesus is alive!"
- Show and say words on the "Word Cards" again, prompting kids to repeat each word. If a child is nonverbal, gently guide the child's hand to touch the word as the group says it.

Adapt: Make textured word cards by writing each word using glitter glue on a sentence strip or card.

STUDY THE BIBLE

Option 2

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ Dry erase board and marker
- ☐ Drawing paper
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Place a paper marker at Mark 14 in a Bible.

OPTION 2: LISTEN AND DRAW

- Show the Bible with the paper marker at Mark 14. Invite a child to open the Bible to the marker and show it to the group.
- Remind boys and girls that the Bible is grouped in two parts (*the Old Testament and the New Testament*) and the book of Mark is in the New Testament. Open your Bible to Mark 14 and tell the story.
- On a dry erase board, draw a few simple pictures while telling the story. Pictures may include: a cross, an empty tomb, and Jesus (a stick figure drawing).
- Give each child a sheet of drawing paper and a pencil to draw the pictures. If a child struggles with fine motor skills or struggles with drawing, have a volunteer draw part of each picture and encourage him to add to them.
- Ask kids to recall the details from today's Bible story as they look at the pictures.

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

Option 1

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ "Bible Verse Poster"
(Printables—Kids Items)

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

Option 2

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ "Bible Verse Poster"
(Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ Large sticky notes or pieces of paper and tape
- ☐ "Bible Verse Strips"
(Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ Place a "Bible Verse Strip" in each Bible at John 8:12.

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

Choose an activity to help children learn and interact with the Bible verse.

OPTION 1: CLAP A BEAT

- Open your Bible to John 8:12 and read it. (Say the verse paraphrase.)
- Point to the words on the "Bible Verse Poster" as you say the verse again.
- Clap a steady beat. Say each portion of the verse while kids repeat the beat and say the words together. Clap faster or slower and repeat the verse to a new tempo.

OPTION 2: COVER THE WORDS

- Point to the "Bible Verse Poster." Read it aloud. Cover two words with sticky notes.
- Read the verse again, leaving out the covered words. Ask kids if they can help you remember what words are under the sticky notes.
- As they successfully recall, remove the notes and then point to each word as you say the verse slowly. Guide kids to join you in saying the verse.

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

- Lead boys and girls to pick up Bibles and open them to the bookmarks they find. Ask learners to point to the name of the Bible book (*John*). Then, help them find chapter number 8 and verse number 12.

LIVE IT OUT

Draw attention to the “Spotlight Wall.” Invite a child to tape the Day 4 Spotlight Question to the wall. Read aloud the question: “Was Jesus just someone who lived a long time ago?” Encourage children to think about the question as they do the Live It Out activities.

OPTION 1: ARRANGE NATURE ITEMS

- Prior to the session, make a homemade light box, which can be an underbed clear plastic container filled with white string lights or puck lights and covered with a clear plastic lid. Post an “Allergy Alert.” Place a basket of nature items next to the light box.
- Show the nature items and talk about which items are living versus nonliving. Invite kids to arrange the items on the light box. Challenge them to explore and experiment with different designs or even make a letter *J* and tell kids that it is the first letter of Jesus’ name.
- Talk about the Bible story. Comment that the tomb where Jesus’ body was placed was in a garden.
- Excitedly say: “Jesus is alive! Jesus is God’s Son.”

OPTION 2: EXPLORE GLOW STICKS AND PLAY DOUGH

- Prior to the session, create play dough mats with the word *Jesus* written on them. Shape play dough to resemble a tomb. Display the *tomb* “Word Card” next to the sculpture.
- Post an “Allergy Alert.”
- Invite kids to mold and press the dough to make a replica of the tomb or the letters for Jesus’ name.
- Encourage kids to use glow sticks, craft sticks, and chenille stems with their play dough creations.
- As the kids work, ask the question: “Was Jesus just someone who lived a long time ago?” Invite the kids to answer. Say: “Jesus lived, died, and rose to life to be our Savior, now and forever.”

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Choose one activity to close the session.

OPTION 1: MOVE AND FREEZE

- Play “Shine the Light” or “Illumination Station” and lead kids to move with the music.
- Stop the music unexpectedly. Show one of the “Shadow Poses.” Tell kids to freeze and pose like the shadow.

LIVE IT OUT PREP

- ☐ “Spotlight Wall” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ “Spotlight Add-ons” (Printables—Kids Items)

LIVE IT OUT

Option 1

- ☐ Homemade light box
- ☐ Nature items, such as flowers, leaves, rocks
- ☐ “Allergy Alert” listing nature items (Printables—Kids Items)

LIVE IT OUT

Option 2

- ☐ *Tomb* “Word Card” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ Play dough
- ☐ Glow sticks
- ☐ Neon chenille stems
- ☐ Craft sticks
- ☐ “Allergy Alert” listing play dough ingredients (Printables—Kids Items)

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Option 1

- ☐ *VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers*
- ☐ “Shadow Poses” (Printables—Kids Items)

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Option 2

- ❑ 3 clear plastic bottles (use 2 shaker bottles from “Introduce the Bible Story”)
- ❑ Small items to put in one of the bottles to make noise (dried beans, small rocks, beads)
- ❑ Wrapping paper to cover each bottle
- ❑ Tape

ACTIVITY BOOK

- ❑ *VBS 2026 Preschool Activity Book* (1 per child)

Tip: If it is not possible to provide one for each child, purchase a few for the room to use during VBS.

MEMORY MAKERS

- ❑ *VBS 2026 Memory Maker* (1 set per child)

- Restart the music and lead children to move again. Stop the music and show a different pose. Continue as time allows. If a child in the group is in a wheelchair, include a shadow of a child sitting in a wheelchair and other kids can find a chair to sit in when the card is shown.
- As parents arrive and kids prepare to leave, tell them you enjoyed learning about Jesus with them at VBS today. Remind them the Bible helps us learn what we need to know about Jesus.

OPTION 2: PICK A BOTTLE

- Prior to the session, fill two small plastic bottles such as water bottles with small items that make noise when shaken. Leave the other bottle empty. Wrap each bottle in paper so kids can’t see what is inside.
- Line the bottles side by side on a table. Invite one child at a time to pick a bottle and shake it with the goal of selecting the empty bottle. Switch the bottles around and let the next child try to select the empty bottle.
- After all the kids have a chance to make a selection, unwrap the bottles and show the one that has nothing inside it.
- Remind kids that the tomb where Jesus’ body was placed after He died is empty because Jesus is alive!

ACTIVITY BOOK

- Ask: “Was Jesus just someone who lived a long time ago? Jesus lived, died, and rose again. Jesus is alive!”
- Distribute an Activity Book to each child. Turn to page 14 in the Activity Book. Read the directions and move around the room to assist as needed.

MAKE A MEMORY

- Give each child a Day 4 Memory Maker tag. Help kids identify the picture of the tomb on the tag. Remind kids that a tomb is where people are sometimes buried.
- Tell them that the picture of the tomb can help them think about the Bible story and what they have learned about Jesus. (*He rose from the dead and is alive!*)
- Help kids add the Day 4 tag to their Memory Makers.
- Lead the children to place their tags in their Memory Maker bags.



BONUS ACTIVITIES

TRACE FACES

SUPPLIES

- ☐ “Faces” (Printables—Kids Items)
 - ☐ White paper
 - ☐ Tape
 - ☐ Pencils
 - ☐ Windows or light boards
 - ☐ Optional Items—colored pencils, small paper plates
 - ☐ Make copies of “Faces” and cut them apart. Tape the faces on windows or light boards. If using windows, leave space between the faces. Tape a piece of paper on top of each face. If a child is in a wheelchair, place the paper within easy reach or give the child a light board with the paper attached.
1. Assign a paper to each child. Lead him to use a pencil to trace a face onto her paper.
 2. Talk about the expressions on the faces.
 3. Review the Bible story, mentioning emotions that people may have felt. For example, some men felt angry at Jesus and did not want to believe that He is the Son of God. When Jesus died, people who followed Him were sad. The women were afraid when they saw the man in white. People were happy when they learned that Jesus is alive.

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY

- Offer colored pencils. Suggest that kids create pictures using the faces and add details with the colored pencils.

ADAPT THE ACTIVITY

- If a child struggles as she traces the face, offer a small paper plate to draw the face on instead of tracing.

KID CONNECTION

I can think about what happened when Jesus died and rose to life.

INVITE CHILDREN TO RESPOND

SUPPLIES

- ☐ Print “Response Cards” from the “Printables—Administrative Items” section. Print one card for each child.
- ☐ Pencils, markers, crayons
- ☐ **Extend:** “Bible Story Coloring Page Day 4” (Printables—Bible Story Pictures)

Tip: “When Is a Person with Special Needs Ready to Become a Christian?” is located on page 8 in this guide.

1. Consider asking each older child to fill in a “Response Card.” Include parents as appropriate. Use your discretion to spend some one-on-one time with any child who is being led by the Holy Spirit to make the decision to become a Christian. (Reminder: An adult should never be alone with a child. Another adult should always be within sight.) In addition to “Response Cards,” use “When Is a Person with Special Needs Ready to Become a Christian?” and “Sharing the Gospel with Learners” (inside front cover) as you prayerfully interact with a child.
2. Be sure to notify parents or guardians as well as your pastor or children’s minister if you believe a child is ready to make a decision. Celebrate with the child, his family, and your church family!

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY

- For younger kids or those who don’t choose to fill in a “Response Card,” provide the “Bible Story Coloring Page Day 4” and crayons. While they color, ask learners to tell what they learned about Jesus this week.

KID CONNECTION

I can love and follow Jesus.

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.

TODAY'S POINT

JESUS IS GOD'S PLAN FOR FORGIVENESS.

BIBLE VERSE

JESUS SAID, "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD."
JOHN 8:12

BIBLE STORY

PETER PREACHED ABOUT JESUS

Acts 2

Followers of Jesus were all together in one place for a celebration. While they were there, God helped them speak in many different languages so they could tell people about Jesus. People were confused about what was happening.

Peter and the other disciples stood up in front of the crowd. Peter reminded the people that they saw Jesus do things no one else could do. (They saw Jesus make sick people well and feed many people with just a little food.) These things proved that Jesus is God's Son. But just as God knew would happen, some people did not like Jesus and killed Him. Peter reminded the people that Jesus came back to life.

As the people listened to Peter, they were sad. They knew they had disobeyed God (sinned). The people were sorry they had disobeyed God. They wanted to do what God wanted them to do. That day, about 3,000 people decided to become followers of Jesus!



Helpful definition:

Sin—anything we think, say, or do that
does not please God

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

1. 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?
2. Spend some time in prayer for 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.



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TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE

STORY PREP

- ❑ *VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers*
- ❑ “Motto Poster” (Printables—Kids Items)

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Option 1

- ❑ “Shadow Poses” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ❑ Large flashlight or spotlight
- ❑ Hand puppets

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Option 2

- ❑ Blocks (wooden, interlocking, or magnetic)
- ❑ Cups (optional)
- ❑ Rope light
- ❑ “Disciple Match” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ❑ Binder clips

STUDY THE BIBLE

Option 1

- ❑ Bible
- ❑ “Bible Story Pictures 1–5” (Printables—Bible Story Pictures)
- ❑ *Disciple* “Word Card” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ❑ Beanbag
- ❑ “Spotlight Wall” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ❑ “Spotlight Add-ons” (Printables—Kids Items)

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

- Welcome the children to VBS. Play the song “Illumination Station.”
- Show the “Motto Poster” and say the VBS motto: “Jesus is the Light of the world.”

OPTION 1: CREATE SHADOWS

- Project a light source onto a wall. Leave space between the light and wall so children can stand or sit between and make shadows.
- Display the “Shadow Poses.” Invite kids to stand in the light and create matching poses. If a child is in a wheelchair, suggest poses the child can do while sitting and encourage others to do the same pose. Offer puppets to use to create additional poses.
- Try a few poses related to the Bible stories: pose as if you are teaching like Jesus; pose like you are John baptizing someone; pose like you are eating bread from Jesus. Finally, pose as if you are celebrating.
- Tell boys and girls that in today’s Bible story they will hear about a time when people were gathered for a celebration. While they were there, about 3,000 people decided to become followers of Jesus, which is a reason to celebrate.

OPTION 2: BUILD A ROOM

- Place piles of blocks and cups on a tabletop. Invite kids to work together or independently to build a room or other structure. If desired, incorporate a rope light in the construction.
- Using one or two binder clips turned upside down, attach a picture from “Disciple Match.” Place several pictures inside the block room.
- Comment: “Followers of Jesus gathered together in one place for a celebration. The disciples told other people about Jesus. Peter preached to the people and reminded the people of the things Jesus did. Listen to today’s Bible story to find out what happened at the gathering.”

STUDY THE BIBLE

Choose one option for telling the Bible story.

OPTION 1: TOSS A BEANBAG

- Show “Bible Story Picture 5” and invite kids to tell what they see in the picture. Introduce Peter. Next, show and read the words on the *disciple* “Word Card.”
- Say: “Peter was one of Jesus’ disciples. He told people about Jesus. Many people wanted to follow Jesus after they heard what Peter said.”
- Open your Bible to Acts 2 and tell today’s Bible story.
- Tell the children that they can think about all the stories about Jesus they heard at Illumination Station. Show and lay the five pictures on the floor, faceup.
- Toss a beanbag to a child. Tell her to toss the beanbag onto one of the pictures. When the beanbag lands on a picture, ask kids to tell about the Bible story or play it out with a friend. If a child is nonverbal, pick up the picture the beanbag landed on

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

and encourage the child to touch a person in the picture. Tell who the child pointed to or the action being presented in the picture.

- Continue tossing or handing the beanbag to a child who tosses it onto a picture, making sure each child has a turn to toss.
- Say: “We have learned a lot about Jesus!” Read each of the daily Points from the focal wall. Lead kids to repeat each Point after you read it.

OPTION 2: SEARCH AND FIND

- Play the song “I Can Be Like Jesus.” Tell the children to move around the room and look for the “Disciple Match” cards.
- Say: “Pick up only one card. When you find one card, come back to the group.” Play music until all children find a card. Assist children in wheelchairs by pushing them to where they want to look and placing cards in a location within their reach.
- After each child has found one card, ask other leaders to gather the rest of the cards.
- Point to a name on the “Disciple Names.” Say: “This is Peter. Look at your card. Who has the cards with Peter?” Help kids identify if they have Peter. When you find one, show it so the children see if they have a match.” Read the names and match the names of the other disciples.
- Open your Bible to Acts 2 and tell the story of when Peter preached about Jesus.
- After telling the story, show “Bible Story Picture 5.” Talk about how Peter helped the people understand that they disobeyed God and needed to ask for forgiveness. Sin is disobeying God. Help children understand that 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 is sin. Say: “In the Bible story, about 3,000 people prayed and told God they were sorry for disobeying Him. They trusted in Jesus and were baptized. This was a reason to celebrate!”

STUDY THE BIBLE

Option 2

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ *VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers*
- ☐ “Disciple Names” (Printables—Kids Items)—Hide around the room within easy reach for children in wheelchairs.
- ☐ “Disciple Match” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ “Bible Story Picture 5” (Printables—Kids Items)

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

Choose an activity to help children learn and interact with the Bible verse.

OPTION 1: DO MOTIONS

- Open the Bible to John 8:12 and say the verse: “Jesus said, I am the light of the world.” Point to the words on the “Bible Verse Poster” as you say the verse again.
- Suggest adding motions to the verse. *Jesus* (touch middle finger of one hand to the palm of the other hand; repeat touching middle finger of the other hand to first palm), *said* (touch index fingers to mouth; move fingers forward away from mouth); *light* (hold open hands with fingers spread and palms forward; move hands up and out to sides); *world* (“draw” a large circle in front of the body with both hands).
- Start with one motion and repeat the verse. Then, add another motion and repeat the verse again. Decide how many motions would be manageable based on the needs of your group.
- Repeat the verse with the motions several times.

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

Option 1

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ “Bible Verse Poster” (Printables—Kids Items)

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

Option 2

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ Hand puppet

LIVE IT OUT PREP

- ☐ “Spotlight Wall” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ “Spotlight Add-ons” (Printables—Kids Items)

LIVE IT OUT

Option 1

- ☐ “Spotlight Gameboard” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ “Spotlight Game Cards” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ VBS 2026 Sticky Foam Shapes (9798384538134) or other foam shapes
- ☐ “I Spy Pictures”—Jesus’ picture (Printables—Kids Items)

LIVE IT OUT

Option 2

- ☐ Large pieces of copy paper (11 by 17 inches) or banner paper
- ☐ Neon stickers
- ☐ Neon tape
- ☐ 2026 VBS Theme Stickers (9798384538158)
- ☐ Highlighters
- ☐ “Lacing Cards” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ “Book: *Jesus Is God’s Son*” (Printables—Kids Items)
- ☐ Rubber bands
- ☐ Blank index cards
- ☐ Marker

OPTION 2: USE A PUPPET

- Open your Bible to the Bible Verse, John 8:12. Read it aloud to the group.
- Guide a leader to use a puppet to prompt kids to repeat the verse. Practice the verse several times. Offer opportunities for volunteers to move the puppet’s mouth while kids say the verse.
- Say: “Jesus is the Light of the world because He is God’s Son and the Savior of the world. Jesus made a way for people who believe and trust in Him to go to heaven.”

LIVE IT OUT

Draw attention to the “Spotlight Wall.” Invite a child to tape the Day 5 Spotlight Question to the wall. Read aloud the question: “Why do I need to respond to Jesus?” Encourage children to think about the question as they do the Live It Out activities. Say: “Jesus is the only way to receive God’s forgiveness.”

Choose an activity that relates to Today’s Point.

OPTION 1: PLAY A COLOR GAME

- Set up the “Spotlight Gameboard” with the cards in a pile facedown and foam shapes in the “Start” shape on the gameboard.
- When a child chooses a color card, ask her to tell something she remembers about Jesus or say Today’s Point. If a child is nonverbal, guide the child to point to or glance at a picture of Jesus while a leader tells a fact about Jesus. Then, guide the child to move his foam shape to the next space of that color.
- If a selected card shows a spotlight, say the words of the Bible verse, John 8:12. Lead the child to repeat or listen to the words and move the shape one space. If an arrow card is chosen, move one space.

OPTION 2: MAKE MINI BANNERS

- Tape a large sheet of paper to a wall or place on a table for each child to make individual banners. Write *Jesus* in the middle of each banner.
- Read the name on the paper. Say: “We can decorate around Jesus’ name and even write what we learned about Him.” Suggest they use stickers, highlighters, pieces of neon tape, and drawings to make their banners. They can also look at the “Lacing Cards” and “Book: *Jesus Is God’s Son*” for ideas of pictures to draw or words to write.
- Move around the room with blank index cards and a marker. Ask each child to say something he wants to write on the banner about Jesus. Write what he says on a note card for him to copy or write it directly on the banner, depending on the child’s needs. As you talk with kids about Jesus, remind them that Jesus is God’s Son and the Savior of the world. Jesus made a way for people to go to heaven if they believe and put their trust in Him. Say Today’s Point: “Jesus is the only way to receive God’s forgiveness.”
- When a child finishes decorating his banner, help him roll it up with a rubber band. Tell him that he can take it home to display to help him remember what he learned this week about Jesus, or he may give the banner to someone who may need to hear about Jesus.

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Choose one activity to close the session.

OPTION 1: REVIEW AND PRAY

- Remind kids that Jesus is the only person who never disobeyed God. When we sin, we disobey God.
- Review that sin 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. Talk about times when kids may disobey God.
- Review Today's Point: Jesus is God's plan for forgiveness.
- Comment: "When we disobey God, we can tell God that we are sorry, and He will forgive us."
- Say a closing prayer: "God, thank You for Jesus. Amen."

OPTION 2: SING ABOUT JESUS

- Play and sing "Light of the World." Lead kids to use motions with the song.
- Encourage children to return to church on Sunday and thank them for coming to Illumination Station.

ACTIVITY BOOK

- Turn to page 15 in the Activity Book. Complete the activity together.
- Pray and thank God for Jesus. Thank God that people tell about Jesus, the Savior.

MAKE A MEMORY

- Distribute the Day 5 memory item. Note that an exclamation mark is used to show that something should be said with excitement.
- Say: "You can remember that Jesus is God's Son. You can tell people what you know about Jesus."
- Help kids add the Day 5 tag to their Memory Makers. Gather the Memory Makers.



CLOSING ACTIVITY

Option 1

- ☐ No additional items needed

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Option 2

- ☐ VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers

ACTIVITY BOOK

- ☐ VBS 2026 Preschool Activity Book (1 per child)
- ☐ Pencils

MEMORY MAKERS

- ☐ VBS 2026 Memory Maker (1 set per child)
- ☐ Gather the Day 5 Memory Maker tags.

BONUS ACTIVITIES

EXPLORE COLOR AND LIGHT

SUPPLIES

- ❑ “Bible Verse Poster” (Printables—Kids Items)
 - ❑ “I Spy Pictures” (Printables—Kids Items)
 - ❑ Large, clear plastic container
 - ❑ Glass gemstone beads
 - ❑ Neon glow necklaces
 - ❑ Flashlights
 - ❑ **Extend:** acrylic prisms, color paddles
1. Create a sensory bin using clear glass gemstone beads. Place the “I Spy Pictures” and neon glow necklaces in the bin. Arrange pictures for the kids to find. **Supervise carefully due to choking hazards presented by the gemstones.**
 2. Ask: “Can you find a picture of Jesus?” Invite kids to shine flashlights into the bin.
 3. Display the “Bible Verse Poster” on the wall. Shine a light on the poster and say the verse together.
 4. Say: “The disciples learned from Jesus. They preached to others so people would know about God’s plan for Jesus.”

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY

Add acrylic prisms and color paddles. Lead kids to shine the flashlight through the prism and onto the wall to see what happens to the light. Lead one child at a time to look through a color paddle to find Jesus’ picture.

KID CONNECTION

I can hear about God’s plan for Jesus.

SING-ALONG TIME

SUPPLIES

- ❑ *VBS 2026 Music for Preschoolers*
 - ❑ Optional: Provide the shakers from Day 4.
 - ❑ **Extend:** Print “Learner Certificate” from the “Printables—Administrative Items” section. Print one copy for each child. Fill out the certificates in advance, including having them signed by the VBS director and your pastor.
1. Ask learners to take turns telling their favorite songs from this week. Play each song as it is named. Optional: Invite kids to shake their shakers in time with the music.
 2. Continue as you have time.

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY

Joyfully present each child with a certificate. Encourage children to continue coming to church to learn more about Jesus.

KID CONNECTION

I can love and follow Jesus.



TEACHING PLANS FOR STUDENTS AND ADULTS

DAILY TEACHING PLAN

Day 1: Jesus Is God's Promised Son.....	50
Day 2: Jesus Is God's Perfect Son.....	57
Day 3: Jesus Is the Powerful Son of God.....	64
Day 4: Jesus Is the Proven Son of God.....	71
Day 5: Jesus Is God's Plan for Forgiveness.....	78

GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL FRIENDS VBS FOR STUDENTS/ADULTS

- Offer VBS at night or at a time when students and adults already attend church. This option is especially important for adult learners with special needs who work during the day.
- Never mix adults with special needs with kids. Their needs are different and should be met separately.
- Enlist 1 leader for every 4–5 learners.
- Recruit at least one male and one female leader who can assist other leaders with personal care.
- Use materials and activities that are appropriate for adults.
- Encourage independence. Challenge students and adults to do as much as they can for themselves. Provide opportunities for them to help rather than always be helped. Allow students to work at their own pace even if it means multiple activities are happening at the same time.
- Set realistic time goals. Don't rush adults to move to another activity before they end the previous one. No specific time limits are suggested for Bible study activities. Some groups will be able to complete most of the suggested activities while others may only tell the Bible story and complete a few supplementary activities. Please adapt the teaching plans to meet the specific needs of your learners.

TEACHING TIP

Need more activities? Flip through the Teaching Plans for Kids. Use any that you like!

BIBLE STUDY PRINTABLES: STUDENTS/ADULTS ITEMS

- Illumination Station Banner (Days 1–5)
- Illumination Station Banner Add-ons (Days 1–5)
- Theme Verse Poster (Days 1–5)
- Bible Story Pictures (Days 1–5 from the “Bible Story Pictures” folder in the Printable Resources)
- Allergy Alert (Day 2)
- Day 1 Bonus Verse Poster (Day 1)
- Daily Question Marquees (Days 1–5)
- Light Speed Silhouettes (Day 1)
- Lacing Cards (Day 1)
- Book: *Jesus Is God's Son* (Day 1)
- Strike a Match (Day 1)
- Paper Flashlights (Day 1)
- Day 2 Bonus Verse Poster (Day 2)
- Word Cards (Days 2, 3)
- I Spy Pictures (Day 2)
- Paper Lantern Pattern (Day 2)
- Flash(light) Cards (Day 2)
- Day 3 Bonus Verse Poster (Day 3)
- Disciple Match (Day 3, 4)
- ZAP! Cards (Day 3)
- Disciple Names (Day 3)
- Day 4 Bonus Verse Poster (Day 4)
- Faces (Day 4)
- Bible Verse Strips (Day 4)
- Gospel Poster (Day 4, 5)
- Day 5 Bonus Verse Poster (Day 5)
- Crazy Glasses Template (Day 5)



Printables and Audio

PRINTABLES are available by following the download instructions on page 3.

AUDIO VBS 2026 songs can be purchased on discs or as downloads. See page 6 for ordering information or go to lifeway.com.

DAY 1

JESUS IS GOD'S PROMISED SON



SPOTLIGHT QUESTION

WHO IS JESUS? JESUS IS THE MESSIAH, THE PROMISED SON OF GOD.

TODAY'S POINT

JESUS IS GOD'S PROMISED SON.

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*

BONUS VERSE

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

BIBLE STORY

JESUS ASKED WHO PEOPLE THOUGHT HE WAS

Matthew 16:13-20

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 and Peter would share the good news about Jesus and start His church.

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

Helpful definitions:

Messiah—God's chosen Savior

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



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 students and adults, helping them feel loved and accepted in ways they may have never experienced before. Take time to pray and ask God to use you to make an eternal impact in the lives of the learners you teach.

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 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 was 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 a 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 the 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 learner in your care.



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TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

START IT PREP

- ☐ Name badges
- ☐ Flashlight or lantern
- ☐ “Light Speed Silhouettes” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ Black construction paper
- ☐ “Illumination Station Banner” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ “Illumination Station Add-ons” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)

HEAR IT PREP

- ☐ Bibles (1 per participant)
- ☐ Bookmarks (1 per participant)
- ☐ “Bible Story Picture 1” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ Sticky notes
- ☐ Flashlight



LEADER TIPS

- Prior to the session, place a bookmark or paper strip separating the Old Testament from the New Testament for each participant.
- Completely cover the “Day 1 Bible Story Picture” with sticky notes.
- If a participant is in a wheelchair, hang the covered Bible story picture on the wall at the person’s eye level so that everyone can be better engaged in the activity.

START IT

- Warmly welcome the participants to VBS. Give each person a name badge and introduce yourself and other adult leaders and helpers.
- Use a flashlight or lantern to create a lighted spot on the floor. Invite each person to stand in the spotlight, introduce himself to the group, and take a bow while the group cheers. If someone is in a wheelchair, move the light to him. If a participant is nonverbal, tell the person’s name and an encouraging introduction.
- Gather participants around a table. Show one of the “Light Speed Silhouettes” to the group and identify what it is. Next, conceal one of the pictures with a piece of black construction paper, briefly display the silhouette by lifting up the paper, and quickly cover it again. Give a couple of choices on what it could be and ask the group which one they think is correct. Repeat with more silhouettes. Say: “Was it hard to recognize what was in each picture? Jesus asked His disciples if people recognized who He really was.”
- Invite a volunteer to “light” the first window on the “Illumination Station Banner.” Affix the Day 1 add-on in the proper spot. Comment that we can tell others who Jesus is because Jesus is God’s promised Son.

Challenge: After concealing and quickly revealing a “Light Speed Silhouette,” ask participants to guess what the picture is without giving options.

HEAR IT

- Give each person a Bible with a bookmark marking the first page of the New Testament. Prompt participants to open up the Bible to the marked page. Say: “The first part of the Bible—the Old Testament—has many promises about the coming of the Messiah, God’s Son. The New Testament, where we find today’s story, tells how Jesus kept those promises.” Hold up an open Bible to show how much of the Bible is the Old Testament compared to the New Testament.
- Assist learners in finding today’s Bible story, Matthew 16:13-20. Point out that Matthew is the first book in the New Testament, 16 is the big chapter number, and the smaller numbers are verse numbers. With an opened Bible, tell today’s Bible story.
- After telling the story, invite one person at a time to remove a sticky note from the “Day 1 Bible Story Picture” while you shine a light on the picture. After a few notes are removed, invite participants to tell what they see. Continue until all the sticky notes are removed from the picture, making sure each learner gets a turn to remove a note.
- After all the notes are removed, ask: “Who is Jesus?” Write each response on a sticky note and place the notes around the edges of the picture.
- Comment: “At first, you couldn’t see the picture at all, but as we removed the notes one by one, the picture began to make sense. Peter did not know everything there was to know about Jesus, but he had seen enough to know that Jesus is the promised Son of God. You may not know a lot about Jesus yet, but the more you learn, the more you will see that He is worthy of your love and trust!”

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

LEARN IT

- Call attention to the “Theme Verse Poster.” Read it aloud to the group while pointing to each word with a penlight or laser pointer.
- Move around the room with a Bible opened to John 8:12. Point to the Bible book name, chapter number, and verse number on the page. Then, challenge the learner to point to each. If needed, assist by gently guiding the person’s finger to each part or use the laser pointer to direct the learner where to point.
- Ask: “Why do you think Jesus called Himself ‘the Light of the world?’” Remind learners that people need sunlight to be healthy. Explain that just as light guides people through the darkness, Jesus helps us see and know what God is like.
- Form a circle. Challenge participants to toss or bat and catch a “solar blob” (balloon) to one another until you call “Stop!” Say the verse, prompting learners to join in. Play several rounds.
- Pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to be the Light of the world.

Challenge: Add an additional balloon with the goal of keeping both of them in the air until hearing the word, “Stop!”

LIVE IT

- Distribute the Activity Books and pencils. Work together to complete “‘Candle’ Do This” on page 3. Guide learners to match the candelabras and read each set of matched sentence fragments. For read-aloud activities, invite willing volunteers to read and assist as needed instead of asking learners to read. Follow up by reading each “Brighter Ideas!” verse aloud to the group.
- Say: “When Jesus came, He taught people about God. He healed people and did miracles. Everything He did shows people what God is like, but, most importantly, Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Son of God. He came to rescue people from sin.” Explain that sin is anything we think (touch head), say (touch mouth), or do (hold out your hands) that doesn’t please God.
- Tape a poster board to the wall at the level where a participant in a wheelchair can easily reach or tape banner paper to a table and move it to the wall when the activity is finished. Post the Day 1 question next to the poster board or banner. Call attention to the “Who Is Jesus?” daily marquee question. Distribute markers and let learners write or draw responses on the blank paper. Add a couple of examples to the paper showing what a learner may write or draw, so the learner has an option to copy it. Place “Lacing Cards” and “Book: *Jesus Is God’s Son*” on the table for learners to look at for ideas also. Move around and assist as needed while talking to them about their answers to the question. If a learner struggles with drawing, work together to create the picture by asking a helper to draw part of it and the learner to add to it.
- When everyone is finished writing or drawing, pray, thanking God for keeping His promise to send Jesus.
- **Tip:** If activities requiring less reading and writing better fit the skills of your learners, purchase copies of *VBS 2026 Preschool Activity Book* (9798384537014). Use any daily activity in the book that supports the developmental skills of any learner in your class.

LEARN IT PREP

- ☐ Display the “Theme Verse Poster” (Printables—Students/Adults Items). Plan to display it all week.
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Penlight or laser pointer
- ☐ Inflated yellow balloons (1 or 2)
- ☐ “Allergy Alert” listing latex (Printables—Students/Adults Items)

LIVE IT PREP

- ☐ *VBS 2026 Kids Activity Book* (1 per learner or several for the group to share, 9798384535041)
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ “Daily Question Marquees” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ Poster board or banner paper
- ☐ Tape
- ☐ Washable markers
- ☐ “Lacing Cards” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ “Book: *Jesus Is God’s Son*” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)

KIDS ACTIVITY BOOK

This fun book provides activities and tips to help learners engage in Bible study and gives them fun resources to take home at the end of the week. Gather



one Activity Book per person or provide a few for the group to share.



TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

END IT PREP

- ❑ “Illumination Station Banner” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ❑ “Illumination Station Add-ons” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ❑ *VBS 2026 Music for Kids* (see page 6 for ordering information)

MEMORY MAKER

- ❑ *VBS 2026 Memory Maker* (1 set per person, 9798384538141)
- ❑ “Bible Story Picture 1”

LEADER TIP

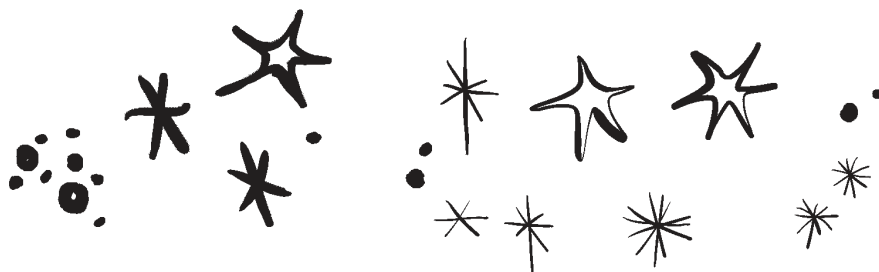
To avoid frustration with the small Memory Maker bags, consider providing gallon ziplock bags in which to keep their Memory Maker collections.

END IT

- Point out the “Illumination Station Banner” and the Day 1 add-on. Read aloud the point: “Jesus is God’s promised Son.”
- Play the “Illumination Station” theme song as the group listens to it and sings along.
- Occasionally, pause the song and call on a participant to tell something that he learned today.
- Pray and thank God for seeing and loving each person in the group.

MEMORY MAKER

- Distribute Memory Makers and allow learners to add the Day 1 Memory Maker tag. Talk about the picture and how it is a reminder that Jesus is God’s promised Son.
- Call attention to “Bible Story Picture 1.” Say and guide participants to repeat the question Jesus asked His disciples: “Who do you say that I am?”
- Present the yes or no statements. For yes, guide learners to blink their eyes or make “blinkly lights” by opening and closing their fingers. For no, they do not need to do anything. Statements may include: God promised to send Jesus (*Yes!*), Jesus was a prophet who had come back to life (*No!*), Jesus is God’s promised Son (*Yes!*).





BONUS ACTIVITIES

BUILD AND CREATE SHADOWS

SUPPLIES

- ❑ Bible
- ❑ Building materials (wooden blocks, interlocking blocks, cardboard pieces, chenille stems, or other types of construction materials)
- ❑ Flashlight or small spotlight
- ❑ **Extend:** banner paper, tape, pencils

1. Review the VBS motto: “Jesus is the Light of the world.”
2. Place a pile of blocks or other construction materials in front of each participant. Encourage learners to build structures with the materials.
3. Shine a flashlight onto each structure and briefly dim the lights. Talk about the shadows on the wall. Encourage participants to add or adjust their structures to change the shadows.
4. Open your Bible to John 8:12 and read aloud the verse. Ask: “Who is the Light of the world?” Say: “Yes, Jesus is the Light of the world. He is God’s Son. He came to help people know about God.”

Extend: Tape paper to the wall. Lay pencils nearby. Help each person position the structure so that the shadow is on the paper. Challenge him to trace the shadow onto the paper.

Tip: Place each table, where participants will build, a few feet from the wall

PLAY A MATCHING GAME

SUPPLIES

- ❑ “Strike a Match” (Printable—Students/Adults Items)

- ❑ Cut apart the cards. Mark the verses listed on the reference strip in your Bible.
1. Say: “Long before Jesus came, God told people what the Messiah would be like and what He would do. Jesus, the Messiah, kept every one of those promises.”
 2. Give everyone a “Strike a Match” card. Guide learners to find the person holding the color-coded card that matches their own. Move around the room and assist with reading the words on the cards. Follow up by reading and summarizing the Scripture verses related to each promise and fulfillment.
 3. Collect the cards, mix them up, and place them facedown on a table. Play a matching game, inviting participants to turn over two cards at a time to try to make a match. If the cards do not match, turn them back over. When a match is located, prompt learners to pretend to strike a match and make a sound like a match is being struck. Give an example of the sound. (Point out that matches should never be struck without proper supervision, but with leaders in the room, it’s OK to pretend to light a match.) Set the matched cards aside and continue. Read the promises/fulfillments on the matched cards.

Extend: Mix up the cards and play again, as time allows.



BONUS ACTIVITIES

ARRANGE LUMINARIES

SUPPLIES

- ❑ Bible
 - ❑ “Day 1 Bonus Verse Poster” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
 - ❑ Paper lunch sacks (5)
 - ❑ Glow sticks (5)
 - ❑ Flashlight or penlight
 - ❑ Marker
 - ❑ Write the words to Matthew 16:16 on one bag. Divide the verse into four phrases and write each phrase on a remaining bag. To assist learners, number each bag to help with arranging them in order.
1. Call attention to the “Day 1 Bonus Verse Poster.” Mention that the verse was part of today’s Bible story. Peter was telling about Jesus. Point to the word *Messiah* and explain that Jesus is the Messiah. He came to save us, just as God promised.
 2. Darken the room as much as possible. Set the labeled lunch bags in correct order on the floor or a table. Read the words on each bag as you point to them. Read it again, leading learners to repeat the words.
 3. Allow volunteers to help you activate glow sticks. Direct another volunteer to scramble the order of the lunch bags.
 4. Hand an activated stick to yet another volunteer. Prompt him to drop the glow stick into the bag marked with the first phrase of Matthew 16:16. Note that the volunteer can look for the number one. When he does, say and repeat the phrase together. Repeat the process with the remaining phrases of the verse.
 5. Scramble the order of the bags. Repeat Step 4 with a new volunteer as time allows.

Tip: For safety and accountability, always leave your entrance door partially open. If the door contains a window, do not cover it. Test the activity in the room and with the supplies you will be using. Make adjustments as necessary. If you choose not to use glow sticks, let your volunteer shine a bright flashlight into the interior of the bag.

MAKE PAPER FLASHLIGHTS

SUPPLIES

- ❑ “Paper Flashlights” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
 - ❑ White heavy paper
 - ❑ Crayons or colored pencils
 - ❑ Quart-size ziplock bags
 - ❑ Black construction paper
 - ❑ Black permanent markers
 - ❑ Make a sample paper flashlight according to the instructions on the printable.
 - ❑ For each learner, make a copy and cut apart the “flashlight” template.
 - ❑ Trace the picture of Jesus and the words/designs from the printable on multiple ziplock bags.
1. Give each learner a copy of a “flashlight.” Guide participants to color the flashlight but to leave the beam of light white.
 2. Place a piece of black construction paper into the bag with Jesus’ picture. Let a volunteer insert the beam of light (white portion) from the “flashlight” into the bag to reveal the picture. Do the same with the bags with the words and designs.
 3. Read aloud and repeat the words together: “Jesus is God’s Son.”

Challenge: Put the picture of Jesus or the words and designs into a bag and lead the learner to trace the image using a permanent marker.

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.

TODAY'S POINT

JESUS IS GOD'S PERFECT SON.

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*

BONUS VERSE

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

Mark 1:11

BIBLE STORY

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

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

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.

People heard John's message and started to repent of their sin. They wanted to stop disobeying God, so they asked God for forgiveness. Then John baptized them. 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 is 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 did not 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."

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

2



LEADER DEVOTION

Some people 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 people mistakenly associate it with salvation itself rather than recognizing it as an outward expression of their faith.

As we have opportunities to teach 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 learners 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.



Printables and Audio

PRINTABLES are available by following the download instructions on page 3.

AUDIO VBS 2026 songs can be purchased on discs or as downloads. See page 6 for ordering information or go to lifeway.com.

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

START IT

- Welcome friends back to VBS. Review the motto, “Jesus is the Light of the world.”
- Scatter “I Spy Pictures” faceup on a table. On a large dry erase board, draw one of the pictures and prompt learners to guess the drawing by finding the matching picture card. If a participant is nonverbal, he can guess the picture by pointing or glancing at it.
- Point out the picture of Jesus and the picture of the river.
- Say: “Today, you will hear a story about Jesus’ baptism (*shine a light on the picture of Jesus*) in the Jordan River (*shine a light on the picture of the river*). You will also hear about someone who pointed others to Jesus. His name was John, and here is what he wanted people to know.” Attach the Day 2 add-on to the “Illumination Station Banner” and read it aloud to the group. Comment: “Jesus was not just an ordinary man. He is God’s perfect Son. Jesus never disobeyed God. He obeyed God when He was baptized.”

Challenge: Invite one volunteer at a time to secretly select an “I Spy Picture” and draw it for the group to guess.

HEAR IT

- Display the “Day 2 Bible Story Picture.” Open your Bible to the New Testament and say: “Four different writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—wrote Bible books about Jesus’ life.” All of them mentioned the events in this picture. Ask: “Do you see Jesus in the picture?” Point to Jesus and introduce Jesus’ cousin John.
- Continue: “Why do you think they are standing in the water? Listen to today’s story to find out.”
- Open your Bible to Mark 1 and tell the story of Jesus’ baptism. After telling the story, ask learners again why Jesus and John were standing in the water. Show the *baptize* “Word Card” and read the definition.
- Review by rereading the story slowly and dramatically, pausing for participants to say what people might have been thinking or feeling as they watched Jesus get baptized. They may also want to show facial expressions such as joy or confusion to represent how the people watching may have felt.
- After rereading the story, ask: “Why do you think God said He was pleased with Jesus?” Say: “God was pleased because Jesus did everything that God wanted Him to do.”
- Conduct a follow-up discussion: “People were baptized by John to show that they wanted to turn away from their sin.” Review that sin is anything we think (touch head), say (touch mouth), or do (hold out your hands) that doesn’t please God. Continue: “Jesus never sinned. Why do you think He wanted to be baptized?” Help learners understand that Jesus’ baptism set an example for people to follow. His baptism also showed that Jesus always did what God wanted Him to do.
- Lead in a time of prayer. Invite any willing volunteer to thank God for Jesus.

START IT PREP

- ❑ “I Spy Pictures” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ❑ Large dry erase board
- ❑ Dry erase marker and eraser
- ❑ “Illumination Station Banner” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ❑ “Illumination Station Add-ons” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ❑ Penlight

HEAR IT PREP

- ❑ Bible
- ❑ Bible Story Picture 2” (Printables—Bible Story Pictures)
- ❑ *Baptize* “Word Card” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)





TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

LEARN IT PREP

- ☐ “Theme Verse Poster”
(Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Several tap lights

LIVE IT PREP

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Bookmarks
- ☐ Highlighters
- ☐ “Illumination Station Banner”
(Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ “Illumination Station Add-ons”
(Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ *VBS 2026 Kids Activity Book*
(1 per person or several for the group to share)
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ “Daily Question Marquee”
(Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ Blank poster or bulletin board paper
- ☐ Tape
- ☐ Washable markers

LIVE IT TIPS

Prior to the session, bookmark and highlight the verses mentioned in “Lighten Up” in the activity book. Verses include: John 5:24; John 13:34; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 2 Timothy 2:13.

If activities requiring less reading and writing better fit the skills of your group, purchase copies of *VBS 2026 Preschool Activity Book* (9798384537014). Use any daily activity in the book that supports the developmental skills of any learner in your class.

LEARN IT

- Open your Bible to John 8:12 and show learners where the verse can be found in the Bible.
- Call attention to the “Theme Verse Poster” and read it aloud. Point to each word of the verse. Push down a tap light when reading the word *light* twice in the verse and tap it off when reading the word *darkness*.
- Talk about how light and darkness are opposites. Say: “Walking in darkness means choosing to disobey God. Jesus said people who follow Him choose to obey God.”
- While taking turns using the tap lights, read the verse several more times, giving volunteers a chance to tap the light on when hearing the word *light* and off when hearing the word *darkness*. Prompt the group to say the verse with you when they are ready.

LIVE IT

- Say: “Everything Jesus said or did when He was on earth was exactly right. Everything He does now is perfect, too!” Call attention to the Day 2 add-on on the “Illumination Station Banner.” Say Today’s Point: “Jesus is God’s perfect Son.”
- Provide Bibles and pencils. Guide learners to complete “Lighten Up!” on page 5 of the activity book. Guide adult leaders to work with small groups to help them find each bookmarked/highlighted Bible verse. Read aloud the verses, one at a time, then give hints for each answer on the activity page such as one letter at a time until the word is successfully unscrambled.
- Say: “Jesus never disobeyed God. Not once. Because He loves you and me, He was willing to take the punishment we deserve when we disobey God. He did that when He was put to death on the cross, but that is not the end of the story! Jesus rose from the dead and is alive right now!”
- Call attention to the Day 2 Question Marquee. Tape a poster board to the wall at the level where a participant in a wheelchair can easily reach it or tape banner paper to a table and move it to the wall when the activity is finished. Ask: “Was Jesus just an ordinary man?” (*No!*)
- Continue: “Jesus is the perfect Son of God who came to be the Savior of the world.” Distribute markers and let learners draw a picture of Jesus’ baptism or help them write words or sentences about Jesus on the poster or banner paper.

JESUS ✨
is GOD'S
PERFECT
SON



TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

END IT

- Invite learners to sing the “Illumination Station” theme song as they prepare to leave.

MEMORY MAKER

- Distribute Memory Makers and Day 2 tags and allow learners to add them to their Memory Maker bags.
- Conclude with a joyful prayer. Begin: “Jesus, You are _____.” Allow learners to fill in the blank.

END IT PREP

- ☐ *VBS 2026 Music for Kids*

MEMORY MAKER

- ☐ *VBS 2026 Memory Maker* (1 set per person)—Gather the Day 2 tags.

2





BONUS ACTIVITIES

MAKE PAPER LANTERNS

SUPPLIES

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ “Paper Lantern Pattern” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)- 1 copy per person
- ☐ Neon colored copy paper
- ☐ Washable markers
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Clear tape or glue sticks
- ☐ Print copies of the “Paper Lantern Pattern” for each person and some extra copies. Cut off the instruction strip for each. Precut lanterns for learners who struggle with fine motor skills.

1. Say: “John the Baptist knew Jesus was perfect. Jesus’ disciples knew that too. They wrote true stories and letters about Jesus.”
2. Help learners locate 1 John 3:5 in their Bibles. Read the verse aloud. Say: “Jesus never disobeyed God. He came to earth to take away sin. After He forgives you for your sin, the more you will learn about Jesus, the more you will want to be like Him. The more you know about Jesus, you’ll understand why people need to trust Jesus to rescue them from sin.”
3. Distribute scissors and copies of the “Paper Lantern Pattern.” Show learners how to fold the paper in half the long way, then carefully cut along the dotted lines. Assist with cutting as needed or provide precut lanterns and let learners decorate them.
4. When the cuts are complete, demonstrate how to unfold the paper and join the short ends with glue or tape to make the lantern shape. Use a precut instruction strip to make a handle at the top of each lantern.
5. Encourage learners to display their lanterns at home as a reminder that Jesus is perfect and worthy of their love and obedience.

MAKE SENSORY BAGS

SUPPLIES

- ☐ “Allergy Alert” listing the items used (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ *Baptize* “Word Card” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ Heavy duty ziplock bags
- ☐ Baby oil or cooking oil
- ☐ Measuring cups and tablespoons
- ☐ Neon watercolor paint, preferably blue
- ☐ Wide transparent tape
- ☐ Optional: black light bar or black light flashlight

1. Work together to make sensory bags. Fill each bag between one-third and one-half with oil (closer to one-third than one-half full). Add several tablespoons of neon watercolor paint. Close and seal each bag, squeezing all excess air from the bag. Move the bag to “mix” the oil and watercolor paint. Seal the bag with wide tape.
2. Encourage learners to explore the sensory bags. As they press and move the bags, the contents will create a “lava lamp” effect.
3. Lay the *baptize* “Word Card” with the sensory bags. Talk about the Bible story. Suggest the learner lay a bag over the word card and try to see the word under the bag.
4. Hold a black light bar or black light flashlight over the sensory bags to make them glow.





BONUS ACTIVITIES

LIGHT UP WORDS

SUPPLIES

- ❑ Bible
 - ❑ “Day 2 Bonus Verse Poster” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
 - ❑ “Flash(light) Cards” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
 - ❑ Round toothpicks or barbecue skewers (leader use only)
 - ❑ LED flashlights
 - ❑ Black construction paper
 - ❑ Prior to the session, place each “Flash(light) Card” over a sheet of black construction paper. Poke a toothpick or skewer through both layers to create a series of small holes.
 - ❑ **Tip:** Test this activity in the room with the supplies you will be using. Make adjustments as necessary.
1. Read aloud Mark 1:11, the Bonus Verse. Ask: “Whose voice came from heaven? Who was the voice speaking about?” (*God was speaking about Jesus.*)
 2. Using the “Toothpick Template” word made on black construction paper, show the punched piece of paper and challenge the group to decide what the dots represent. If they are having trouble figuring it out, explain that each set of dots represent a word in the Bible verse.
 3. Invite volunteers to experiment with shining lights to illuminate the words on the wall. (Depending on the strength of the flashlights, participants may have to hold the paper close to the wall or shine light on one letter at a time.)
 4. Read the verse a few more times, listening for the words that were illuminated.

PAINT WITH MARKERS AND WATER

SUPPLIES

- ❑ “Bible Story Picture 2” (Printables—Bible Story Pictures)
 - ❑ Blue plastic table cover
 - ❑ Large white coffee filters
 - ❑ Markers (different shades of blue)
 - ❑ Spray bottles filled with water
 - ❑ **Extend:** Permanent markers
1. Cover tables with a tablecloth. Provide a large coffee filter to each participant, along with various shades of blue markers and spray bottles with water for learners to share.
 2. Instruct participants to make designs with markers on their coffee filters.
 3. Show “Bible Story Picture 2.” Review today’s Bible story. Explain that John baptized Jesus because Jesus wanted to obey God and show people what they should do when they decide to follow God.
 4. When learners are finished making designs, they will spritz water onto their coffee filters so their designs begin to bleed or spread out to look like watercolors to resemble water. **Note:** Limit the amount of water so the filters do not become saturated. Try giving a little spritz and then watch for a moment before giving another spritz.
 5. Lay artwork somewhere to dry.
- Extend the Activity:** After the artwork dries, provide permanent markers and prompt learners to draw two stick figures, one representing John and the other representing Jesus, to create the look of them standing in the water for Jesus’ baptism.

DAY 3

JESUS IS THE POWERFUL SON OF GOD



SPOTLIGHT QUESTION

WAS JESUS JUST A TEACHER? EVERYTHING THAT JESUS SAID AND DID SHOWED THAT HE IS THE POWERFUL SON OF GOD.

TODAY'S POINT

JESUS 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*

BONUS VERSE

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

Matthew 28:18

BIBLE STORY

JESUS PERFORMED MIRACLES

Matthew 15:29-39

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.

Helpful definitions:



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

To give glory—To praise God



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 three days without food. 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 once again, in the hands of Jesus, a little is more than enough.

Just like in Matthew 14, 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 learners 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 you.

Illuminate Your Heart

1. What are you doing to bring people to Jesus?
2. Are you willing to give what you have when there are needs around you?
3. Pray for the learners 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.

3



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TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

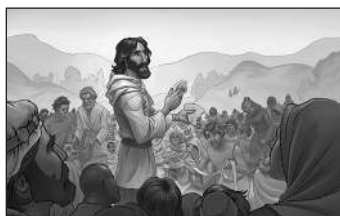
START IT PREP

- ☐ VBS 2026 Music for Kids
- ☐ Banner paper
- ☐ Tape
- ☐ Washable markers or face ink stampers
- ☐ "Bible Story Picture 3"
(Printables—Bible Story Pictures)
- ☐ *Miracle* "Word Card"
(Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ Timer

HEAR IT PREP

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ "Illumination Station Banner"
(Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ "Illumination Station Add-ons"
(Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ "Bible Story Picture 3"
(Printables—Bible Story Pictures)
- ☐ Battery-operated tea lights
(1 per person) (or blank index cards)

With a permanent marker, write one of these words on each light (or index card): *Jesus, mountain, crowd, healed, food*. Duplicates are OK.



LEARN IT PREP

- ☐ "Theme Verse Poster"
(Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ Rope lights
- ☐ Neon tape or heavy tape
(painter's tape if placing the path on the wall)
- ☐ Neon paper or colorful index cards
- ☐ Marker
- ☐ Swim noodle to use as a reaching tool (cut in half or thirds)
- ☐ Bible Story Pictures 1–3
(Printables—Bible Story Pictures)

START IT

- Welcome participants back to Illumination Station VBS. Play the song "Illumination Station" as learners arrive.
- Cover a table with banner paper and tape down the edges. Assign each person to an area of the table. Demonstrate how to quickly draw a stick figure person or use happy face ink stampers on the paper. Issue a challenge to fill the paper with as many stick figure people or faces as possible. Set a timer for about five minutes. However, plan more or less time based on the needs of the group.
- When learners have started to lose interest or the time has expired, point out that they made a crowd of people on the paper.
- Show the "Bible Story Picture 3." Say: "In today's Bible story, Jesus was with a crowd of more than 4,000 people when He made a miracle happen." Show the picture and read the definition on the *miracle* "Word Card."

HEAR IT

- Briefly use the Day 1 and Day 2 banner add-ons to refresh everyone's memory about what they have already learned about Jesus (or missed if they are newcomers). Together, practice saying and repeating *Jesus is God's promised Son* and *Jesus is God's perfect Son*. Repeat a few times, first quietly and gradually getting slightly louder. Avoid screaming to accommodate those with sensory issues.
- Distribute tea lights, making sure each child has a light. If the group is large and there are not enough lights, tell the story twice to ensure that each participant has a chance to hold a light. If the group is small, still plan to tell the story twice, once without the lights and again with the lights. Move around the room to each learner with a light and read the word written on it. Comment: "The words on the lights are important to today's story. When you hear the word written on your light, hold it up, touch it, or look at it."
- Open your Bible to Matthew 15 and tell today's Bible story of when Jesus performed miracles, pausing at appropriate points so participants can respond.
- When telling the story a second time, leave the last sentence unfinished: "He could do things no one else could do because He is _____." Fasten the Day 3 Add-on to the "Illumination Station Banner" and read it aloud to the group.
- Show the "Bible Story Picture 3" and review the story by talking about the picture.
- Say: "Because He is powerful, Jesus can do many things that no one else can do. What did Jesus do in today's story that no one else could do?" (*healed people; miraculously fed the crowd*)

LEARN IT

- Prior to the session, stretch a rope light in a wavy path. Write the words of the Bible verse, John 8:12, on neon paper, one phrase per page for a total of five pages. Lay the words along the rope light path, keeping the phrases in order. If desired, add some blank pages to make the path longer. Tape the lights and pages to the floor. Display the "Theme Verse Poster" close to the path. For participants who are less



TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

mobile or in wheelchairs, create a rope light path on the wall at wheelchair height.

Use painter's tape to attach it to the wall and write the words on colorful index cards or cut the neon paper into smaller cards. Display the "Theme Verse" next to the path.

- Guide learners to take turns stepping from page to page. Help them say the verse as they step from page to page. For individuals using the light and cards attached to the wall, use a pre-cut swim noodle to tap the words on the wall while saying them.
- At the end of the path, tell them to look at Bible Story Pictures 1–3. Ask: "What have we learned about Jesus so far this week?" Talk about the miracles Jesus performed which prove His power.

LIVE IT

- Prior to the session, mark each of the Activity Book passages from "A Place in the Sun" (page 7) in a Bible. Write a description of the miracle on six separate bookmarks. Use a different color bookmark for each miracle. Miracles include: Matthew 8:5-8,13 (*healed a centurion's servant*), Matthew 28:5-6 (*rose from the dead*), Mark 4:39-40 (*calmed a storm*), Mark 6:49-50 (*walked on water*), Luke 5:4-6 (*miraculous catch of fish*), Luke 17:12-14 (*healed ten lepers*).
- Distribute activity books, Bibles, pencils, and paper clips. Help learners find "A Place in the Sun." Make a spinner by placing the pencil (point side down) in the center of the spinner with the paper clip looped around the pencil point.
- Let learners take turns spinning the spinner to choose a Bible reference. Help them locate the appropriate bookmark in your prepared Bible reference by announcing a color to find and identify the miracles Jesus performed.
- Call attention to the Day 3 Question Marquee (Was Jesus just a teacher?) Invite kids to respond. Then follow up: "Everything Jesus said and did showed that He is the powerful Son of God. Jesus gives eternal (everlasting) life to everyone who trusts Him to save them from sin. No one else can do that!"

Tip: If activities requiring less reading and writing better fit the skills of your learners, purchase copies of *VBS 2026 Preschool Activity Book*. Use any daily activity in the book that supports the developmental skills of any learner in your class.

LIVE IT PREP

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ *VBS 2026 Kids Activity Book* (1 per person or several for the group to share)
- ☐ Neon colored paper to make six bookmarks
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Paper clips
- ☐ "Daily Question Marquee" (Printables—Students/Adults Items)

Leader Tip

Reference "When Is a Person with Special Needs Ready to Become a Christian?" on page 8 as you sense a learner is ready to make the decision to become a Christian.

JESUS is ✱
THE POWERFUL
✱ SON of GOD

3



TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

END IT PREP

- ❑ *VBS 2026 Glitter Beach Ball* (9798384539810) or paper wad

MEMORY MAKER

- ❑ *VBS 2026 Memory Maker* (1 set per person)—Gather the Day 3 tags.

END IT

- Toss a *VBS 2026 Glitter Beach Ball* or paper wad to several volunteers. Ask each volunteer: “What are things people might do when they realize just how powerful Jesus is?” (*obey Him, trust Him, worship Him, and so on*). If a learner is nonverbal, let an adult leader answer the question while standing next to the learner.

MEMORY MAKER

- Distribute Memory Makers and Day 3 tags. Ask: “What do the fish and bread remind you about from today’s Bible story?” Comment: “Jesus can perform miracles. He can make people well and feed a large crowd with a small amount of food. Only God and Jesus can perform miracles.”
- Allow kids to add them to their Memory Maker bags.





BONUS ACTIVITIES

PASS AND TAP

SUPPLIES

- ☐ Bible
 - ☐ *Miracle* “Word Card” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
 - ☐ “ZAP!” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
 - ☐ Gift bag
 - ☐ Tap lights
 - ☐ *VBS 2026 Music for Kids*
 - ☐ Mark your Bible with the verses mentioned on the “ZAP!” cards: Mark 2:8 (*knows people’s thoughts*), Matthew 28:20 (*is with you always*), Hebrews 7:25 (*saves people from sin*), John 1:3 (*created all things*), Matthew 28:18 (*has power over all things*), John 10:28 (*gives eternal life*)
1. Show and read the *miracle* “Word Card.” Ask learners to recall miracles mentioned in today’s Bible story or other stories about Jesus’ miracles they already know.
 2. Say: “Jesus is alive and working in the world today. He still does things no one else can do! This game will help you find out what some of those things are.”
 3. Guide learners to sit in chairs in a circle. Give a volunteer a tap light. Explain that they will move the light around the circle while a VBS song plays. Periodically, stop the music. When the music stops, the person holding the light will tap it. The person sitting next to the light will draw a card from the bag. Assist with reading the words on the card and the related Bible verse. If the player draws a *ZAP!* card, he must turn off the light and pick a player to give it to.
 4. Continue to play additional rounds with a different participant starting/receiving the tap light each time to allow as many learners as possible to select a card.

TAKE PHOTOS

SUPPLIES

- ☐ Bibles
 - ☐ “Day 3 Bonus Verse Poster” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
 - ☐ Bookmarks
 - ☐ Highlighter
 - ☐ Digital camera or other devices the participants can use to take pictures
 - ☐ For each learner, place a bookmark in a Bible to mark Matthew 28:18 and highlight the verse and the book name at the top of the page.
1. Give each learner a Bible. Challenge him to open it up to the marked page and find the highlighted verse and highlighted Bible book name.
 2. Let learners take turns using a digital camera to take a picture of the page. Show them how to zoom in on the page to see the highlights.
 3. Read the verse aloud. Comment: “God gave Jesus authority over everything there is.” Explain that there is nothing that Jesus is not in charge of. Jesus is good and people can trust Jesus to do what is best with everything in the whole world!

Extend the Activity: Take a picture of each learner holding a Bible in an area with VBS decorations. Make plans to print it and give it to him at the end of VBS.



BONUS ACTIVITIES

DRAW AND GLOW

SUPPLIES

- ❑ “Word Cards” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
 - ❑ Banner paper
 - ❑ Tape
 - ❑ Highlighters (especially yellow and orange)
 - ❑ Pencils
 - ❑ Black light bar or black light flashlight
 - ❑ **Extend:** “Bible Story Pictures 1–3” (Printables—Bible Story Pictures)
1. Cover a table with banner paper and tape down the edges. Arrange the black light to shine where participants will be drawing.
 2. Give each person one or more highlighters to draw and write. Place “Word Cards” (*baptize, miracle, disciples*) on the table for learners to see to copy the words. Write “Jesus” on several spots on the paper. Suggest they draw pictures of Jesus with a pencil and highlight the drawing.
 3. Notice how highlighters glow under the black light.
 4. Talk about Jesus. Review by asking, “Who is Jesus?” “Who baptized Jesus?” and “What miracles did Jesus perform?”
 5. Say: “Jesus is God’s promised Son. He never disobeyed God, so He lived a perfect life. Jesus is powerful. He performed miracles.”

Extend: Show the “Bible Story Pictures 1–3.” Challenge learners to draw someone or something they see in one of the pictures.

DISCIPLE MATCH

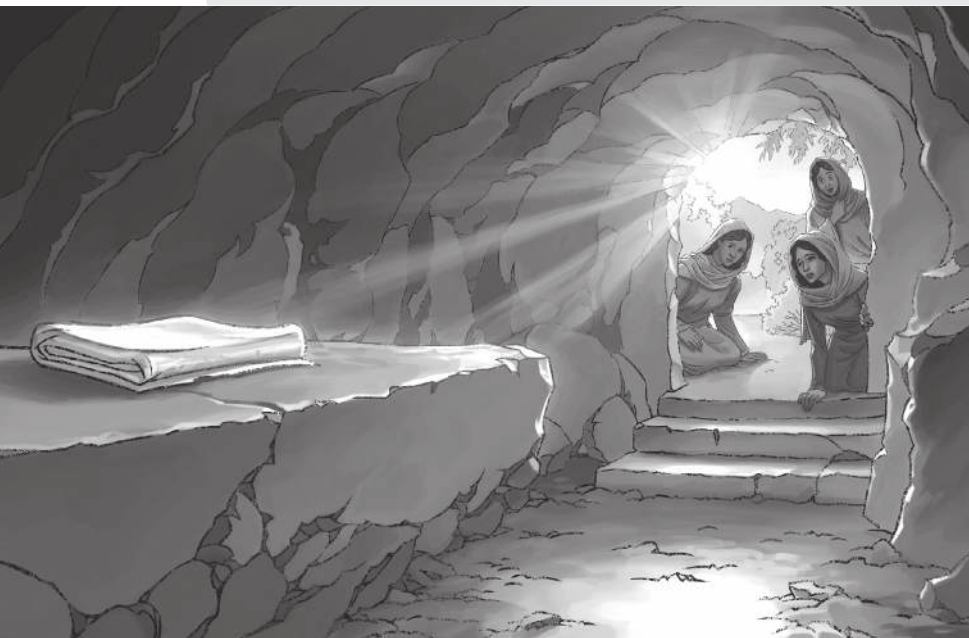
SUPPLIES

- ❑ *Disciple* “Word Card” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
 - ❑ “Disciple Match” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
 - ❑ “Disciple Names” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
 - ❑ Scissors
 - ❑ Print and cut apart the “Disciple Match” cards. Make a set for each group of three or four learners. Cut apart the “Disciple Names.”
1. Show the *disciple* “Word Card” and read aloud the definition. Show each disciple from “Disciple Match” and read his name. Say: “These are pictures someone drew of Jesus’ disciples or helpers. In today’s Bible story, the disciples witnessed the miracles Jesus performed.” Talk with learners about these miracles.
 2. Place the precut “Disciple Names” and one picture of each disciple faceup on the table. Guide learners to match the names to the pictures.
 3. Mix up a set of matching cards and lay them facedown on the table. Invite one participant at a time to turn over two cards to try to get a match. If the cards match, set them aside. If they do not match, turn them back over for the next participant to try to get a match. Continue to play until all the matching cards are found.



DAY 4

JESUS IS THE PROVEN SON OF GOD



BIBLE STORY

JESUS DIED AND ROSE TO LIFE

Mark 14:43–16:7

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 or 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. *(Make a thumbs-down gesture with one hand.)*

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!"** *(Make a cross with both pointer fingers.)*

After Jesus died, a man named Joseph of Arimathea 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. *(Arch one hand to make a tomb shape. Make a "stone" with the fist of your other hand and move over the tomb opening.)*

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." *(Arch one hand to make an empty tomb shape.)* **Jesus is not just someone who lived a long time ago. He has always existed. He came 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.** *(Make a heart shape using both hands.)*

After three days, some women went back to the tomb where Jesus had been buried. It was empty! Jesus had risen from the dead. In the days that followed, Jesus appeared to more than 500 people, showing that He is alive! Jesus rose from the dead so that those who receive His gift of forgiveness can be part of God's family forever.

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.

TODAY'S POINT

JESUS IS THE PROVEN 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

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

4



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 learners 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, students and adults 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 learners 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, participants 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

1. How have you experienced Jesus personally? Thank Him for being present in your life.
2. There could be no greater privilege than to tell others 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.

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.



Printables and Audio

PRINTABLES are available by following the download instructions on page 3.

AUDIO VBS 2026 songs can be purchased on discs or as downloads. See page 6 for ordering information or go to lifeway.com.

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

START IT

- Prior to the session, print copies of “Faces” and cut them apart. Tape the faces on a window. Leave space between the faces. Tape a piece of paper on top of the face on the window. If there are no windows in the room, use tracing paper or take turns using light-up tracing pads. If a learner is in a wheelchair, tape the paper within reach or use the tracing pad.
- Play the song “Illumination Station” as learners arrive. Review the motto, “Jesus is the Light of the world.”
- Invite learners to use a pencil to trace the face onto a paper. Talk about the expressions on the faces.
- Say: “In today’s Bible story, people felt many different emotions. Our story today is both sad and happy. We will hear about exciting miracles that Jesus did which proved He is the powerful Son of God. However, some men felt angry at Jesus and did not want to believe that He is God’s Son. We will hear how people were so sad when Jesus died on the cross and how they were happy when they found out that Jesus rose from the dead and is alive. As you listen to the story, think about how you feel about what happened to Jesus.”

HEAR IT

- Dim the room lights, if possible. Ask learners if they have ever made hand shadows on a wall. If so, let them demonstrate some sample hand shapes and tell you what their shadows would represent.
- Tell the group that they can make hand shadows to illustrate important parts of today’s Bible story. Teach and practice the following gestures: thumbs-down, a cross using both pointer fingers, arch one hand to make a tomb opening and a fist to cover the opening, an empty tomb shape with an arched hand, and a heart shape using both hands.
- Open your Bible to Mark 14 and tell the story. Stop after the first paragraph and demonstrate the hand shape described in italics. Once learners have formed the same shape with their hands, walk behind the group and project their hand shadows on the wall one at a time using the flashlight. Continue in the same manner with the remainder of the story.
- Display the “Day 4 Bible Story Picture” when that part of the story happens.
- Review the story by working together to complete “I Have a Beam” on page 11 of the activity book.

Tips: If you feel the activity could be too distracting for your group, simply tell the story first. Then go back through the story doing the activity. Repetition enhances learning.

If activities requiring less reading and writing better fit the skills of your learners, purchase copies of *VBS 2026 Preschool Activity Book*. Use any daily activity in the book that supports the developmental skills of any learner in your class.

START IT PREP

- ❑ *VBS 2026 Music for Kids*
- ❑ “Faces”(Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ❑ White paper or tracing paper
- ❑ Pencils
- ❑ Windows or light-up tracing pads

HEAR IT PREP

- ❑ Bible
- ❑ “Bible Story Picture 4” (Printables—Bible Story Pictures)
- ❑ *VBS 2026 Kids Activity Book* (1 per person or several for the group to share)
- ❑ Strong flashlight





TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

LEARN IT PREP

- ☐ “Theme Verse Poster”
(Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ “Bible Verse Strips”
(Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ “Illumination Station Banner”
(Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ “Illumination Station Add-ons”
(Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ Children’s picture Bibles
- ☐ Highlighter

LIVE IT PREP

- ☐ Gospel Poster” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ Vellum (optional)
- ☐ Flashlight or penlight (optional)
- ☐ Neon paper
- ☐ Marker
- ☐ Tape

LEADER TIP

Reference “When Is a Person with Special Needs Ready to Become a Christian?” on page 8 as you sense a learner is ready to make the decision to become a Christian.

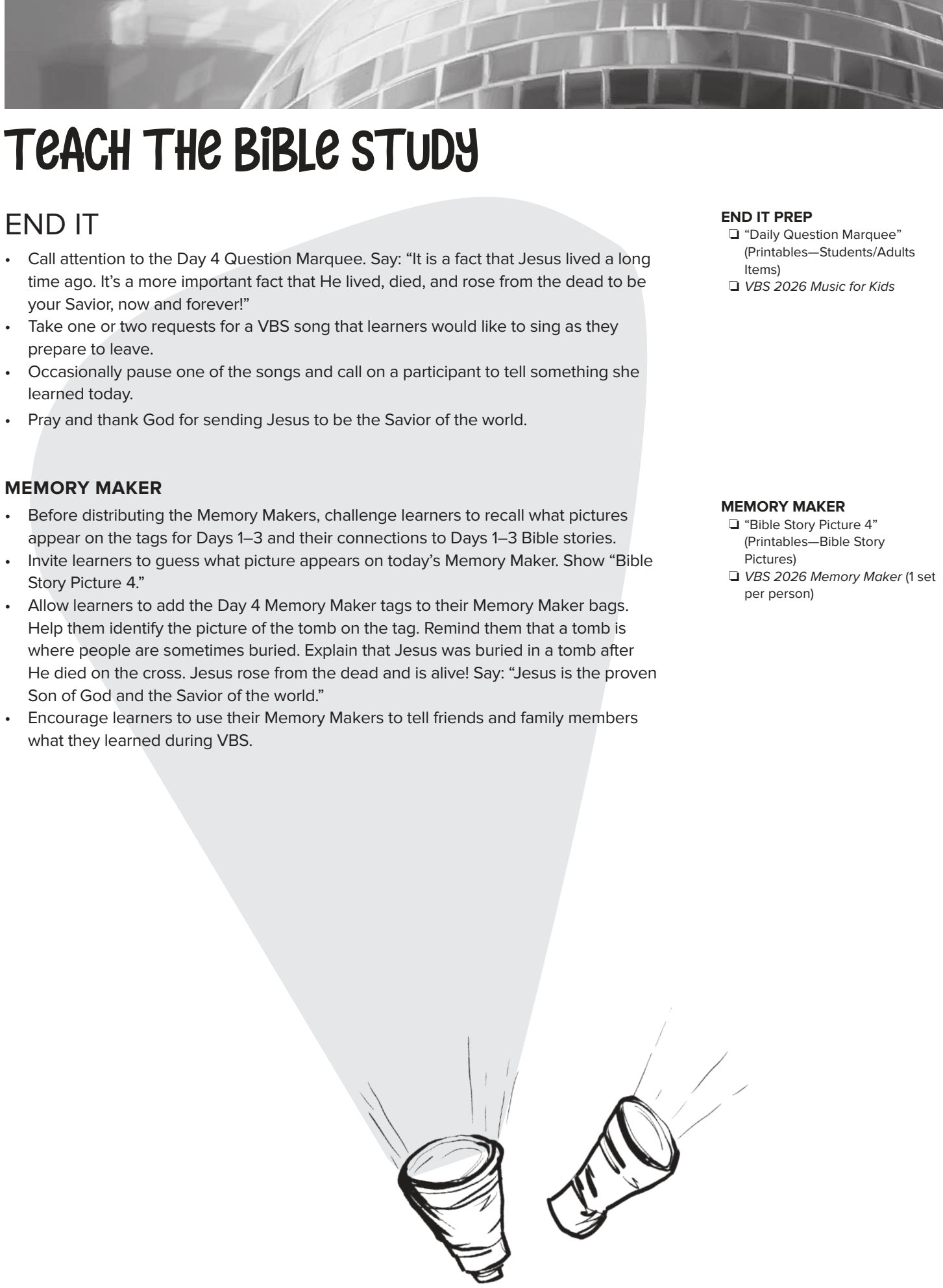
LEARN IT

- Use the “Theme Verse Poster” to review John 8:12 with the group. Read aloud the verse a few times.
- Place a “Bible Verse Strip” to mark John 8:12. Highlight the verse, chapter, number, and Bible book name in a children’s picture Bible for each learner.
- Challenge learners to locate the verse by finding the verse strip and highlights.
- Next, search the Bible for pictures of Jesus. When a picture is located, talk with the learner about what Jesus is doing in the picture. Show pictures to the group.
- Say: “The Bible is centered around Jesus. The Old Testament (show the portion that is the Old Testament) tells us what happened before the birth of Jesus. The New Testament (show the New Testament portion of the Bible) tells us about Jesus’ birth, life, death, resurrection from the dead, and what will happen in the future.”
- Fasten the Day 4 Add-on to the “Illumination Station Banner” and read it aloud to the group.

LIVE IT

- Say: “Here are some important things to know about trusting and following Jesus.” Display the “Gospel Poster.” Avoid using long descriptions of sin. Instead, you might describe sin as “wrong choices.” Review the following definition and motions: sin is anything we think (touch head), say (touch mouth), or do (hold out your hands) that does not please God.
- On the “Gospel Poster,” you may choose to cut out the light bulb outlines, cover with vellum, and shine your flashlight from behind the poster as you describe each point of the outline; or simply use a penlight to call attention to each icon as you present the related information.
- See “Sharing the Gospel with Learners” on the inside front cover of this leader guide. Write each outline point on a sheet of neon paper. Tape the paper to the wall and shine a flashlight or laser pointer on each sheet as you describe the idea behind each point.
- Invite learners to ask questions about what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Offer to answer questions learners have about salvation, both now and one-on-one at a later time. A nonverbal person can answer yes or no questions with the shake of a head.

JESUS is 
THE PROVEN 
SON of GOD



TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

END IT

- Call attention to the Day 4 Question Marquee. Say: “It is a fact that Jesus lived a long time ago. It’s a more important fact that He lived, died, and rose from the dead to be your Savior, now and forever!”
- Take one or two requests for a VBS song that learners would like to sing as they prepare to leave.
- Occasionally pause one of the songs and call on a participant to tell something she learned today.
- Pray and thank God for sending Jesus to be the Savior of the world.

MEMORY MAKER

- Before distributing the Memory Makers, challenge learners to recall what pictures appear on the tags for Days 1–3 and their connections to Days 1–3 Bible stories.
- Invite learners to guess what picture appears on today’s Memory Maker. Show “Bible Story Picture 4.”
- Allow learners to add the Day 4 Memory Maker tags to their Memory Maker bags. Help them identify the picture of the tomb on the tag. Remind them that a tomb is where people are sometimes buried. Explain that Jesus was buried in a tomb after He died on the cross. Jesus rose from the dead and is alive! Say: “Jesus is the proven Son of God and the Savior of the world.”
- Encourage learners to use their Memory Makers to tell friends and family members what they learned during VBS.

END IT PREP

- ❑ “Daily Question Marquee”
(Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ❑ *VBS 2026 Music for Kids*

MEMORY MAKER

- ❑ “Bible Story Picture 4”
(Printables—Bible Story Pictures)
- ❑ *VBS 2026 Memory Maker* (1 set per person)



BONUS ACTIVITIES

PLAY RING TOSS

SUPPLIES

- ❑ “Day 4 Bonus Verse Poster” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
 - ❑ Unopened water bottles or game cones (8)
 - ❑ Large mailing labels or sticky notes
 - ❑ 22-inch glow necklaces
 - ❑ Painter’s tape
 - ❑ Divide Mark 15:39 into four phrases. Write each phrase on a large label or sticky note and fasten it to a water bottle or game cone.
 - ❑ Tape a start line on the floor. Set up four cones, one about 1 or 2-feet from the start line, another a couple of feet directly behind the first cone, the next a couple of feet behind the second cone, and the fourth 1 or more feet from the third cone. Place the cones in order based on the verse.
 - ❑ Read aloud Mark 15:39 from the “Day 4 Bonus Verse Poster.” Comment: “The centurion is the speaker of the verse. He figured out that Jesus really is the Son of God.”
1. Hand four glow necklaces to a participant. Guide him to try to toss the necklace onto each bottle in order. Say each phrase of the verse after he tries to toss it on each necklace. Prompt learners to join in saying the verse.
 2. Continue the same way inviting each person to try to toss the rings onto the bottles while hearing each phrase of the verse in order.
 3. Say: “Believing that Jesus is really God’s Son can change your life. I’m praying that each of you will put your faith in Jesus and follow Him.”

MAKE A GARDEN

SUPPLIES

- ❑ “Bible Story Picture 4” (Printables—Bible Story Pictures)
 - ❑ Large sheets of white paper or banner paper
 - ❑ Gardening magazines
 - ❑ Glue sticks
 - ❑ Tape
 - ❑ Pencils
 - ❑ Colored pencils or crayons
 - ❑ Safety scissors or adaptive loop scissors
 - ❑ Cover a table with banner paper and tape down the edges to make one large banner or provide each participant with a piece of paper to make her own mini banner or picture.
 - ❑ Draw a simple tomb shape in the center of each sheet of paper or on the banner paper.
1. Invite participants to search through gardening magazines to find and cut out items seen in a garden. Assist with cutting, as needed.
 2. Show “Bible Story Picture 4.” Review the story. Say: “The tomb where Jesus’ body was placed was in a garden. Jesus’ body is no longer in the tomb because Jesus is alive!”
 3. Point out the tomb drawing on the white paper or banner paper and prompt learners to select pictures to glue around the tomb to create the look of a garden or draw and color items that may be in a garden.
 4. Invite learners to show their pictures. If using banner paper, help them roll up their pictures and secure with tape to take home.
 5. Check for comprehension by asking, “Was Jesus just someone who lived a long time ago?” Explain: “Jesus was not just an ordinary person. He is the promised, powerful, proven Son of God. Jesus lived, died, and rose to life again to be our Savior, now and forever.”



BONUS ACTIVITIES

SEEK AND FIND

SUPPLIES

- ❑ Clear, fillable plastic light bulb (made for party favors), clear fillable Christmas ornaments, or 4-ounce plastic jars (5)
 - ❑ Paper strips (5)
 - ❑ Highlighter (optional)
 - ❑ Write these phrases on separate strips: *God Rules, We Sinned, God Provided, Jesus Gives, We Respond*. Curl and insert into the ornaments so that the captions are visible.
 - ❑ Mark these verses in your Bible with a bookmark and highlighter: Genesis 1:1; Romans 3:23; John 3:16; 1 Peter 3:18; Romans 10:9-10.
1. Say: “From the very beginning, God planned to send Jesus to save people from sin. Sin is anything we think, say, or do that does not please God. We’re going to play a game to discover what the Bible says about that plan.”
 2. Select a volunteer to go outside the room with an adult helper, if needed. Hand the “God Rules” ornament (call it a light bulb) to another volunteer who will quickly hide it somewhere in the room.
 3. Call for the “seeker” to return and locate the hidden bulb, guided by the verbal cues of the rest of the group (“brighter” if the seeker is close to the bulb, “darker” if she is moving away from the bulb).
 4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 with the remaining bulbs in order, following up with the marked verses: Genesis 1:1 for *God Rules*; Romans 3:23 for *We Sinned*; John 3:16 for *God Provided*; 1 Peter 3:18 for *Jesus Gives*; Romans 10:9-10 for *We Respond*.
 5. Find and read the verses that go along with each bulb. Show learners where the verses are found in the Bible.
 6. Offer to answer questions about salvation, both now and one-on-one later. If a learner asks to meet privately, meet in an area where you can easily be seen by other adults.

INVITE LEARNERS TO RESPOND

SUPPLIES

- ❑ Pencils
- ❑ Print “Response Cards” (Printables—Administrative Items, 1 per person).
- ❑ Optional: Print page 2 of “Sharing the Gospel” (Printables—Administrative Items). Use the icons on “Sharing the Gospel with Kids” as you explain.

Use these sample talking points to present the gospel message:

1. **God Rules:** Explain that the Bible tells that God created everything and is in charge of everything. Point to the crown picture, which represents God being in charge.
2. **We Sinned:** (Point to the X.) Tell learners that everyone since Adam and Eve has chosen to disobey God and that the Bible calls that disobedience *sin*. Explain that because God is holy, He cannot be around sin. Note for learners that sin separates people from God and deserves God’s punishment of death.
3. **God Provided:** (Point to the cross.) Emphasize that God sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. No one can be good enough to save himself from the punishment. Only Jesus can save us.
4. **Jesus Gives:** (Point to the gift.) Tell learners that Jesus never sinned, but He did die on the cross for our sins and then rose back to life. Since Jesus gave His life for us, we can be welcomed into God’s family.
5. **We Respond:** (Point to the receiving hands.) Mention that people can respond to Jesus with three ABC words:
 - Admit to God that you are a sinner and repent. Tell God you are sorry and want to change.
 - Believe that Jesus is God’s Son and receive God’s gift of forgiveness from sin.
 - Confess your faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Tell God and others what you believe.
6. Give each member a “Response Card” and a pencil. Encourage learners to complete the cards to express what they know about salvation. Emphasize that there is no pressure for learners to make a decision today. (Note: See page 8 for information about sharing the gospel with a person with special needs.)

DAY 5

JESUS IS GOD'S PLAN FOR FORGIVENESS



BIBLE STORY

PETER PREACHED ABOUT JESUS

Acts 2

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. *(What did the people think?)* 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. *(What else did Peter say?)*

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." *(How did the people feel?)*

When the people heard this, they were very sorry. They asked

SPOTLIGHT QUESTION

WHY DO I NEED TO RESPOND TO JESUS?
JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY TO RECEIVE
GOD'S FORGIVENESS.

TODAY'S POINT

JESUS IS GOD'S PLAN FOR 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*

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

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. *(What did the people do?)* 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. Jesus is the only way to receive forgiveness for our sins.

Helpful definitions:

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.





LEADER DEVOTION

This week, the focus has been on helping learners discover the answer to a spotlight question each day. These questions have laid the foundation for students and adults 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.

People 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 person is ready to decide to follow Jesus. People must know what sin is and the problem it causes for their relationship with God. People 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 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 people 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 learners 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 people with the gospel than VBS. The Holy Spirit may be drawing students and adults in your care to salvation this week. God gives us the privilege and honor of being in relationship with the people He is calling to salvation.

Illuminate Your Heart

1. 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?
2. Spend some time in prayer for the learners 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.



Printables and Audio

PRINTABLES are available by following the download instructions on page 3.

AUDIO VBS 2026 songs can be purchased on discs or as downloads. See page 6 for ordering information or go to lifeway.com.

TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

START IT PREP

- ❑ *VBS 2026 Music for Kids*
- ❑ 2 or 3 hula hoops
- ❑ Beanbags, paper wads, or rolled socks (1 per person)
- ❑ Flashlight

START IT

- Issue a flashlight to a “spotlight operator,” who will stand in the center of the room. Place a few hula hoops on the floor, also in the center of the room. Gather learners to form a circle several feet away from the hoops. Give each learner a beanbag, paper wad, or rolled pair of socks.
- As you play “Forgiveness In You,” learners should walk in a circle around the spotlight operator and hoops. Guide helpers to assist participants who are in wheelchairs or have trouble walking, or offer a spot where they can sit as others walk.
- Stop the music at a random moment. When you do, the spotlight operator will shine her flashlight on any hoop she chooses. Learners will try to toss the beanbag into the illuminated hoop. Lead them to get their beanbags and continue to play until the song ends.
- Say: “A spotlight is used to focus attention on something or someone special. In today’s Bible story, Jesus’ disciple Peter said some important things to put Jesus in the spotlight. Let’s listen closely to find out what he said about Jesus.”

HEAR IT PREP

- ❑ Bible
- ❑ Blocks (interlocking, wooden, or magnetic)
- ❑ “Bible Story Picture 5” (Printables—Bible Story Pictures)
- ❑ “Disciple Match”- Peter’s picture card (Printables—Students/Adults Items)



HEAR IT

- Place a pile of blocks in front of each learner. Place boxes of additional blocks within reach. Mention that the disciples were all together in one place for a celebration. Challenge learners to build a square structure to represent the place where the people gathered as they listen to today’s Bible story. Open your Bible to Acts 2 and tell the story of when Peter preached about Jesus without asking the questions listed in the story.
- Say: “Peter told the crowd of people about Jesus. Many people wanted to follow Jesus after they heard what Peter said.” Show “Bible Story Picture 5” and ask learners to tell about the picture.
- Retell the story again, pausing to ask questions on cue. Use all of the questions listed in the story or just ask a few.
- Display the “Bible Story Picture 5” and encourage learners to describe the scene by telling what they remember about the story.
- Invite learners to show the structures they built. Show the “Disciple Match” card featuring Peter and tape or place him in a structure as if he is preaching.
- Pray, thanking God that people can learn about Jesus by reading the Bible and hearing Bible stories.

LEARN IT PREP

- ❑ Bibles
- ❑ “Theme Verse Poster” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ❑ Pop fidgets (1 per learner)

LEARN IT

- Call attention to the “Theme Verse Poster.” Read aloud John 8:12 a few times. Ask: “What do you think are the five most important words in the verse?” (Answers will vary.) Shine your pointer on those words. Ask learners to indicate the most important word in the verse, which is “Jesus.”
- Give everyone a pop fidget. Guide learners to say or listen to the verse again, pushing down a raised bubble on the fidget when they say or hear one of the five key words.



TEACH THE BIBLE STUDY

- Say: “You have been looking at this verse each day during VBS. Now, let’s try to say it without looking at the poster.”

LIVE IT

- Fasten the Day 5 add-on to the “Illumination Station Banner.” Use the flashlight add-on to reveal the exclamation point sketch. Ask: “What can the speech bubble with the exclamation point help you remember?” Comment that this represents the words Peter spoke and the response of the people. Point out that it can also remind people of the choice they can make to respond to Jesus by trusting Him and making their faith public through baptism.
- Call attention to the Day 5 Question Marquee. Say: “You can find the answer to the question by looking through a small square of cellophane.” Distribute activity books. Guide learners to find “‘Red’ This!” on page 13 and read the hidden message by placing the cellophane over the page.
- Highlight John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 in a Bible and mark the pages with bookmarks. Invite volunteers to find each “Brighter Idea” verse. Say: “These verses show that trusting Jesus is the only way to be saved from sin.”
- Use the “Gospel Poster” to help learners understand that everyone sins and needs forgiveness and what it means to trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior.
- Tape poster board to the wall within easy reach for a person in a wheelchair or banner paper to the table with the Day 5 Question Marquee nearby. Read the question, “Why do I need to respond to Jesus?” Invite each learner to draw a picture of himself on the poster or banner and talk with learners about reasons why people need to trust in Jesus.
- Pray, thanking God for providing a way for everyone to be forgiven from sin.

END IT

- Form as many groups as you have leaders. Pray for participants by name. Ask God to help them be courageous followers of Jesus.
- Individually tell each learner you have loved the time you spent together at Illumination Station VBS.

MEMORY MAKER

- Distribute Memory Makers and the Day 5 tags so that learners can add them to their Memory Maker bags. Invite volunteers to share one fun thing they will remember about VBS and one important thing they learned at VBS.
- Say: “Learning about Jesus doesn’t have to stop now!” Tell them that teaching them at VBS has been a bright spot in your summer and that you’ll continue to pray that they will always follow Jesus, the Light of the world.
- Invite guests to come back to church and tell caregivers about your church’s special needs ministry and any upcoming events at your church.

LIVE IT PREP

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ “Illumination Station Banner” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ “Illumination Station Add-ons” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ “Gospel Poster” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ *VBS 2026 Kids Activity Book* (1 per person or several for the group to share)
- ☐ Red cellophane cut into 3-inch squares
- ☐ Blank poster board or banner paper
- ☐ “Day 5 Question Marquee” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Washable markers
- ☐ Highlighter
- ☐ Bookmark

LEADER TIP

Reference “When Is a Person with Special Needs Ready to Become a Christian?” on page 8 as you sense a learner is ready to make the decision to become a Christian.

MEMORY MAKER

- ☐ *VBS 2026 Memory Maker* (1 set per person)

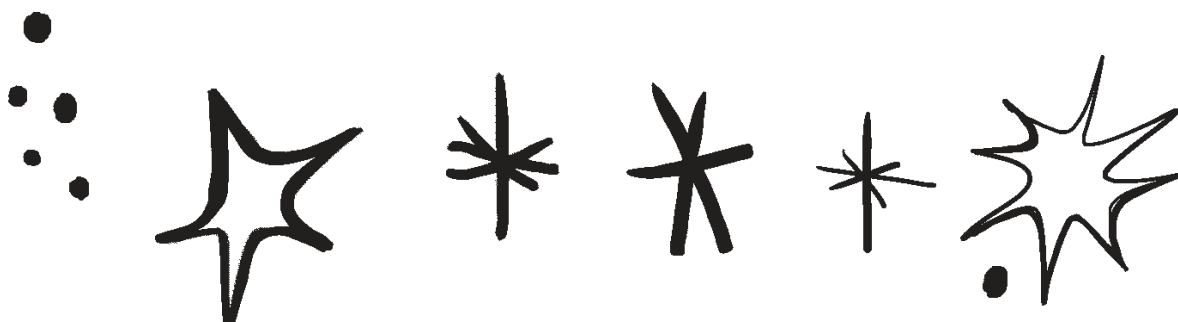
BONUS ACTIVITIES

SHAPE DOUGH

SUPPLIES

- ☐ “Bible Story Picture 5” (Printables—Bible Story Pictures)
- ☐ Play dough
- ☐ Glow sticks or glow bracelets
- ☐ Chenille stems
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Permanent marker
- ☐ *VBS 2026 Music for Kids*
- ☐ Create play dough mats with *JESUS* on it.

1. Review today’s Bible story. Ask learners to recall what Peter told the people. Talk about the miracles Jesus did that proves He is the Son of God. Mention that Jesus provided food for a large group of people with only a small amount of food, healed people, and rose from the grave.
2. Give each learner one or more balls of dough and prompt him to make something that reminds him of something Jesus did. Learners may want to make their dough resemble a bread or fish, a stick person figure, or a tomb. Another option is to shape letters out of the dough to make Jesus’ name.
3. Place glow sticks, glow bracelets, or chenille stems on the table for learners to add to their creations.
4. Take requests for VBS songs they would like to hear as they make their play dough creations.
5. Invite learners to show and tell about what they made and how it reminds them of Jesus or something Jesus did.



BE THE STAR OF THE SHOW

SUPPLIES

- ☐ “Day 5 Bonus Verse” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
- ☐ Flashlight
- ☐ Penlight
- ☐ Puppet
- ☐ Gift bag
- ☐ Craft foam (black and yellow)
- ☐ Star-shaped cookie cutter
- ☐ Trace the cookie cutter on craft foam, cut out one star per person. Only one of the stars should be yellow.

1. Call attention to the “Day 5 Bonus Verse Poster.” Say: “This is something Peter told the people who listened to him speak.”
2. Show learners the foam stars. Then drop them into a gift bag. Invite each person to close his eyes and draw a star from the bag.
3. When someone chooses a yellow star, prompt him to stand or sit next to the Bonus Verse. Let him pick one of the following options: shine a light on the verse as the group reads it, hold a puppet and move its mouth to pretend the puppet is saying the verse with the group, or stand in the spotlight and dramatically say the verse with the group. Allow the entire group to clap and cheer after saying the verse.
4. Return the star cutouts to the bag. Repeat as time allows or until everyone has an opportunity to lead the verse.



BONUS ACTIVITIES

MAKE PAPER GLASSES

SUPPLIES

- ❑ Bible
 - ❑ “Crazy Glasses Template” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
 - ❑ Scissors
 - ❑ Glue sticks
 - ❑ Fine point markers
 - ❑ Small iridescent stickers (optional)
 - ❑ Cardstock
 - ❑ Camera or phone
 - ❑ Print and cut apart one “Crazy Glasses Template” per person. Note the verses listed and keep a complete copy for the activity.
1. Ask learners if they have ever heard the phrase: “The future’s so bright I gotta wear shades!” Comment: “Shades is another word for sunglasses. When you say yes to the good news of Jesus, you can look forward to great things!”
 2. Open your Bible and read aloud the verses on the printable. Ask: “What do people receive when they trust and follow Jesus? What can they expect in the future?” Acknowledge that Christians will go through hard times, but they can be certain that Jesus is in control and will take care of them. Believers in Jesus can experience joy as they follow Jesus and look forward to everlasting life in heaven.
 3. Give each participant a pair of sunglasses to decorate. Assist with writing a summary phrase for the verses on each earpiece such as *forgiven forever*, *peace with God*, or *living hope*. Use the glue sticks to attach the earpieces to the glasses frames and then add stickers.
 4. When your glasses are finished, lead learners to wear them for a silly group photo. Encourage them to tell others about Jesus when people notice their glasses.

PASS THE LIGHT

SUPPLIES

- ❑ “Bible Story Pictures 1–5” (Printables—Students/Adults Items)
 - ❑ Flashlight and another type of light source such as a penlight, lantern, flame-less battery-operated candle, or tap light (avoid flashing lights)
 - ❑ *VBS 2026 Music for Kids*
1. Remind learners that every Bible story they heard this week is true. The people really existed, and the events really happened. Say: “One way to speak the truth is to talk about the stories about Jesus you heard at VBS.”
 2. Guide participants to form a circle either standing or sitting, depending on the needs of your group. Hand a flashlight to one of the players and another type of light to another player.
 3. Play “Illumination Station” and guide players to pass the lights from person to person, shining it down toward their shoes, until you stop the music at an unexpected time.
 4. Pause the music. Hold up any of the teaching pictures and prompt the holders of the lights to tell what they see in the picture. Assist by mentioning the story title. If a learner is nonverbal, let him get a close-up look at the picture and touch it while a leader says something about it.
 5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 until all the teaching pictures have been used. As time allows, play additional rounds of the game.

NOTES

As VBS ends, continue to pray for individuals in your class that the Holy Spirit might continue to work in their lives and help them know when they are ready to trust Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Use “What Do I Do When VBS is Over” on page 12 to follow up with learners and families going forward.



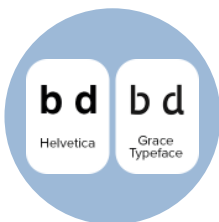
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