



ILLUMINATION
STATION JOHN 8:12

VBS 2026

STUDENT
BIBLE STUDY
LEADER GUIDE



THE WORD GOSPEL MEANS “GOOD NEWS.”



It is the message about Christ,
the kingdom of God, and salvation.

1. GOD'S POWER

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16a). God is the power, source, and reward in salvation. Because we are powerless in our sin, God steps in to rescue us.

2. OUR PROBLEM

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Sin means missing the mark and falling short of perfection. Because of our imperfection, we cannot stand before a holy God.

3. OUR PUNISHMENT

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Sin separates us from God and sentences us to death.

4. GOD'S PROVISION

“But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Though we deserve eternal death, God has made a way for us to be rescued through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus.

5. OUR RESPONSE

“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). To confess Jesus as Lord means we agree with God about our sin and need for salvation. We must repent and trust only in the work of Jesus to save us.



PREPARE TO TEACH

Before arriving, plan your session and get ready for the students you will lead. Use the following steps for successful preparation.

PREPARE YOUR HEART

- Read the daily Scripture passages from your Bible. Pray that God will speak to you through His Word. See the “Checklist” on page 4.
- Read the daily leader devotion each day.
- Pray for the students you will teach. See page 5.
- Pray for yourself and the other leaders at VBS. Ask people to pray for you.

PLAN

Use these curriculum pieces:

- This leader guide (one per teacher)—Copies can be printed by the purchasing church from the digital resources included in the kit.
- Leader Kit Items—The kit items include a Promotional Poster, VBS Scripture Poster, five daily session posters, and other full-color teaching items to use throughout this leader guide.
- Printable Items—Printable items are included in the leader kit, in the folders of the digital product, or for download using the redeemable code on this page.
- VBS 2026 Student Learner Guide* (9798384537519)—This learner guide is designed especially with students in mind. This book provides activities and tips to help students engage in Bible study and gives them a fun resource to take home at the end of the week (one per student).

Multimedia Resources

You can find these resources in the printables folder of the digital product or 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 and digital slides:
VD8MGVG3MYMV
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.

GATHER AND PREPARE

- Look at the Bible Study Schedule Options on page 4 to determine how to plan your schedule.
- Find out how many students to prepare for.
- Recruit assistant leaders for small groups, crafts, recreation, and snacks.
- Read through the daily sessions. Highlight what you plan to include.
- Meet with your other leaders to plan each daily session.
- Sort and assemble items from your leader kit. Instructions are printed on the bottom of each kit item.
- Print any printable items you plan to use. See the instructions below to download the printable resources from my.lifeway.com/redeem.
- Gather the supplies you need.

TEACH

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

CONTINUE THE CONNECTION

- Make sure your church has correct contact information for each student in your group.
- Keep the connection going by looking for ways to stay connected with the students you taught.
- Ask permission for your church student group to connect with students through social media.



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ILLUMINATION STATION™



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

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

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

VBS SCRIPTURE

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

DAY 1: JESUS IS GOD’S PROMISED SON

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

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

DAY 2: JESUS IS GOD’S PERFECT SON

The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:1-6,13-17; Mark 1:1-11; John 1:29-34)

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

DAY 3: JESUS IS THE POWERFUL SON OF GOD

Jesus Performed Miracles (Matthew 15:29-39)

Large crowds came and Jesus healed sick people in the crowd. Jesus wanted to provide food.

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

DAY 4: JESUS IS THE PROVEN SON OF GOD

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

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

DAY 5: JESUS IS GOD’S PLAN FOR FORGIVENESS

Peter Preached About Jesus (Mark 14:66-72; Acts 2)

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

GETTING STARTED

Before the first session, run through the following checklist to prepare for VBS.

CHECKLIST

- Read the Bible content for all five days.
 - » Day 1—Matthew 16:13-20
 - » Day 2—Matthew 3:1-6,13-17; Mark 1:1-11; John 1:29-34
 - » Day 3—Matthew 15:29-39
 - » Day 4—Mark 14:43-16:7
 - » Day 5—Mark 14:66-72; Acts 2
- Read the Leader Devotions for each session (pages 7, 15, 23, 31, and 39).
- Pray for yourself, other VBS leaders, and the students whose lives you will touch this week.
- Find out from your VBS director how long you will have each day for Bible study. Look at the Bible Study Schedule Options to determine how to plan your time.
- Read through each day's session. Make note of any changes or adjustments that will best accommodate the students in your group.
- Gather supplies and prepare to teach.

Session Itinerary

Open—Offers students a time to get to know one another better and a time to honor the Lord through praise.

Motivate—Introduces the session by using energetic and creative activities.

Examine—Engages students in studying the daily Bible passages.

Apply—Helps students apply what they have learned to their daily lives.

Rotations—Leads students through recreation, craft, and mission rotations that apply to each day's Bible content.

BIBLE STUDY SCHEDULE OPTIONS

My director has told me that I will use the:

- Three-hour Schedule—Use the Bible Study Plan as written for each session. Include all the rotations and time of worship.
- Two-hour Schedule—Use the Bible Study Plan as written for each session. Include a time of worship, snacks, and recreation. Omit the missions and crafts rotations.

Sample Schedule

	2-hour Schedule	3-hour Schedule
Open	20 minutes	20 minutes
Bible Study	70 minutes	70 minutes
Recreation and Snack*	30 minutes	30 minutes
Missions		30 minutes
Crafts		30 minutes

***NOTE:** Suggestions for snacks can be found in the *VBS 2026 Snack Rotation Recipe Cards* (9798384536932).

UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS

UNDERSTAND HOW STUDENTS DEVELOP

Students are entering puberty and experiencing rapid growth spurts. Their bodies are changing and many will be physically developed by the 11th or 12th grade. Self-image is very important during this time of development. They crave attention but do not want to stand out.

Students need you to remember that they develop at different rates. They do not all have the same skills and abilities. Plan activities that use gross motor skills, such as games, and fine motor skills, such as crafts. Give students choices whenever possible.

UNDERSTAND HOW STUDENTS THINK

Students seem to push the limits of adults while having mixed emotions about breaking away from their parents. They are spending more time with other teens and less time with their families. They are beginning to think in abstract terms and see the “bigger picture.” Students experience emotional highs and lows and may exhibit oppositional behaviors at times.


Students need you to listen to and respect their ideas. They appreciate opinions from others and understand the long-term effects of their decisions. Many students are starting to see the world outside of their own social circles. Try to capitalize on these characteristics and offer opportunities to help students build their leadership skills through assisting in the classrooms of younger learners or presenting opportunities for helping other people in the community.

UNDERSTAND STUDENTS’ SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Students can be sensitive to conviction from the Holy Spirit and are developing a value system based on their own understanding of biblical principles. They are beginning to apply the biblical truths they are learning in Bible study to their lives. Many students are starting to put the pieces of their faith together but still have many questions to be answered. They may be hesitant to share or act on their faith outside the church walls.

Students need you to openly answer spiritual questions using the Bible as your guide. Help students develop and begin their own Bible study time by exposing them to a variety of Bible study techniques. They need you to model Christian attitudes and actions and be a Christian mentor.

Learn more about student characteristics from the printable items in this kit.

NOTE:  This icon identifies an opportune time to share the gospel with students as led by the Holy Spirit.

PROMOTION AND REGISTRATION

PROMOTION

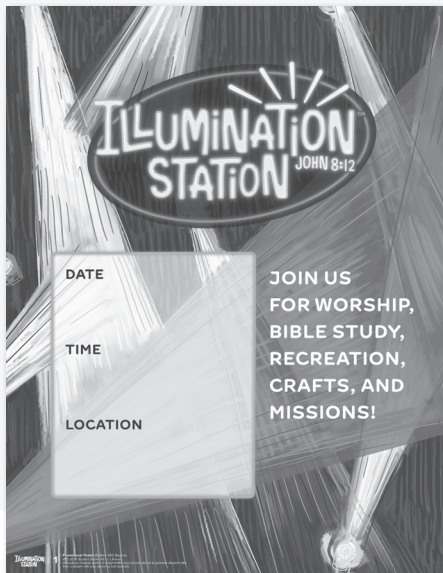
Schedule a time to promote Student VBS. Plan an event to kick off the study and introduce the theme. Use the following suggestions to promote your VBS.

- Use the “Promotional Poster” (kit item 1) and copies of the “Promotional Flyer” (located in the “General Helps” folder) to promote within your church.
- Take a picture of the “Promotional Poster” (kit item 1). Text the photo to invite students to VBS. Encourage students to share the text with friends as well.
- Use the “Promo Graphic Slide” (located in the “Slides” folder) to promote Student VBS on social media or other digital church promotion avenues such as email distribution lists or parent texting applications.
- Send students *VBS 2026 Supersized Postcards* (9798384538660) with the dates and times of VBS.
- Ask permission to display “Promotional Flyers” at local businesses that students visit frequently.

REGISTRATION

Register students ahead of time if possible. Student registration may coincide with children’s registration or run separately. Use these ideas for effective registration:

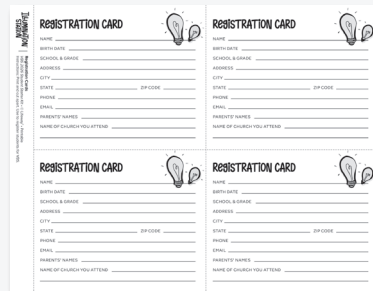
- Gather complete information from all students. Include phone numbers, addresses, ages, parents’ names, and so forth.
- Print “Registration Cards” (located in the “General Helps” folder) and have on hand at each student gathering.
- Encourage students to register online through *Lifeway® KidEvent Pro®* (634337327389) or another church program.



Promotional Poster (kit item 1)



2026 Supersized Postcard



Registration Cards



SESSION 1: JESUS IS GOD'S PROMISED SON

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

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

Spotlight Question: Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Son of God.

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



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, helping them feel loved and accepted in ways they may have never experienced before. Take a moment now to stop and pray, asking God to use you to make an eternal impact on the lives of the students you teach. Continue to do so again each day of VBS.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Illuminate Your Heart

1. Jesus asks each of us the same question. Take this opportunity to answer it for yourself. "But you, who do you say I am?"
2. 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 student in your care.

OPEN

(20 MINUTES)

Open Prep

- Leader kit item 2
- Digital Files
 - “Session 1 Opening Slide”
- Flashlight

Leader Tip

Ensure you comply with CCLI and streaming services guidelines when playing music at your church. Contact your church’s worship leader for questions about playing recorded music during your sessions.

Motivate Prep

- Leader kit item 4
- Digital Files
 - “Session 1 Spotlight Slide”
- VBS 2026 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)
- Pens (1 per student)

- Show “Session 1 Opening Slide” on the screen.
 - Welcome students to Illumination Station! Say: “This week will be the brightest week of your year! We will spend every session shining a light on who Jesus really is! Some of you may be followers of Jesus and some of you may not have taken that step yet. My prayer is that through our time together this week, your walk with Jesus will be strengthened and, for some of you, that your journey with Jesus will begin!”
 - Continue: “The truth is, our culture claims to know about Jesus, but many people are in the dark about who He really is. Some people see Jesus as just a person from history or a great teacher—but He is much, much more! Illumination Station will shine a light on the truth of who Jesus really is. Before we get started, though, let’s shine the spotlight on all of you!”
- student has been in the spotlight, encourage leaders to be acknowledged in the spotlight, too, and answer the questions.
- Point out that as everyone was “in the spotlight,” the flashlight was being used to shine the light on that person as a way of introducing him! Share that at Illumination Station this week, students will hear biblical truth that, when applied to their lives, will help them see Jesus for who He really is.
 - Call attention to the “VBS Scripture Poster” (kit item 2) and read it aloud.
 - Invite students to turn to “Light of the World” on page 4 of their learner guides to get more acquainted with the VBS theme verse. Give students a few moments to work independently, and then ask for volunteers to share how they would describe walking in darkness and walking in the light. Explain that this week at Illumination Station, students will learn that Jesus is the Light of the world. If they are willing to follow Him, they will never have to walk in darkness!

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

- Gather students in a circle and dim the lights. Shine the flashlight on any student to start the game, being careful not to shine it in his eyes.
 - Ask that student to “spotlight” himself by sharing his name, favorite color, and favorite ice cream flavor. Once that student is finished, give the flashlight to him and instruct him to shine it on another student.
 - Continue until every student has had a turn in the spotlight! When the last
- Guide students to take a few moments to pray over the session. Encourage them to pray that God will help them understand more of who Jesus is this week. Allow time for silent prayer. Pray aloud to conclude this time.
 - Invite a student band or trusted adult leader to lead the group in singing a few worship songs that are familiar to your church and students.

MOTIVATE

(15 MINUTES)

- Show “Session 1 Spotlight Slide” on the screen.
 - Say: “Light is so important. We would have a very difficult time living our lives without it. Each day this week we’re going to highlight a different light source to help us understand the characteristics of Jesus as the Light of the world!”
- Ask: “Can anyone guess what today’s light source is based on what we’ve experienced so far?” (*flashlight*)
 - Say: “Let’s play a game to help us get acquainted with a few different light sources.”

WHAT AM I?

- Form two groups.
- Place “What Am I?” cards (kit item 4) in a deck facedown.
- Explain that students must try to guess the light sources by only asking the leader yes or no questions. Groups will take turns asking a question. If group 1 guesses correctly, it gets a point for that card. If the answer is incorrect, group 2 will ask a question. The second round group 2 will get to ask the first question. Go back and forth between the groups until all cards are guessed. The team with the most points wins.
- Say: “Each of these light sources are suited for a specific situation. For example, a lighthouse won’t help you much on a crowded city street with a lot of traffic, but for a boat offshore trying to find its way home, it is a lifeline! Unlike these light sources, there is another kind of light source that illuminates the darkness no matter the situation—Jesus Christ! Jesus is the most powerful light of them all. Let’s unpack that together and see what the Bible has to say about Jesus.”
- Invite students to turn to “Hello, My Name Is ...” on page 5 of their learner guides. Give them a few minutes to work independently.
- Ask: “Which of these descriptions of Jesus stood out to you? Why?” Be prepared to share your own answer to get discussion going.
- Say: “The Bible is very clear that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah. Does anyone know what *Messiah* means?”
- Continue: “It means ‘anointed one.’ Jesus is Messiah because He was chosen by God to be the Savior of the world. All throughout history, God’s people waited and waited for the Messiah to come, but when He arrived on the scene, as we will see in the passage we’re studying today, many people did not recognize Him as Messiah.”

EXAMINE (35 MINUTES)

- Say: “Genesis 1 tells us that God created light. Isn’t it interesting that God did not want the world to remain in darkness all the time? Light must matter a great deal to God since He purposely created it and separated it from the darkness.”
- Continue: “There is so much fascinating science behind light and how it works in our physical world. Entire fields of research and study are dedicated to studying light. One of the scientific concepts that is studied in physics is the concept of transparency of light.
- Show “Session 1 Physics Slide.”
- Say: “An object that is opaque does not let any light pass through it. An object that is translucent lets a little bit of light through, and an object that is transparent lets all of the light shine through it.”
- Say: “Now let’s put your physics skills to the test. Turn to ‘It’s Clearly Physics’ on page 6 in your learner guides.”
- Allow students a couple minutes to work independently.
- Say: “As you can see from this quick physics lesson, light must be received and allowed to shine through. Each of these items lets in a different amount of light. No matter how bright the sun is shining, if a person wears a tight blindfold that is completely opaque, he will remain in darkness.”
- Continue: “In the Bible passage we will study together today, try to identify how the people responded to the Light of the world—Jesus. Did they let the light in or did they keep it blocked out?”
- Say: “Now that I know you’re all great physicists, let’s see if you’re great listeners too. I’m going to ask you a few questions after the Bible passage is read, so listen very carefully.”

Examine Prep

- Bibles
- Leader kit items 5–6
- Digital files
 - “Session 1 Physics Slide”
 - “Session 1 Review Questions” Printable
- VBS 2026 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)
- Pens (1 per student)
- 2 small dry erase boards
- 2 dry erase markers

JESUS TOOK A POLL (MATTHEW 16:13)

- Choose a volunteer to read Matthew 16:13.
- Ask: “Who is present at this moment in Matthew 16?” (*Jesus and His disciples*)
- Explain that this passage did not take place in a crowd of people. This was a personal moment between Jesus and His closest friends—His disciples.
- Ask: “Where were they?” (*Caesarea Philippi*)
- Say: “Caesarea Philippi was a very interesting backdrop to the conversation Jesus had with His disciples that day. Caesarea Philippi was known for worshiping many false gods, such as the false god Baal, the false Greek god Pan, and many others. The people of Caesarea Philippi even worshiped their political leaders.”
- Ask: “What question did Jesus ask His disciples that day?” (*“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”*)

THE DISCIPLES REPORTED THE RESULTS (MATTHEW 16:14)

- Select a volunteer to read Matthew 16:14.
- Say: “The disciples told Jesus that people had varying opinions about His identity.”
- Ask: “What were some of the ideas people had about who Jesus was?” (*John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah*)
- Ask: “Were any of those answers correct?” (*No, none of those answers identified Jesus as the Son of God.*)
- Say: “So far in this passage, we know about the people of Caesarea Philippi who believed in all sorts of false gods, and we’ve heard how other people believed Jesus was merely one of the prophets. A prophet is a person who speaks God’s words about things that will happen in the future. Jesus was much more than that.”

JESUS GOT PERSONAL (MATTHEW 16:15-20)

- Direct a volunteer to read Matthew 16:15-20.
- Ask: “When Jesus asked the disciples personally who they said He was, how did Peter respond?” (*“You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.”*)
- Ask: “How did Jesus respond to Peter? Did Peter answer correctly?” (*Yes, Jesus called him blessed.*)
- Say: “When everyone else seemed to be confused or unclear about Jesus’s identity, Peter hit the nail on the head!”
- Continue: “Jesus’s question, ‘Who do you say that I am?’, is one we all must answer. It does not matter what everyone else thinks. No one can answer this question for us. In the same way Jesus was concerned and asked His disciples this personal question, He urges all of us to answer it too.”
- Say: “My hope for you this week is that you learn all about who Jesus is, you open your hearts to Him, and that if not already, by the end of this week, you are able to answer Jesus’s question with the same answer that Peter gave!”

ILLUMINATE YOUR WORLD REVIEW GAME

- Form two teams.
- Give each team an “Illuminate Your World Gameboard” (kit items 5a–5b), a small dry erase board, and a dry erase marker. Also give each team a stack of nine “Light Cards” (kit item 6).
- Say: “As you can see, the community on your game board is in darkness. None of its light sources are working. It’s your job to get the lights back on. I will ask a review question. You will discuss it as a team and write down your answer quietly. When I say ‘lights on,’ reveal your answer. Every time your team answers a review question correctly, you get to add a light card to your community. The first team to illuminate its community fully wins the game!”
- Ask the “Session 1 Review Questions.”
- Congratulate the winning team.

GOSPEL FOCUS (5 MINUTES)

- Remind students of the physics definitions previously mentioned.
 - » Opaque—light does not shine through the object
 - » Transparent—light passes all the way through the object
 - » Translucent—light passes through the object partially
- Say: “There were three groups of people referred to in our Bible passage today: the people of Caesarea Philippi, the people who followed Jesus with the disciples, and the disciples themselves. Which of these groups of people in Matthew 16 would you say let the light in the least or were opaque?” (*the people of Caesarea Philippi who worshiped false gods*)
- Ask: “Who in Matthew 16 let the light of Jesus in a little bit? Which audience was most translucent?” (*The people who followed Jesus with the disciples. These people were curious about “Jesus” and they believed Him to be a prophet. They didn’t understand that He was the long-awaited Messiah.*)
- Ask: “Who in Matthew 16 was completely transparent and opened his heart to the Light of the world?” (*Peter*)
- Say: “Jesus cared about His disciples so much. That’s why He asked them this important question. Do you realize that Jesus cares about you too? He wants to rescue you from your inner darkness—your sin—and shine His light in your heart. There is no darkness in you that is too dark for the light of Jesus to overcome.”
- ✚ Continue: “This is the power of the gospel—the good news—that Jesus came to earth and lived a perfect life of no darkness, died on a cross to pay the price for our sin, and rose back to life three days later, defeating darkness forever! If you have any questions about the gospel, or if you’re not sure if you have the light of Jesus in your life, please talk to your leaders before you leave today.”

Illuminate Your World Leader Tip

Prepare a bonus question (perhaps something shared in your spotlight introductions) in the event of a tie.

Sharing the Gospel

✚ This icon identifies an opportune time to share the gospel with students as led by the Holy Spirit.

Apply Prep

- Leader kit item 3
- Digital Files
 - “Matthew 16:16 Printable” (1 per student)
- VBS 2026 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)
- Pens (1 per student)
- Flashlight

Leader Tip

Ensure that a leader is never alone with a student. It is best to have private conversations in public locations.

APPLY (15 MINUTES)

- Guide students to “Session 1 Guided Reflection” on page 7 in their learner guides and complete the activity.
- Say: “Let’s discuss the guided reflection you just completed. There is no pressure to share if you don’t feel comfortable, but if you’re willing to share, it just might help someone else in the room.”
- Ask: “What is something you wrote down in question 2 that brings you joy?”
- Give the students a few minutes to pass the flashlight around and share about the light in their lives. Praise God together for these good gifts!
- Ask: “How can your life become more ‘transparent,’ letting the light of Jesus shine in your life more?”
- Take a moment to encourage any student who shares, pointing her to Jesus!
- Say: “Thank you all for being willing to share with the group. If you would like to talk to a leader about anything you wrote down in your guided reflection, please pull someone aside today for a chat. We would love to talk with you.”
- Continue: “We’re going to take a few moments to work on memorizing Matthew 16:16. This is an important verse for us to remember because it will help us keep the correct answer to Jesus’s question about His identity in our hearts.”
- Distribute the “Matthew 16:16” printable to students, being careful to put them down with the “this side up” note on top. Instruct your students not to flip the page over.
- Explain that students should read the verse at the top of the page and get familiar with it. When they are ready, they can fold the paper down on the dotted line. After folding, they will fill in the blanks and then fold the paper down again, continuing until the very last fold, in which they will write the entire verse from memory. Instruct the students not to flip their papers back to see the previous version. The goal is to exercise their memory and recall the missing words without looking.

PRAY

- Pray the prayer below for the group or ask a student volunteer to close the session in prayer.
- Lord Jesus, we thank You that You are truly the Light of the world. We are so grateful that Your light is powerful enough to conquer every darkness. Please illuminate our hearts this week to understand the fullness of who You are and to see ourselves more honestly. Bring us into the light and dispel the darkness in our hearts and lives. Thank You for loving us completely!

MATTHEW 16:16

- Direct students’ attention to the “Session 1 Poster” (kit item 3).
- Select a volunteer to read the verse.
- Ask: “Who remembers what the word *Messiah* means?” (*anointed one*)
- Continue: “Imagine how pleased Jesus must have been when Peter answered His question with complete accuracy! Peter understood a crucial fact about Jesus’s identity. Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Son of God.”

ROTATIONS (30 MINUTES EACH)

MISSIONS

Plans for leading a missions rotation can be found in the printable resources of the student leader kit.

RECREATION

MOTION MATCH

PLAY

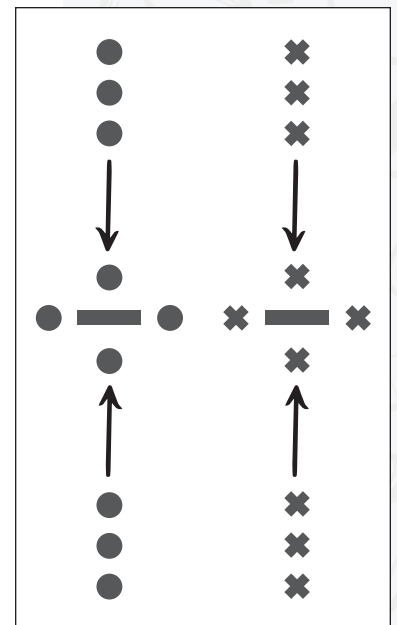
- Form two teams. Each team should have its own sheet with two “sheet holders.”
- Next, form two groups from each team. Half of each team will stand in its own line at one end of the field and the other half of each team will stand in its own line at the other end of the field. (See diagram for reference.)
- The sheet holders will stand in the center of the field holding either end of the sheets like a partition.
- When the leader yells, “GO!” one player from each side of each team will run up to her team’s partition. An adult leader will yell out “1, 2, 3, GO!”
- On “GO!”, each student will make one of the following motions (without being able to see what his teammate chose):
 - » Make circles with both hands like binoculars
 - » Hold hands straight up on either side of the face like blinders
 - » Hold both hands wide open beside the face, palms out
- The leaders will lower the curtain.
- If the two teammates made the same gesture, they go and sit down on the side line. If they made different gestures, they run back to where they started and get in the back of the line.
- The next two teammates run to the partition, make a motion, and either sit down on the sideline or get back in line. This continues in relay style.
- The first team to get its entire team seated on the sideline wins!
- Play additional rounds with alternate motion suggestions.

DEBRIEF

- Explain that it’s hard to mimic someone that you can’t see. Without sight, it was just a guessing game. Praise God that Jesus has revealed Himself to us through His Word so we are able to see Him clearly. His true identity does not have to be a guessing game!

Recreation Prep

- 2 dark bedsheets or blankets (any size)
- 4 adults or student volunteers



Crafts Prep

- Light bulb
- Permanent markers
- Masking tape (optional)
- Pool noodle
- Dry erase board or small poster
- Craft knife (leader use only)
- Alcohol
- Cotton swabs

Advanced Prep

- Write *Who is Jesus?* on a dry erase board or a small poster. Be ready to add titles the students name.
- Cut the pool noodle into 3-inch slices
- Make a sample light bulb.

Leader Tip

Most light bulbs now have an opaque finish on the lower half of the bulb.

CRAFTS

WHO IS JESUS? LIGHT BULB ART

WELCOME

Welcome students to Kaleidoscope Crafts. Explain that in crafts this week you will be doing projects that will help shine a light on who Jesus really is. Call attention to the board where you have written *Who is Jesus?* Ask students to call out some answers to the question. Record the answers on the board. Be sure to include Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man, Lamb of God, Lord, Light of the world. Show the students the light bulb you made and invite the students to decorate a light bulb they can use to remind them who Jesus is.

ASSEMBLE

Step 1: Insert your light bulb into the pool noodle to create a base to make it easier to decorate. You may want to use masking tape to attach your bulb to the table.

Step 2: Write *Who is Jesus?* on the lower part of the bulb. Add some of the answers students gave to the light bulb as well.

Step 3: Use markers to decorate around the top of the bulb. Alcohol and a cotton swab may be used to remove any mistakes.



SESSION 2: JESUS IS GOD'S PERFECT SON

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

Bonus Verse: A voice came from heaven:
“You are my beloved Son; with you I am
well-pleased.” *Mark 1:11*

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.



LEADER DEVOTION

Students 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's death, burial, and resurrection. However, while baptism comes after salvation, some students mistakenly associate it with salvation itself rather than recognizing it as an outward expression of their faith.

As we have opportunities to teach students about baptism, it is good to illuminate the fact that Jesus's 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's 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's greatness and even suggesting that John should be baptized by Jesus instead. Jesus's 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's 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

1. Have you followed Christ's example of submission by being baptized? If not, pray about setting up a meeting with a church leader.
2. 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.
3. As students hear today's Bible passage and reflect on Jesus's 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.

Open Prep

- Leader kit item 2
- Digital Files
 - “Session 2 Opening Slide”
- Laser pointer
- Flashlight
- Painter’s tape
- Practice the laser pointer/flashlight demonstration in advance. Put a piece of painter’s tape on the floor where leaders need to stand to ensure the flashlight is far enough away that it is difficult to pinpoint an exact letter.

Leader Tip

Ensure you comply with CCLI and streaming services guidelines when playing music at your church. Contact your church’s worship leader for questions about playing recorded music during your sessions.

OPEN

(20 MINUTES)

- Show “Session 2 Opening Slide” on the screen.
- Welcome students to Session 2 of Illumination Station where every day we get to shine a light on the truth of who Jesus really is.
- Call attention to the “VBS Scripture Poster” (kit item 2) and read it aloud.
- Say: “We’re going to use another light source to help us explore today’s theme. I will need two volunteers to help me.”
- Give one volunteer the laser pointer and the other volunteer the flashlight. Ask each volunteer to point at a letter on the “VBS Scripture Poster” with her light without telling the group which letter she chose. See if the group can identify which letters they are pointing at. It should be easy to determine the letter with the laser pointer but unclear with the flashlight beam.
- Say: “Both the flashlight and the laser pointer are light sources, but which one is more precise?”
- Explain: “The laser pointer is a much more narrow, concentrated stream of light than the flashlight, so we’re able to see precisely what the laser is pointing to.”
- Continue: “Today, we’re going to zero in on the truth that Jesus is God’s perfect Son, which means He lived His life precisely, or in perfect obedience, to God’s will.”

LASER FOCUS

- Invite students to turn to “Laser Focus” on page 10 in their learner guides to complete the activity. Allow students a few minutes to work independently.
- Guide students to discuss their answers to what Jesus meant when He said, “I am the light of the world.”
- Say: “We desperately need Jesus. Without Him, we would live in spiritual darkness now and forever. The light of Jesus is the greatest gift we could ever receive. It is my hope and prayer that today you gain a greater understanding of why Jesus was precisely the only One who could bring light to the darkness!”
- Ask students to take a few moments to pray over the session. Encourage them to pray that God will help them understand more of who Jesus is this week. Allow time for silent prayer. Pray aloud to conclude this time.
- Invite a student band or trusted adult leader to lead the group in singing a few worship songs that are familiar to your church and students.

MOTIVATE (15 MINUTES)

- Show “Session 2 Spotlight Slide” on the screen.
- Say: “Let’s play a game to put your drawing skills to the test.”
- Select a volunteer to distribute paper plates and markers.
- Explain that every student needs to put a paper plate on his head and follow your instructions.
- Read the drawing instructions from “Look Alike Contest” (kit item 7). Whichever drawing ends up closest to the leader’s drawing wins!
- Reveal the paper plate drawings when all of the instructions have been given. Hold up the leader drawing next to everyone’s paper plate and choose the top two or three. Then guide the group to vote for the winner.
- Say: “As you can see, I had you draw a target with an arrow hitting the bullseye. I think it’s fair to say none of us quite hit the bullseye on that assignment though. It’s pretty difficult to follow instructions perfectly. Our spotlight question for today will help us understand whether or not Jesus hits the bullseye.
- Invite students to turn to “Spotlight Question” on page 11 in their learner guides to complete the activity.
- Give students a few minutes to work independently on this activity.
- Ask: “Who would like to share his answer to the spotlight question? What did you learn about Jesus in those verses?”
- Continue: “We are well aware that no one is perfect, but that quality is exactly what set Jesus apart from all of the other people who have ever existed. Unlike any person who had gone before Him, Jesus was completely perfect! He did not sin—ever. This is crucial because in order for us to be rescued from our sin, we needed someone to live a sinless life and be the one perfect sacrifice that covered all of our sin. We needed more than just an ordinary man. We needed the perfect Son of God, the Savior of the world!”

EXAMINE (35 MINUTES)

- Say: “Our light source today is a laser. What are ways that lasers are used today?” (*laser printers, barcode scanners, medical equipment, land surveying tools, fiber optic cables, etc.*)
- Say: “Lasers have become pretty important in modern technology. Why do you think lasers have helped technology improve over the years?” (*They enable precision.*)
- Explain: “It’s all about precision! When we use a laser printer and we print a document, we expect that print-out to look identical to what was on our screen, don’t we? When we scan the barcode on an apple at the grocery store, we want the register to charge us for an apple, not a television, right? Lasers help us with precision.”
- Say: “In the Bible passages we’re reading today, we will uncover why it’s so important that Jesus is precisely the one PERFECT Son of God!”

Motivate Prep

- Leader kit item 7
- Digital Files
 - “Session 2 Spotlight Slide”
- Paper plates (1 per student)
- Markers (1 per student)
- Make a sample paper plate drawing using the “Look Alike Instructions” (kit item 7).

Examine Prep

- Bibles
- Leader kit items 5–6
- Digital Files
 - “Session 2 Review Questions”
- VBS 2026 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)
- Pens (1 per student)
- 2 small dry erase boards
- 2 dry erase markers

JOHN THE BAPTIST PREACHED REPENTANCE (MATTHEW 3:1-6)

- Select a student volunteer to read Matthew 3:1-6.
- Say: “John the Baptist’s mission was to encourage people to repent from their sin. True biblical repentance is not just saying we’re sorry. It’s more than that. It’s a turning or changing from disobeying God to obeying Him. When a person repents, he changes his behavior.”
- Ask: “Has someone ever apologized to you for something and then kept on doing that same thing?”
- Say: “We’ve probably all been guilty of that at one point or another. The reality is, that apology did not lead to a changed heart or mind. When we repent from our sin, we are making a choice to turn away from the words, actions, thoughts, or motivations that turn us away from God and instead turn toward God.”
- Explain: “A great way to remember what repentance means is to think about an ‘about-face’. An about-face is a 180 degree turn from one position to another. If I have turned toward a sinful thought or action, I have turned away from God because God is perfect and does not sin. If I repent from that sin, I am turning my back on the sin and turning toward God.”
- Ask: “Why do you think John the Baptist preached that the people should repent from their sin in preparation for Jesus’s coming?”
- Say: “John the Baptist wanted to make sure the people did an about-face and turned away from their sin. Then they would be facing the ‘right direction’ when Jesus arrived. They would be ready to see Him and to receive His message!”

JOHN THE BAPTIST PROCLAIMED THE COMING OF JESUS (MARK 1:7-8)

- Ask for a volunteer to read Mark 1:7-8.
- Say: “John the Baptist preached a message of repentance, but he didn’t stop there. He proclaimed the coming of Jesus!”
- Continue: “John the Baptist wanted to make sure the people understood that he was not the Messiah. In the Old Testament prophets told of a coming Messiah, or ‘anointed one’ who would be Israel’s Savior. John was simply a messenger sent to get people ready for Jesus’s coming. He could have snuck around and quietly whispered to people about Jesus, but he didn’t. He made a proclamation that One far more powerful was coming. He would baptize with the Holy Spirit, not just water!”
- Ask: “Why do you think John the Baptist was so careful to make sure the people understood he was not this chosen Savior?”
- Explain: “John the Baptist understood that the people desperately needed the Messiah—the one perfect Son of God—in order for them to be rescued from their sin. John was an ordinary man. He was neither perfect nor the Son of God, but Jesus absolutely is both of those things!”

JOHN THE BAPTIST TESTIFIED TO JESUS'S TRUE IDENTITY (JOHN 1:29-34)

- Choose a student volunteer to read John 1:29-34.
- Ask: “How do you think John the Baptist felt when Jesus finally arrived in Judea?”
- Say: “John the Baptist had been faithfully preaching and proclaiming that Jesus was coming, so he was probably in awe to see Jesus walking through the crowd toward him!”
- Continue: “John the Baptist testified that the man who arrived was in fact Jesus—the Messiah! He explained that God told him that he would know Jesus by seeing the Spirit rest on Him like a dove. When Jesus came and the Spirit did in fact descend and rest on Jesus like a dove, John the Baptist was completely certain of Jesus’s true identity, and he testified to that truth!”
- Say: “To testify in court is to give evidence for something. So when John the Baptist testified that this man was Jesus, the Son of God, he was able to make that claim because he had received evidence from God that it was true.


The long-awaited Messiah had finally come. He came to set the people free from their sin!”

- Invite students to turn to “Unscramble This” on page 12 in their learner guides to complete the activity.


ILLUMINATE YOUR WORLD REVIEW GAME

- Form two teams.
- Give each team an “Illuminate Your World Gameboard” (kit items 5a–5b), a small dry erase board, and a dry erase marker. Also give each team a stack of nine “Light Cards” (kit item 6).
- Say: “As you can see, the community on your game board is in darkness. None of its light sources are working. It’s your job to get the lights back on. I will ask a review question. You will discuss it as a team and write down your answer quietly. When I say ‘lights on,’ reveal your answer. Every time your team answers a review question correctly, you get to add a light card to your community. The first team to illuminate its community fully wins the game!”
- Ask the “Session 2 Review Questions.”
- Congratulate the winning team.

Sharing the Gospel

 This icon identifies an opportune time to share the gospel with students as led by the Holy Spirit.

GOSPEL FOCUS (5 MINUTES)

- Ask: “Who can remind us what makes lasers so important to modern technology? Why do we use them?” (*precision*)
- Say: “Lasers help us get as close to perfection as possible, but when it comes to sinless perfection, every one of us comes up short. There is no laser on earth that can help us with that problem.”
- Read Romans 6:23.
-  Explain that Jesus came to earth to live the perfect life that we could not live so that He could be our one perfect sacrifice. Jesus paid for our sin by dying on the cross for us.
- Say: “It was His perfection that made His sacrifice enough to pay the punishment to cover all of our sin. If John the Baptist had died on a cross, it would not have paid our sin debt because John the Baptist had sin of his own. Jesus alone is the one PERFECT Son of God! He alone is the Messiah! He alone can pay the price for your sin!”
- Let students know that you or other leaders are available if they would like to discuss more about Jesus paying the punishment for their sin.

Gospel Focus Prep

- Bibles

Leader Tip

Ensure that a leader is never alone with a student. It is best to have private conversations in public locations.

Apply Prep

- Leader kit items 8 and 9
- VBS 2026 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)
- Pens (1 per student)

APPLY (15 MINUTES)

- Direct students to “Session 2 Guided Reflection” on page 13 of their learner guides.
- Say: “We’re going to have a time of discussion about the guided reflection you just completed. There is no pressure to share if you don’t feel comfortable, but if you’re willing to share, it just might help someone else in the room.”
- Ask: “Would anyone be willing to share how you have encountered Jesus?”
- Respond with encouragement to each student who shares. Consider sharing your own answer. This is a great time to share your testimony.
- Ask: “What about question number 4? What do you think Jesus would think and feel if you did an about-face and turned toward Him?”
- Make sure students understand that God is slow to anger and has great compassion for His children. It is human nature to have a tendency to fear approaching God when we have sinned, but the reality is His forgiveness never runs out. He is delighted every single time we turn toward Him. (See Lamentations 3:22-23.)
- Thank everyone who shared.

MARK 1:11

- Direct students’ attention to the “Session 2 Poster” (kit item 9).
- Select a volunteer to read the verse.
- Ask: “Who is speaking in this verse and who is He speaking to?” (*God is speaking to Jesus.*)
- Ask: “Why do you think God spoke directly to Jesus in that moment

instead of speaking to the crowd about Jesus?”

- Say: “Mark 1:11 shows us that God had a personal relationship with His Son, Jesus. This is all the more evidence that Jesus is not just an ordinary man. He is the perfect Son of God!”
- Guide students to form a circle. Stand in the middle of the circle and shuffle the “Bonus Verse Challenge Cards” (kit item 8), keeping them facedown.
- Explain to the students that when it’s their turn, they will draw a challenge card from the leader’s deck and complete the task. If they complete it, they can sit down. If they don’t complete it or choose to pass, they must remain standing. At the completion of each turn, the card goes back in the deck and the leader reshuffles. Continue until every person is seated.
- Say: “The Bible tells us clearly who Jesus is. He is God’s Son.”

PRAY

- Pray the prayer below for the group or ask a student volunteer to close the session in prayer.
- Father, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to earth to live the perfect life we could not live. We are so thankful that You provided a way for us to be rescued from our sin. Please bring to our minds and hearts the areas of our lives that need an about-face. Help us turn toward You today in repentance. We are so grateful for Your compassion and grace!

ROTATIONS (30 MINUTES EACH)

MISSIONS

Plans for leading a missions rotation can be found in the printable resources of the student leader kit.

RECREATION TARGET TOSS

PLAY

- Form two teams and give each team a set of table tennis balls.
- Players will take turns standing at the starting line and throwing their balls at one of the targets. If they make it in the target, their team gets that number of points. If the other team makes it into the same target, it cancels out the previous team's points.
- After throwing, players will get back in line with their teammates.
- Play alternates between the two teams until all of the balls have been thrown.
- Add up the points for each team. The team with the most points wins!
- If the game concludes quickly, allow the students to take turns resetting the targets by moving the items around and playing the game again.

DEBRIEF

- Point out that in this game, precision was everything! If players missed the target, they lost out on points. They had to know exactly where to aim and in order to win, they had to throw the balls with accuracy.
- Remind students that God had perfect aim when He sent Jesus to save the world. Jesus is the perfect Son of God who came to be the Savior of the world.

Recreation Prep

- Buckets
- Bowls
- Cups
- Painter's tape or chalk
- 2 different colors of table tennis balls (enough for every student to have at least 1 ball)
- Randomly place items of different circumferences (buckets, bowls, cups, etc.) around the field and assign a point value to each item. For example, bowls have a wide circumference so they should be worth fewer points than a cup.
- Mark the point value on the item or on the ground next to each item.
- Establish a start line a fair distance away from the targets using a piece of tape or chalk line.

Crafts Prep

- Tall, clear plastic bottle
- Oil (vegetable or mineral)
- Water
- Crayola™ Bath Dropz
- Adhesive remover
- Ziplock bags
- 2026 VBS Theme Stickers (9798384538158) or Sticky Foam Shapes (9798384538134) (optional)

Advanced Preparation

- Use adhesive remover to remove the label from the bottles.
- Make a sample lava lamp.

Leader Tip

Give each student a few extra bath drops in a ziplock bag so they can continue using their lava lamps at home.

CRAFTS

LUMINESCENT LAVA LAMP

WELCOME

Welcome students to Kaleidoscope Crafts. Ask the students today's spotlight question: Was Jesus just an ordinary man? Ask a volunteer to recall the events in today's Bible study that show us that Jesus is God's perfect Son. Show the students the lava lamp you made and demonstrate how the contents react to the bath drops. Encourage students to make a lava lamp they can enjoy at home.

ASSEMBLE

Step 1: Fill the bottle about $\frac{2}{3}$ full with oil. Add enough water to fill to the top.

Step 2: Add a bath drop to the bottle.

Step 3: Decorate with VBS stickers or foam shapes.

Step 4: When the bubbles stop, cap the bottle to take home.



SESSION 3: JESUS IS THE POWERFUL SON OF GOD

Bible Passage: Jesus Performed Miracles
(*Matthew 15:29-39*)

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

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.



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’s healing power (*Mark 2:1-5*). Regardless, their actions reflected their faith in Jesus’s 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 students 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

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

Open Prep

- Leader kit items 2, 10a–10b
- Digital Files
 - “Session 3 Opening Slide”
- Dry erase board
- Dry erase marker

Leader Tip

Ensure you comply with CCLI and streaming services guidelines when playing music at your church. Contact your church’s worship leader for questions about playing recorded music during your sessions.

OPEN (20 MINUTES)

- Show “Session 3 Opening Slide” on the screen.
- Welcome students to Session 3 of Illumination Station. Remind them that culture claims to know about Jesus, but many people are in the dark about who He really is. The goal of this week is to shine a light on the truth of who Jesus really is.
- Call attention to the “VBS Scripture Poster” (kit item 2) and read it aloud.
- Say: “Before we reveal today’s light source, let’s spend some time learning John 8:12.”
- Form two groups. Place two chairs at one end of the room and put a stack of “John 8:12 Cards” (kit items 10a–10b) on each chair. Shuffle the cards. Invite each group to form a line at the opposite end of the room. When the leader says, “Go!” the first person in line from each team will run to his team’s chair, pick up the first card, and run back to his team. The relay continues until they have all of their team’s cards. The goal is for each team to put its cards in order as they get them, completing the theme verse. The first team to complete the verse accurately wins!
- Say: “It’s time to reveal today’s light source! Does anyone know what a flood light is? A flood light is a high intensity, broad beam light used to light up, or flood, large spaces. If a laser has a very narrow stream of light, a flood light is the exact opposite.”
- Continue: “One of the most common uses for flood lights is around people’s homes in order to increase security. That’s because the light exposes everything and makes it easier for property owners to know exactly what is happening on their property. So flood lights are definitely powerful, but you might also say that a flood light is an expression of a kind of authority.”
- Explain: “Today, we’re exploring the truth that Jesus is the powerful Son of God. We’re going to see that Jesus not only has power, but He has full authority too!”

PLOT THE POWER

- Invite students to turn to “Plot the People” on page 16 in their learner guides to complete the activity.
- Explain to students that the graph is made up of a horizontal axis (X axis) and a vertical axis (Y axis) and that each axis measures something different. The X axis measures authority and the Y axis measures influence.
- Draw the graph on a dry erase board. Allow students to write their ideas in the four quadrants after they complete the activity in their learner guides.
- Ask: “Based on this graph, in which quadrant would we plot a baby?” (*Quadrant 3 – little influence, little authority*)
- Ask: “Where should we plot Jesus?” (*Quadrant 1 – far top right corner; total influence, total authority*)
- Say: “Even though we know where we should plot Jesus on this graph, it might not be where we actually put Him in our lives. He should be the most influential person in our lives, whose complete authority we follow because He is the Son of God—the Messiah.”
- Continue: “However, if you are not a Christian or are not truly seeking to follow Jesus, He might not rank in Quadrant 1. You might let friends or other people have more influence in your life. Where do you *really* rank Jesus on this graph?”
- Invite a student band or trusted adult leader to lead the group in singing a few worship songs that are familiar to your church and students.

MOTIVATE (15 MINUTES)

- Show “Session 3 Spotlight Slide” on the screen.
- Say: “We’re going to play a game called ‘Fact or Fake.’ Each of you will think of a talent or ability that you have that you can demonstrate to the class. Maybe you can count to ten in another language or you are double-jointed in your fingers. Whatever it is, that will be your fact. Next, you need to come up with something ‘fake,’ so choose a talent or ability that you CANNOT do or demonstrate. You will tell the group your two abilities and we will vote on which one is fact and which one is fake. Be prepared to demonstrate your fact afterward.”
- Give students a few minutes to brainstorm and prepare. Be prepared to share your own “fact” or “fake” talent. If you have a large group, consider asking for a few volunteers instead.
- Say: “Isn’t it interesting that people have talents and abilities that perhaps no one in the group would have known about unless it was demonstrated? It would be easy to make assumptions about people and even to underestimate what each of us is capable of. Today’s spotlight question is meant to help us be sure that we don’t underestimate Jesus!”
- Continue: “Jesus made sure that His followers understood just exactly how powerful He is. He demonstrated His power and authority in all sorts of amazing ways. Can you think of any examples?” (*Answers will vary.*)
- Say: “If we were to think of Jesus as only a teacher, we would be severely underestimating Him. He was an amazing teacher and regularly taught crowds in synagogues and on hillsides, but the fact that He was a great teacher would not have been enough to rescue His people from their sin. He had to be powerful—powerful enough to conquer death itself.
- Continue: “Thankfully, Jesus was very intentional about demonstrating that power. We can say with great confidence today that Jesus was not just a teacher. He is the powerful Son of God!”
- Invite students to complete the “All Authority” activity on page 17 in their learner guides. The “Crossword Puzzle Answer Key” is provided in the digital files.
- Give students a few minutes to work independently on this activity.
- Conclude: “Some people may think that Jesus was just a wise teacher. The Bible shows us time and time again that Jesus is more than that. God has given Him authority over all people and all things.”

Motivate Prep

- Digital Files
 - “Session 3 Spotlight Slide”
 - “Crossword Puzzle Answer Key”
- VBS 2026 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)
- Pens (1 per student)

Examine Prep

- Bibles
- Leader kit items 5 and 6
- Digital Files
- “Session 3 Review Questions”
- VBS 2026 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)
- Pens (1 per student)
- 2 small dry erase boards
- 2 dry erase markers

EXAMINE (35 MINUTES)

- Say: “We’ve talked about how powerful flood lights are, lighting up entire football fields and huge shopping center parking lots. Not only are they powerful in terms of light output, but they also produce incredibly wide beams that span very large areas! A flashlight will never be able to do what a flood light can do.”
- Continue: “In the Bible passage we’re exploring today, we will see Jesus display His mighty power in profound ways, and we will see Him use that power across a wide expanse of problems. Jesus’s power is the kind of power that triumphs over every obstacle. There is nothing too difficult for Him!”

JESUS HEALED MANY PEOPLE (MATTHEW 15:29-31)

- Ask for a student volunteer to read Matthew 15:29-31.
- Say: “Matthew tells us in this passage that large crowds followed Jesus to that mountainside and gathered around Him. Why do you think they followed Him there?”
- Continue: “The people who came to see Jesus that day near the Sea of Galilee had no doubt heard about Jesus and His miracles. These people were desperate for healing, hoping they would be able to get close enough to Jesus to be healed once and for all.”
- Ask: “What ailments did Matthew mention people having in this passage? Let’s make a list.” (*There were people who could not walk, people who could not see, people who could not talk, and many others.*)
- Explain to the students that in Bible times, having an ailment such as those listed in the passage, meant these people were unable to work and provide

for themselves. They often ended up being an outcast of society. They would have been used to being dismissed, overlooked, and forgotten. It would have been a very difficult life for these individuals.

- Say: “Everything changed on that mountain that day. When these people were brought to Jesus, He did not dismiss them or overlook them or send them away. Jesus saw their needs and He healed them without question!”
- Continue: “How did the people in the crowd respond after they saw Jesus heal these people?” (*They gave glory to God.*)
- Say: “Matthew tells us the people who witnessed Jesus’s miraculous healings that day worshiped God and gave Him glory! They knew that this incredible power on display had to be from God. There was no teacher on earth who could do what Jesus did. He is truly the powerful Son of God!”

JESUS FED MANY PEOPLE (MATTHEW 15:32-39)

- Say: “If the event ended right there, that would be a pretty amazing story, wouldn’t it? But that’s not all! Jesus didn’t just help the people who were sick and in need of physical healing. Jesus’s power impacted the whole crowd. Let’s keep reading.”
- Select a student volunteer to read Matthew 15:32-39.
- Say: “Matthew tells us this crowd had been following Jesus for three days and they were hungry. Jesus could have dismissed the crowd and told everyone to go home, but He didn’t do that. The passage tells us Jesus had compassion on them.”

- Continue: “We can learn an important truth from Jesus’s compassion on the crowd. Jesus cares about every person, every problem. He will never send us away when we come to Him for help.”
- Ask: “Has anyone ever asked God for help with something and He met your need? Would you be willing to share with the group?”
- Be prepared to share a testimony of your own about how God has met a need in your own life. This is a powerful opportunity for students to hear the very real and tangible ways in which God answers prayer.
- Say: “Even though the disciples had just witnessed Jesus healing people, they were concerned about where they would get food to feed the whole crowd. All they could find was seven loaves of bread and a few small fish.”
- Continue: “But this small amount of resources was no threat to Jesus’s power! He multiplied the bread and the fish and miraculously fed every person on that mountain. He fed 4,000 men, plus women and children, and there were seven large baskets of leftovers!”
- Say: “It’s important for us to remember that Jesus sees our every need, and His power is limitless! There is nothing He can’t do! I hope you will remember this when you have a need and that you will

feel the invitation from Jesus to come to Him and ask for help. He will not send you away. He loves you very much!”

- Invite students to turn to “Leave a Review” on page 18 in their learner guides and complete the activity.
- Give students a few minutes to work on the activity. Ask for a volunteer to share her review with the group.

ILLUMINATE YOUR WORLD REVIEW GAME

- Form two teams.
- Give each team an “Illuminate Your World Gameboard” (kit items 5a–5b), a small dry erase board, and a dry erase marker. Also give each team a stack of nine “Light Cards” (kit item 6).
- Say: “As you can see, the community on your game board is in darkness. None of its light sources are working. It’s your job to get the lights back on. I will ask a review question. You will discuss it as a team and write down your answer quietly. When I say ‘lights on,’ reveal your answer. Every time your team answers a review question correctly, you get to add a light card to your community. The first team to illuminate its community fully wins the game!”
- Ask the “Session 3 Review Questions.”
- Congratulate the winning team.

GOSPEL FOCUS (5 MINUTES)

- Say: “In order to be healed, the people went to Jesus and expressed their need for Him. In the same way, we must search our hearts and be aware of our own deepest needs. We must be willing to call out to Jesus and ask Him for help.”
- Read Romans 1:16a.



Continue: “We all have different needs and desires, but we all share one problem that is the most important one of all: We are sinners and we need a Savior desperately. Thankfully, Jesus came and He offers us both His power AND His authority! Jesus has the authority to forgive our sin, and He also has the power to transform our hearts. What a miracle!”

Gospel Focus Prep

□ Bibles

Apply Prep

- ☐ Leader kit items 11 and 12a–c
- ☐ VBS 2026 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)
- ☐ Pens (1 per student)

APPLY

(15 MINUTES)

- Direct students to “Session 3 Guided Reflection” on page 19 of their learner guides.
- Ask: “How do you think Jesus responds when we go to Him with our concerns and needs?”
- Be sure to encourage each student who shares. Consider sharing your own answer.

MATTHEW 28:18

- Direct students’ attention to the “Session 3 Poster” (kit item 11).
- Ask for a volunteer to read the verse.
- Say: “We have all sorts of leaders with different levels of authority. Who would you say has the most authority in your local middle school or high school? Maybe the principal? But more than likely even the principal has limits on his or her authority. There’s a superintendent or a board of education that principals have to work with.”
- Ask: “According to Matthew 28:18, how much authority does Jesus have?” (*ALL AUTHORITY!*)
- Ask: “Who gave Jesus that authority?” (*God*)
- Say: “Do you think God would willingly give ALL authority to anyone who was not completely trustworthy of it? Would He give it to someone who would abuse it? There was only one worthy of this honor: Jesus! He is absolutely trustworthy!”

- Shuffle the “Memory Cards” (kit items 12a–12c) and lay them on the table or the floor, facedown in a 6-by-5 grid of cards.
- Invite students to gather around the grid on all four sides. Students will go one at a time and flip any card over. If she flips over the first word in the verse, she can take the card and start the verse. If she flips over the wrong word, she will flip it back over and her turn is over. The next student will then flip a card, looking for the second word in the verse. Note that some cards may not be in the Bible verse at all.
- Play continues until the cards are in order and the verse is completed.

PRAY

- Pray the prayer below for the group or ask a student volunteer to close the session in prayer.
- Lord Jesus, we are thankful that You are powerful beyond compare AND so good! You never use Your power and authority to harm. Help us learn to trust You and to call on You when we have a need or concern. Thank You for being willing to die on our behalf and forgive our sin. Thank You for having compassion on us!

ROTATIONS (30 MINUTES EACH)

MISSIONS

Plans for leading a missions rotation can be found in the printable resources of the student leader kit.

RECREATION

BOWL BLITZ

PLAY

- Form two teams.
- Direct each team to stand in a line behind its home base box. When the leader shouts, “Go,” the first player in line from each team will run to the field and pick up one bowl of her choice. If it has a green marking on it, she can bring it back and leave it in the home base box. If it has a yellow marking on it, she has to put it back faceup where the marking is visible and go back to home base empty-handed. Once a yellow bowl is turned faceup, it is fair game to be grabbed by either team on the next turn. If the bowl has a red dot on it, she must bring it to the other team’s home base box and then return back to her team.
- Each player’s turn must conclude with her running back to home base and tagging the next person in line. There can only be one person from each team on the field at a time.
- When all of the bowls have been collected from the field, each team will count its bowls. The team with the most bowls wins!

DEBRIEF

- Say: “In this game, you had to hurry to get enough bowls for your team to win. In today’s Bible passage, though, the people on the mountainside with Jesus did not have to run or clamor or do anything to get fed. All they had to do was be in the presence of Jesus as He miraculously multiplied the bread and fish. We can trust Jesus to meet our needs and take care of us because He is the powerful Son of God! There is nothing He can’t do!”

Recreation Prep

- 30–50 sturdy paper bowls
- Red, green, and yellow markers
- Tape or chalk
- Draw an obvious marking on the inside base of each bowl with either a red, green, or yellow marker. Each bowl should only have one color marking on it, but all three colors should be equally represented.
- Mix up the bowls randomly so the colors are not all stacked together.
- Create a home base for each team on opposite ends of the playing field that is about a 3-by-3-foot square using tape or chalk.
- Randomly place the bowls facedown (where the marking is hidden) all around the field.

Leader Tip

If playing outdoors, consider using dome cones and placing colored sticky notes on the under side of the cones.

Crafts Prep

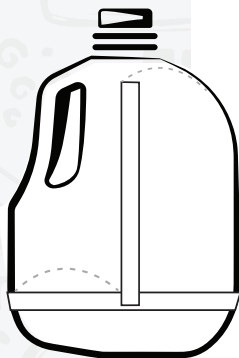
- Gallon jug (1 per student)
- Sticky-backed Velcro® dot (1 set per student)
- Craft knife
- Permanent markers
- Masking tape
- 6-inch circle to use as a pattern for the curves
- Adhesive remover
- Scissors

Advanced Preparation

- Use an adhesive remover to remove the label from the jugs.
- Make a sample bento box.

Leader Tips

- Gallon water jugs work well for this craft. They are easy to clean and cut.
- Some jugs may already have seams or lines that students may use as guides for cut lines.



CRAFTS

BENTO BOX

WELCOME

Welcome students to Kaleidoscope Crafts. Ask the students to recall the events of today's Bible Study. (*Jesus fed thousands with just a few fish and seven loaves of bread.*) Remind the students that Jesus had compassion on the crowd because they had followed Him for three days and they were hungry. Show the students the bento box you made. Explain that in crafts today, students can make a box they can use to pack a lunch.

ASSEMBLE

- Step 1:** Place a piece of masking tape around the jug to mark a line about 2½–3 inches from the bottom.
- Step 2:** Choose one of the sides opposite the handle to be the closing flap of the box. Stretch a piece of masking tape from the bottom tape to the top on each side of this flap. Use the seam lines on the jug to help keep these tape lines straight. The sides of this closing flap should be equal.
- Step 3:** Use the 6-inch circle as a pattern to draw a half circle at the top of the long flap.
- Step 4:** Use the round pattern to draw half circles just above the tape line on the three other sides of the jug. Also draw a line on each side of the closing flap from where the side circles meet to the half circle at the top flap to the flap. You should be able to follow the tape edge.
- Step 5:** Use a craft knife to cut around three half circles at the bottom of the jug. You may find it easier to start the cut with the craft knife and then continue with scissors.
- Step 6:** Use a craft knife to cut up each side of the closing flap and around the half circle at the top.
- Step 7:** Crease the three short sides at the line where the half circle meets the masking tape.
- Step 8:** Remove all the masking tape.
- Step 9:** Crease the closing flap at the same level.
- Step 10:** Attach the hook and loop sides of a Velcro dot together. Remove the release paper from one side and attach the dot to the center of the inside of the closing flap of your box. Remove the release paper from the opposite side of the dot and close the lid. Fold the flap down and allow it to meet the outside of the box. Press the dot. This will make your closure.
- Step 11:** Decorate your bento box with permanent markers.



SESSION 4: JESUS IS THE PROVEN SON OF GOD

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

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

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.



LEADER DEVOTION

Do you remember the first time you heard the story of Jesus’s 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 students in your Vacation Bible School, this week may be the first time they encounter the life-changing truth of Jesus’s resurrection and the salvation He offers each of us.

If it is hard to imagine students 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 student 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 students 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 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 students 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, students 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 students about the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Pray for the students 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.

Open Prep

- Leader kit items 2, 15
- Digital Files
 - “Session 4 Opening Slide”
- Black light
- Petroleum jelly
- Cotton swabs
- White printer paper or poster board
- VBS 2026 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)
- Pens (1 per student)
- Write the words to John 8:12 on white printer paper or a white poster board using a cotton swab and petroleum jelly. Dip the cotton swab into the petroleum jelly until you have a small amount (not a large glob). Write the verse with the tip of the cotton swab. Write it as large as possible on the page.

Leader Tip

- Ensure that a leader is never alone with a student. It is best to have private conversations in public locations.
- Ensure you comply with CCLI and streaming services guidelines when playing music at your church. Contact your church’s worship leader for questions about playing recorded music during your sessions.

OPEN

(20 MINUTES)

- Show the “Session 4 Opening Slide” on the screen.
- Welcome the students back to Illumination Station and thank them for being part of your group today.
- Call attention to the “VBS Scripture Poster” (kit item 2) and read it aloud. Challenge students to say the verse without looking at the poster.
- Say: “Our light source for today is the black light! A black light is an ultraviolet light that emits very little visible light, so it has little effect on most things; however, there are some things that absorb the ultraviolet light and re-emit it as visible light.”
- Turn the black light on.
- Say: “As you can see, I turned on the black light and we can barely tell any difference in light in the room. It would appear that this light is not shining.”
- Dim the room lights.
- Say: “But now, in the darkness, you can see that certain items are absorbing the light being emitted from the black light and are re-emitting it, creating a glow effect.”
- Ask: “Does anyone have any ideas about what black lights are used for?” (*Black lights are used in science experiments, forensic investigations, and are even used to identify counterfeit money.*)
- Continue: “It is clear that black lights are used to see things that are not easily visible. They help us prove that something is actually there. The substance it shines on must receive the light and re-emit it, but not all objects do that.”
- Display the paper or poster board so students can read the verse.
- Say: “John 8:12 tells us that anyone who follows Jesus will never walk in the darkness, but will instead have the light of life!”
- Turn the room lights back on.

LIGHT OF LIFE

- Invite students to complete the “Light of Life” activity on page 22 in their student learner guides.
- Say: “The scores you wrote down are personal and private. I won’t ask you to share, but I do want to make sure you understand that it is possible to live a life where all seven of those questions receive a high score. Some of you are already living that reality. Even when you experience the ‘dark’ or hard times, your life is still full of ‘light’ and hope because you have a relationship with Jesus. If you marked low scores on some of those questions, or you feel like you are living in darkness, I want you to know that Jesus is offering you the opportunity to have the light of life forever!”
- Continue: “Today you will hear how you can have the light of life. If you have any questions at all about that, please pull a leader aside to have a conversation.”
- Invite a student band or trusted adult leader to lead the group in singing a few worship songs that are familiar to your church and students.

MOTIVATE

(15 MINUTES)

- Distribute “So True! Score Cards” to students and instruct them to write their names on them.
- Say: “I am going to read several statements. When I read each statement, you will first mark whether you think it is true or false. Then you will give your answer a confidence rating (1 means you’re not very confident and 5 means you’re totally confident). When I reveal the answers, if you were correct, you’ll add the points you listed in your confidence rating. If you get the answer wrong, you’ll subtract that many points. The person with the most points at the end wins the game!”
- Read the statements from “So True!” (kit item 14) one at a time, pausing to give students time to write their answers and confidence ratings. Then ask students to add up their total scores and write it at the bottom of their score cards.
- Ask: “Did anyone score a perfect score of 50 points?”
- Determine who scored the highest and congratulate the winner.
- Say: “Some of the claims we just discussed were scientifically or historically proven facts. The way things become known as facts is they are verified by an expert and proven in that field. If I wanted someone to verify and prove whether or not astronauts can whistle on the moon, I would ask an astronaut or an astrophysicist, not a zoologist.”
- Show “Session 4 Spotlight Slide” on the screen.
- Continue: “Our spotlight question for today is meant to help us understand a very important truth about Jesus. He was not just a man who lived a long time ago. There are millions of men who lived a long time ago. No, Jesus was more than just a man who lived on earth and then died. Jesus lived, died, and rose to life again to be our Savior, now and forever!”
- Say: “If we wanted someone to prove whether or not Jesus really lived, died, and rose again, we’d want an expert to verify it, right? Well, the Bible gives us eye-witness testimonies of this truth from people who walked with Jesus as He lived, stood and watched as He died, and walked and talked with Him after He was resurrected. That fact should give us a great deal of confidence in this truth.”
- Ask: “Did you know there is another expert witness you know very well? It’s you! One way in which you can know with confidence that Jesus is in fact alive is that you can experience His presence in your own heart, and you can observe the way He transforms people’s hearts and lives still today!”
- Ask students to share evidence of Jesus in their own lives. Be prepared to share a testimony of your own about how you experience Jesus at work in your own heart and life.

Motivate Prep

- Leader kit item 14
- Digital Files
 - “So True! Score Cards”
 - “Session 4 Spotlight Slide”
- Pens (1 per student)

Examine Prep

- Bibles
- Leader kit items 5–6
- Digital Files
 - “Session 4 Review Questions”
- VBS 2026 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)
- Pens (1 per student)
- 2 small dry erase boards
- 2 dry erase markers

EXAMINE

(35 MINUTES)

- Say: “We’ve discussed that black lights prove what is really there even when we sometimes can’t see it and that it’s really about whether or not the substance it shines on receives the ultraviolet light and re-emits it.”
- Continue: “In the Bible passages we will explore today, we will encounter a few unlikely people whose actions shined brightly in the darkness—the very darkest moment of Jesus’s life.”

JESUS SUFFERED (MARK 15:16-32)

- Say: “Jesus did so many things that showed He is the powerful Son of God—things no one else could do. He healed people who could not see. He healed people who couldn’t walk or talk. He made a tiny amount of food into enough to feed more than 4,000 people. He also said things that the religious leaders did not agree with. People saw and heard these things and began to follow Jesus. The religious leaders did not like Jesus because of the things He was doing and teaching. Jesus taught that He was God’s Son, so they wanted to stop Him.”
- Select a student volunteer to read Mark 15:16-32.
- Say: “This is a difficult passage to read or listen to, isn’t it? Jesus had done nothing wrong at all. Yet we read here about the incredible suffering that Jesus went through.”
- Ask: “There were many layers to Jesus’s suffering that day. Let’s first talk about His physical suffering. What are some of the facts from this passage about how Jesus suffered physically?” (*crown of thorns on His head, hit on the head with a stick, spit on, nailed to a cross*)
- Ask: “What about Jesus’s mental and emotional suffering? How did Jesus suffer in His mind and heart?” (*mocked, cast lots*

for His clothes [similar to flipping a coin], insults were yelled at Him, taunted by the criminals He was crucified with)

- Say: “Other Bible passages we have looked at this week have shown us how powerful Jesus, the Son of God is. So why did He willingly suffer in this way? Why didn’t He escape or disappear or perform a miracle?”
- Continue: “Jesus experienced every kind of suffering mankind endures. The Bible tells us that He is able to sympathize with us because He suffered as we do. When you are suffering, there is no one who understands better than Jesus does. You can talk to Him about your pain, and it is a guarantee that He will comfort you and stay close to you in your suffering.”

JESUS DIED (LUKE 23:32-46)

- Select a student volunteer to read Luke 23:32-46.
- Ask: “If Jesus was so powerful and if He truly was the Son of God, why did He have to die at all?”
- Continue: “Jesus understood that the payment for sin was death, and He knew He was the only one who could pay that price. He was the only one on earth, past, present or future who would be without sin. If He did not become the sacrifice we all desperately need, we would have no choice but to pay for our sin ourselves. That payment would mean death and an eternity separated from God. Jesus paid this very expensive price because He loved us and He wanted there to be a way for us to be with Him in eternity.”
- Say: “You are infinitely valuable to Jesus. He loves you so much that He was willing to give up His own life for you. There is no one on earth who loves you as much as God does!”

JESUS ROSE TO LIFE (MATTHEW 27:57-28:10)

- Choose a student volunteer to read Matthew 27:57–28:10.
- Say: “Thankfully, Jesus’s death was not the end of the story! The religious leaders remembered that Jesus said He would rise again after three days, so they sent guards to the tomb to ensure Jesus’s followers didn’t try to trick everyone.”
- Continue: “Jesus did just exactly what He said He would do! He came back to life on the third day. When women went to view the tomb, an angel appeared and told them Jesus was alive. On their way to tell the disciples, Jesus Himself met them on the road! These ladies witnessed Jesus’s resurrected body with their own eyes. They hugged His feet with their own hands. No one would ever be able to convince them that Jesus was still dead. He is alive!”
- Say: “Jesus proved He is the Son of God by rising from the dead, defeating death! Let’s look at a couple of people in the text. Based on the evidence, let’s see if we can determine whether or not they believed Jesus is the proven Son of God.”
- Invite students to complete “State the Evidence” on page 23 in their learner guides.

- If remaining time is short, consider forming two groups and assigning one person to each group. Guide each group to share with the larger group the evidence they collected.
- Give students a few minutes to complete the activity. Then have a time of discussion so they can share the evidence they collected.

ILLUMINATE YOUR WORLD REVIEW GAME

- Form two teams.
- Give each team an “Illuminate Your World Gameboard” (kit items 5a–5b), a small dry erase board, and a dry erase marker. Also give each team a stack of nine “Light Cards” (kit item 6).
- Say: “As you can see, the community on your game board is in darkness. None of its light sources are working. It’s your job to get the lights back on. I will ask a review question. You will discuss it as a team and write down your answer quietly. When I say ‘lights on,’ reveal your answer. Every time your team answers a review question correctly, you get to add a light card to your community. The first team to illuminate its community fully wins the game!”
- Ask the “Session 4 Review Questions.”
- Congratulate the winning team.

GOSPEL FOCUS (5 MINUTES)

- Say: “We know now that black lights can help us prove the existence of things we can’t see. We don’t need a black light to find proof that all people have a sin nature. If we’re honest with ourselves, we’d have to admit that we have a natural tendency to do what pleases ourselves instead of what pleases God.”
- Continue: “This is why we are all in desperate need of a Savior. Jesus came to live a perfect life, die on the cross, and rise from the dead for us! All we have to

do is believe He is the proven Son of God and repent of our sin, or ‘turn around,’ and start following Him by receiving His gift of salvation.”

- ✚ Refer to “Sharing the Gospel with Students.” Share and explain the Bible verses on the page. Answer any questions students may have and give them an opportunity to respond using “Response Cards.”

Leader Tips

- For suggestions on how to share the gospel confidently, review “Tips for Sharing the Gospel” located in the digital files.
- Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s direction as you offer students a time to respond to Jesus. Have a plan in place to speak immediately with students who wish to make a decision or have questions. Consider designating one leader to speak with students or ask your VBS director or pastor to be available.
- Ensure that a leader is never alone with a student. It is best to have private conversations in public locations.

Gospel Focus Prep

- Bibles
- Digital Files
 - “Sharing the Gospel with Students”
 - “Response Cards”
- Pens (1 per student)

Sharing the Gospel

- ✚ This icon identifies an opportune time to share the gospel with students as led by the Holy Spirit.

Apply Prep

- Leader kit item 13
- VBS 2026 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)
- Pens (1 per student)

APPLY

(15 MINUTES)

- Guide students to turn to page 24 in their learner guides and complete the “Session 4 Guided Reflection.”
- Conclude: “If you have any questions about anything we’ve talked about this week or if you’re not sure if you’re a follower of Jesus and would like to talk to someone about that, this is a great time to pull a leader aside and get your questions answered.”

MARK 15:39

- Direct students’ attention to the Session 4 Poster (kit item 13).
- Ask for a volunteer to read Mark 15:39.
- Say: “There is one last person from the passages we read today that we need to talk about. The Bible doesn’t give us a lot of details, but he had a profound experience from what he witnessed.”
- Ask: “Based on the passages we read today, what details were we given about what the soldiers were doing?” (*They dressed Jesus in a purple robe and crown of thorns; They mocked and beat Jesus; They cast lots for His clothes; They crucified Him.*)
- Continue: “After one centurion (Roman army officer) saw Jesus breathe His last breath and die, he made a remarkable statement. What did the centurion say?” (*Truly this man was the Son of God!*)
- Say: “The Bible doesn’t tell us exactly what led to this centurion’s realization, but let’s use our imaginations and the context clues from the passage

to help us better make sense of the centurion’s response to Jesus’s death.”

- Invite students to complete “And I Quote ...” on page 25 in their learner guides.
- Ask for volunteers to share with the group their centurion quote. Discuss what might have led to the centurion’s proclamation about Jesus’s true identity.
- Say: “Only God knows exactly what happened in the centurion’s heart that day, but he went from possibly hurling insults or casting lots or even driving nails into Jesus’s hands and feet to exclaiming that Jesus was in fact the Son of God. Something he witnessed convinced him.”
- Continue: “Each of us has been given the opportunity to observe Jesus up close as we have explored these passages this week. We are each responsible for how we will respond to Him. Will we respond like the centurion and believe?”

PRAY

- Pray the prayer below for the group or ask a student volunteer to close the session in prayer.
- Lord Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross for us. Thank You for loving us that much! For students who are struggling to believe You are who You say You are, please open their eyes to the truth. For those of us who believe, help us continue to follow You always and to walk in the light. Expose any darkness in us and help us turn from it. Thank You for Your forgiveness!

ROTATIONS (30 MINUTES EACH)

MISSIONS

Plans for leading a missions rotation can be found in the printable resources of the student leader kit.

RECREATION POINT PROVERS

PLAY

- Form teams.
- Give each group a “Points Menu” facedown so it cannot be read.
- Tell players that they will have 15 minutes on the clock to complete as many tasks from the “Points Menu” as possible.
- Explain that each item has a point value assigned to it. If teams complete the item and their leader verifies it, they get those points. The team with the most points after the clock stops wins the game!
- Assign a leader or volunteer to each group to verify that they’ve completed tasks from the menu and to keep track of their points.
- Set a timer for 3 minutes and allow the groups to turn over the “Points Menu” to strategize as a group without touching any of the supplies or materials.
- When time is out, reset the timer for 15 minutes for players to prove as many tasks as possible.

DEBRIEF

- Say: “In order to win this game, you had to perform a series of tasks, but those tasks had to be verified by your leader. You didn’t get the points if you couldn’t prove that you actually made a paper airplane fly, right? In the same way, Jesus proved His true identity when He did something that only the Son of God would be able to do, which was to rise from the grave and defeat death. Jesus accomplished the most important task ever assigned by God to anyone, which was to save His people, and He proved it with the resurrection!”

Recreation Prep

- Digital Files
 - “Points Menu”
- Fill a gift bag for each team with the following supplies:
 - Stack of scrap paper
 - Pens
 - Clear tape
 - Roll of toilet paper
 - Pad of sticky notes
 - Handful of balloons (regular-size and long for balloon animals)
 - Piece of bubble gum
- Timer
- Assign a leader or volunteer to each team to verify completed tasks and keep track of points.

Crafts Prep

- Digital Files
 - “String Art Template”
- 3-by-4-inch soft wood block
- 5/8-inch nails
- Small hammer
- Needle-nosed pliers
- Masking tape
- Pushpin
- Cord

Advanced Preparation

- Print a template for each student.
- Make a sample nail art.

Leader Tip

- Encourage students to keep the nails as straight and even as possible.

CRAFTS

NAILED IT! STRING ART

WELCOME

Welcome students to Kaleidoscope Crafts. Ask the students to recall some surprising events in today’s Bible Study (*empty tomb, Jesus’s appearances*). Show the students the nail art you made. Tell students that today they will make a string art exclamation point to remind them, “He is risen!”

ASSEMBLE

Step 1: Center the template on the wood block. Secure with masking tape.

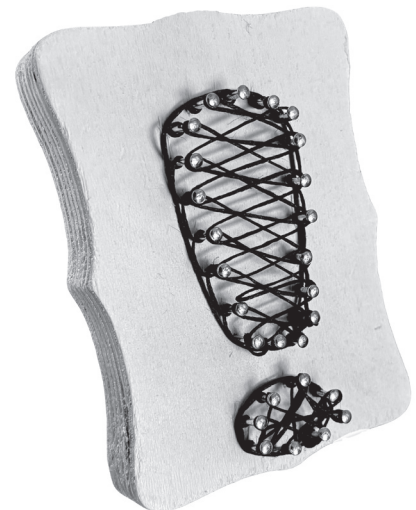
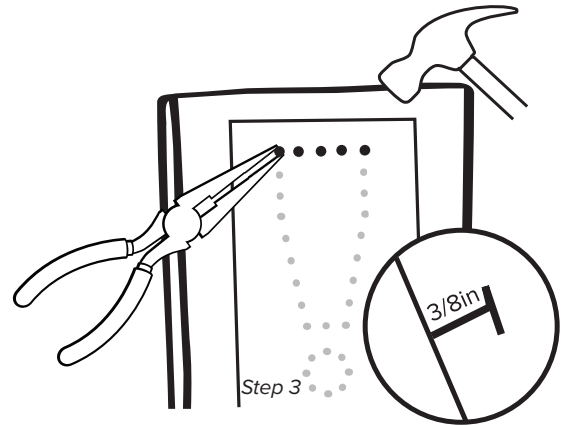
Step 2: Use the pushpin to make a pilot hole in each point on the template.

Step 3: Place a nail into the pilot hole and grip it with needle-nosed pliers. Use the small hammer to hammer a nail into each hole. Leave about 3/8-inch of the nail above the surface of the wood. Repeat with all the holes.

Step 4: Gently tear away the paper template.

Step 5: Tie the cord to one nail and pull it around the entire bar of the exclamation point shape. Wrap the cord around the nail you started with and continue to wrap each nail in the entire bar. Slide the cord to the base of the nails as you wrap. Stretch the cord back and forth to fill in the bar shape. Tie the cord off when you have completed the design.

Step 6: Repeat the actions in Step 5 around the circle below the bar of the exclamation point.



SESSION 5: JESUS IS GOD'S PLAN FOR FORGIVENESS

Bible Passage: Peter Preached About Jesus
(*Mark 14:66-72; Acts 2*)

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*

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.



LEADER DEVOTION

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

Today's students 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 student 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.

Students 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 student is ready to decide to follow Jesus. Students must know what sin is and the problem it causes for their relationship with God. Students 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 students 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 students 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 and students 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 students in your care to salvation this week. God gives us the privilege and honor of being in relationship with the students 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 each of the students 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.

Open Prep

- Leader kit item 2
- Digital Files
 - “Session 5 Opening Slide”
- Cotton swabs (1 box per group)
- VBS 2026 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)
- Pens (1 per student)

Leader Tip

Ensure you comply with CCLI and streaming services guidelines when playing music at your church. Contact your church’s worship leader for questions about playing recorded music during your sessions.

OPEN

(20 MINUTES)

- Show the “Session 5 Opening Slide” on the screen.
- Welcome students to the final session of Illumination Station! Give them an opportunity to share a favorite “light bulb moment” from the week. Be prepared to share your favorite moment as well.
- Say: “Today’s light source is a traffic light. Can you imagine how our towns and cities would function if we didn’t have traffic lights? It would be absolute chaos. There would be far more traffic ‘accidents,’ and it would be very hard to get where you need to go safely.”
- Continue: “Have you ever thought about the fact that traffic lights can’t force us to obey them? When the light turns red, the drivers of the cars must make a choice to respond to that red light and hit their breaks. Though they don’t have to, most people are more than happy to follow the signals and stop their cars at a red light because they realize that responding to the traffic light is for their own good.”
- Say: “Today, we will spend some time talking about what it looks like to respond to Jesus. We can also see a response in our theme verse.”
- Call attention to the “VBS Scripture Poster” (kit item 2) and read it aloud.
- Ask: “Did anyone spot the response in the verse?” (*anyone who follows me*)
- Say: “Following Jesus is a decision to receive His invitation to no longer walk in darkness but to have the light of life. Jesus doesn’t force us to respond in this way, but just like following the traffic light signal, it is absolutely for our good!”
- Invite students to turn to “Follow Me” on page 28 in their learner guides and complete the activity. Give students a few minutes to work independently.

Then allow them to share their ideas with the group.

GREEN, YELLOW, RED

- Continue: “Let’s play a game to help us one last time with memorizing John 8:12.”
- Form multiple groups. Give each group a box of cotton swabs. Explain that groups will construct letters to spell out the entire verse using only cotton swabs. The leader will randomly call out “green light,” “yellow light,” or “red light.”
- Call out “green light” to begin the game, which means students can construct the verse. “Yellow light” means everyone must stop, stand up, and turn around one time. “Red light” means students must immediately freeze until the leader calls another green or yellow light. The first team to finish the verse and yell “Light of the world!” wins.
- Say: “We see light around us so much that sometimes we forget it’s even there. What about the absence of light, though? We can’t help but notice when we’re in the dark. Whether the power is out and you keep trying to turn the light on or if it’s just nighttime and you’re stumbling over a pair of shoes in the dark, we can’t help but notice when we need light. Jesus said He is the Light of the world. When we choose to follow Him, we no longer have to worry about walking around in spiritual darkness.
- Ask students to take a few moments to pray over the session. Allow time for silent prayer. Pray aloud to conclude this time.
- Invite a student band or trusted adult leader to lead the group in singing a few worship songs that are familiar to your church and students.

MOTIVATE (15 MINUTES)

- Show “Session 5 Spotlight Slide” on the screen.
- Say: “Let’s pretend this jar of water is my heart. It was designed to be clear and clean, just pure water. But there is a problem. I am a sinner. Let’s say this morning I got frustrated in traffic and said something ungodly (drop one washer into the jar). Then, I got here and I gossiped about someone (drop another washer into the jar). I continued to sin throughout the day (drop the rest of the washers into the jar). As you can see, my heart is pretty weighed down and cluttered with ways I’ve disobeyed God.”
- Ask: “Can my heart make itself clean? Can it somehow get rid of these impurities by itself?”
- Say: “No matter what I do, I would not be able to pull myself out of this mess. The only hope I would have for a clean, pure heart is for something to reach down to the bottom of my heart and remove all of my sin.”
- Drop the string with the magnet into the jar. Begin picking up all the washers and removing them from the jar.
- Say: “This can remind us what Jesus has done for us. He came down to us and entered this messy, broken world of sin in order to rescue us. He didn’t have to. He could have left us with our sin, but Jesus loves us too much for that.”

His death and resurrection enable us to be forgiven of our sin! His forgiveness is eternal—it’s for forever!”

- Continue: “If we’re willing to respond to Jesus and to receive His gift of forgiveness, He promises to cleanse us of our sin and free us to live in holiness with pure hearts. So why do we need to respond to Jesus? He is the only way receive God’s forgiveness!”

YOU ARE FORGIVEN

- Say: “Let’s explore God’s forgiveness little deeper.”
- Invite students to turn to “You Are Forgiven” on page 29 in their learner guides. Set a timer for four minutes for them to find as many words from the verses as they can.
- Ask: “What are some words from Psalm 103:11-14 that describe God in relationship to His children?” (*faithful, loving, compassionate*)
- Ask: “Based on these verses, is God’s forgiveness permanent?” (*Yes; “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”*)
- Say: “It can be uncomfortable to acknowledge our sin, but we have a God who loves us so much. He is eager for us to receive His forgiveness, and it only comes through Jesus. We just need to respond to Him.”

EXAMINE (35 MINUTES)

- Say: “The Bible passage we will explore today is about an important time when Peter delivered a sermon to a crowd. This might not seem like a remarkable thing to discuss, but as we will see, there was a dramatic transformation that occurred in Peter’s life.”

PETER WAS CHANGED (MARK 14:66-72; ACTS 2:1-14)

- Say: “To help us see the change in Peter, we will look at two different times in his life—one occasion that happened before the crucifixion of Jesus and another that happened after Peter saw the resurrected Jesus.”

Motivate Prep

- Digital Files
 - “Session 5 Spotlight Slide”
- 4–6 light-weight metal washers
- 1 tall, wide-mouthed, clear jar filled $\frac{3}{4}$ with water
- String with a small magnet tied to one end
- VBS 2026 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)
- Pens (1 per student)
- Timer

Motivate Leader Tip

Practice the demonstration ahead of time to ensure the magnet is strong enough to pick up the washers.

Examine Prep

- Bibles
- Leader kit items 5–6
- Digital Files
 - “Session 5 Review Questions”
- VBS 2026 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)
- Pens
- 2 small dry erase boards
- 2 dry erase markers

- Ask for a student volunteer to read Mark 14:66-72.
- Continue: “Peter denied Jesus three times, just like Jesus said he would. (See Mark 14:30.) This is quite shocking considering that Peter was one of the boldest disciples. Peter is the disciple who walked on water when Jesus came to the disciples in the storm. Peter is the disciple who cut off someone’s ear in the garden when soldiers came to arrest Jesus. It is surprising that in this moment in the courtyard, the fearless Peter denied knowing Jesus.”
- Direct students to “Before and After” on page 30 in their learner guides. Lead them to complete the activity.
- Ask: “Based on these verses we read in Mark 14, what were the captions you created in the ‘before’ box?”
- Give students a few minutes to share.
- Ask for a volunteer to read Acts 2:1-14.
- Say: “This moment when the Holy Spirit came and filled the believers must have been an incredible sight. Suddenly these people were able to speak other languages. What a miracle!”
- Continue: “As you can imagine, a crowd began to form as people tried to make sense of what was happening. They tried to deny this miraculous event by attempting to explain it away. This was the perfect moment for someone to set the record straight and to tell the crowd the truth about Jesus.”
- Say: “Isn’t it amazing that Peter, the one who had recently denied knowing Jesus, was the one who spoke?”
- Take a few minutes and allow students to share their captions in the “after” box on page 30 based on Acts 2.
- Say: “Peter was changed forever! Acts 2 tells us that Peter stood up, raised his voice, and made a proclamation to the crowd. Let’s take a look at what he told them.”

PETER PREACHED ABOUT JESUS’S TRUE IDENTITY (ACTS 2:22-24, 32-36)

- Ask for one volunteer to read Acts 2:22-24 and another volunteer to read verses 32-36.
- Give students the opportunity to add any more new descriptions of Peter in their learner guides based off of these verses.
- Say: “Peter boldly proclaimed to the people that Jesus was in fact the Son of God. He reminded them of the miracles Jesus performed. Then he told them a very difficult truth—that they not only crucified an innocent man, but they crucified the Son of God. He boldly proclaimed that Jesus was raised from the dead and that His disciples were witnesses of it!”
- Continue: “Peter finished his sermon with a powerful statement, one that was full of conviction and confidence. He said, ‘Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.’”
- Ask: “How do you think the people in the crowd reacted to this bold proclamation from Peter?”
- Say: “Let’s keep reading and find out.”

THE PEOPLE RESPONDED (ACTS 2:37-41)

- Choose a student volunteer to read Acts 2:37-41.
- Ask: “So how did the people respond to Peter’s message?”
- Say: “They were ‘pierced to the heart’ and immediately asked Peter what they should do next. He told them exactly what we’ve been talking about at Illumination Station, which is that we must repent or change from disobeying God to obeying Him. We must believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sin.”

- Continue: “Verse 41 tells us that 3,000 people accepted Peter’s message that day and were baptized!”
- Say: “The people in the crowd that day responded after hearing the truth. The question we all must ask ourselves is ‘Have I responded to Jesus?’”

ILLUMINATE YOUR WORLD REVIEW GAME

- Form two teams.
- Give each team an “Illuminate Your World Gameboard” (kit items 5a–5b), a small dry erase board, and a dry erase

marker. Also give each team a stack of nine “Light Cards” (kit item 6).

- Say: “As you can see, the community on your game board is in darkness. None of its light sources are working. It’s your job to get the lights back on. I will ask a review question. You will discuss it as a team and write down your answer quietly. When I say ‘lights on,’ reveal your answer. Every time your team answers a review question correctly, you get to add a light card to your community. The first team to illuminate its community fully wins the game!”
- Ask the “Session 5 Review Questions.”
- Congratulate the winning team.

GOSPEL FOCUS (5 MINUTES)

- Ⓜ Explain that 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). 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.
- Read Romans 5:8.
- Say: “Thankfully, God has provided a way for us to be forgiven. 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. 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 receive God’s gift of forgiveness and be welcomed into God’s family for eternity.”
- Continue: “Everyone must respond to Jesus. We either respond with a green

light and repent and believe; or we respond with a yellow light because we have doubts, questions, or fears; or we respond with a red light and we turn away from Jesus to go our own way. No one can make that choice for you. It has been our prayer and hope this week that you would hear the message of Jesus—God’s promised, perfect, powerful, proven Son—and that you would decide to place your trust in Him for the forgiveness of your sin.”

- Consider taking a few minutes to tell students the story of how you heard about Jesus and how you responded to Him. Share a testimony of how Jesus has changed you and why you are glad you responded to Him.
- Tell students that leaders are available if anyone would like to talk more about how they can respond to Jesus.

Sharing the Gospel

Ⓜ This icon identifies an opportune time to share the gospel with students as led by the Holy Spirit.

Gospel Focus Prep

☐ Bibles

Leader Tip

Ensure that a leader is never alone with a student. It is best to have private conversations in public locations.

Apply Prep

- Leader kit items 8 and 15
- VBS 2026 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)
- Pens (1 per student)

APPLY (15 MINUTES)

- Guide students to turn to page 31 in their learner guides and complete the “Session 5 Guided Reflection.”
- Say: “Let’s discuss the guided reflection you just completed. There is no pressure to share if you don’t feel comfortable, but if you’re willing to share, it just might help someone else in the room.”
- Ask: “Would anyone who has already responded to Jesus like to share what that was like?”
- Thank everyone who shared.

ACTS 2:38

- Direct students’ attention to the “Session 5 Poster” (kit item 15).
- Ask for a volunteer to read the verse.
- Say: “We’ve talked a lot about repentance, which means to turn away from sin and turn to God. We’ve talked about baptism, which is an act of obedience that shows someone has repented of her sin and chosen to follow Jesus. Now, let’s talk briefly about the Holy Spirit.”
- Continue: “The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is a gift to us, meant to help us live in a way that pleases God. The Holy Spirit lovingly convicts us of our sin, helping us continue on in following Jesus. The Holy Spirit gives us gifts that we can use to help build up and encourage God’s people, and the Holy Spirit comforts us and empowers us to persevere in our suffering. So when we respond to Jesus and follow Him, we gain first-hand experience that the Holy

Spirit is the greatest gift people can receive!”

- Guide students to form a circle. Stand in the middle of the circle and shuffle the “Bonus Verse Challenge Cards” (kit item 8), keeping them facedown.
- Explain to the students that when it’s their turn, they will draw a challenge card from the leader’s deck and complete the task. If they complete it, they can sit down. If they don’t complete it or choose to pass, they must remain standing. At the completion of each turn, the card goes back in the deck and the leader reshuffles. Continue until every person is seated.
- Congratulate the winning team! Remind students that this verse is a promise—and God keeps His promises!

PRAY

- Pray a prayer of blessing over your students before they leave. Celebrate all that God has done and pray that He will continue that good work in each of their lives.

ROTATIONS (30 MINUTES EACH)

MISSIONS

Plans for leading a missions rotation can be found in the printable resources of the student leader kit.

RECREATION

FOOSBALL FEET

PLAY

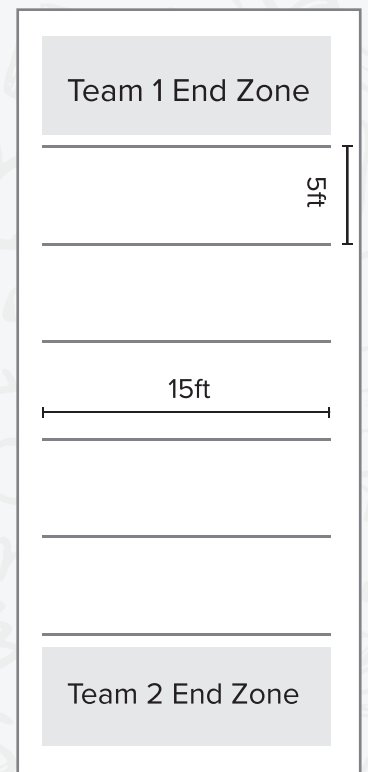
- Form teams of four students each.
- Start the game by inviting two teams to come to the field. The remaining students will watch and cheer.
- There should be two students on each double-length noodle. Team 1 will face the other team's end zone and vice versa.
- Explain to players that they must keep both hands on the noodle at all times and must use only their feet to kick the ball. They are allowed to move left and right along the tape line, but they must stay on the line at all times.
- The leader will throw the ball into the field to kick off the first round.
- The team that gets the ball into the other team's field goal wins. That concludes that round. The winning team will remain on the field and the losing team will be replaced by a new team of four.
- Rounds continue until every team has played and there is one winning team. In the event of a tie, play a tie-breaker round.

DEBRIEF

- Say: "The key to success with this game was being responsive, wasn't it? You had to respond to the movements of the other team, reacting quickly. Likewise, when it comes to the gospel, your response matters a great deal. This week you heard all about Jesus and how to have a relationship with Him. If you haven't already, I pray that you respond to Him and invite Him to be the Lord of your life. It will be the best response you could ever have!"

Recreation Prep

- 8 pool noodles
- Duct tape
- Large beach ball
- Tape or chalk
- Tape 2 pool noodles together, forming 1 long noodle. Repeat this 3 more times for a total of 4 double-length noodles.
- Use tape or chalk to make 4 parallel lines about 15 feet long and about 5 feet apart in width.
- Make another line on either end of the playing field forming each team's end zone.



Crafts Prep

- Bible
- Translucent pony beads
- Baking sheet
- Foil cupcake liners
- Toaster oven
- Outside power source
- Bamboo skewer
- Fishing line
- Clear suction cup with hook

Advanced Preparation

- Cut fishing line into 12-inch lengths.
- Preheat toaster oven to 400°.
- Make a sample suncatcher.

Leader Tips

- Using the toaster ovens outside will allow the fumes caused by melting the beads to disperse. You may want to use several toaster ovens if you have a large group.
- Watch the beads carefully to ensure that they don't melt too much.
- Students may take their suncatchers home in the cupcake liners. They can remove the beads and add the hanger when the suncatchers are completely cooled.

CRAFTS

SUNCATCHER

WELCOME

Welcome students to Kaleidoscope Crafts. Ask the students today's spotlight question: *Why do I need to respond to Jesus? (Jesus is the only way to receive God's forgiveness.)* Ask a volunteer to read today's bonus verse, Acts 2:38. Remind students that Jesus is God's plan for forgiveness and that responding to Jesus is the only way to receive God's forgiveness.

Show the students the suncatcher you made. Invite students to make a suncatcher they can hang in a window to remind them of the truths brought to light in VBS this week at Illumination Station.

ASSEMBLE

Step 1: Turn the cupcake liner inside out so that the beads will be placed on the foiled side. Flatten the liner slightly if you want to make something other than a round design. Use the pony beads to create a design in the cupcake liner. You may want to use a pointed skewer to move the beads around.

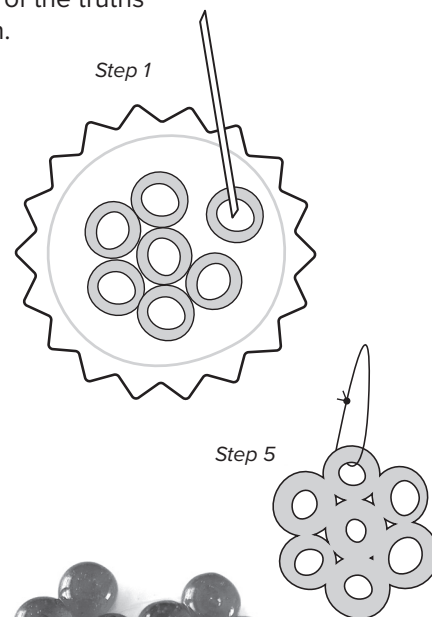
Step 2: Carefully place the liner on a baking sheet and slide it in the toaster oven. Be careful not to shift the pony beads.

Step 3: Heat the beads for 5–8 minutes. They should melt enough to fuse the design together but not go completely flat.

Step 4: Remove the baking sheet and allow the design to cool. Pop the suncatchers out of the liner.

Step 5: Insert the fishing line through a gap in the beads. Tie the ends of the line together to form a loop.

Step 6: Place the clear suction hook on a window. Use the fishing line loop to hang the suncatcher on the hook.



DIGITAL CONTENTS

GENERAL HELPS

- Clip Art
- Daily Overview Chart
- Evaluation Form
- KJV Bonus Verse Posters
- KJV Theme Verse Poster
- Missions Rotation Plan
- Promotional Flyers
- Registration Cards
- Student Characteristics
- Student Leader Guide

SESSION 1

- Session 1 Review Questions
- Matthew 16:16 Printable

SESSION 2

- Session 2 Review Questions

KIT CONTENTS

1. Promotional Poster
2. VBS Scripture Poster
3. Session 1 Poster
4. “What Am I?”
- 5a–5b. Illuminate Your World Gameboards
6. Light Cards
7. Look Alike Contest
8. Bonus Verse Challenge Cards
9. Session 2 Poster

SESSION 3

- Crossword Puzzle Answer Key
- Session 3 Review Questions

SESSION 4

- “So True!” Score Cards
- Session 4 Review Questions
- Tips for Sharing the Gospel
- Sharing the Gospel with Students
- Response Cards
- Points Menu
- String Art Template

SESSION 5

- Session 5 Review Questions

SLIDES

- Promo Graphic Slide
- Opening Slides (Sessions 1–5)
- Customizable Slides (Sessions 1–5)
- Spotlight Slides (Sessions 1–5)
- Physics Slide (Session 1)



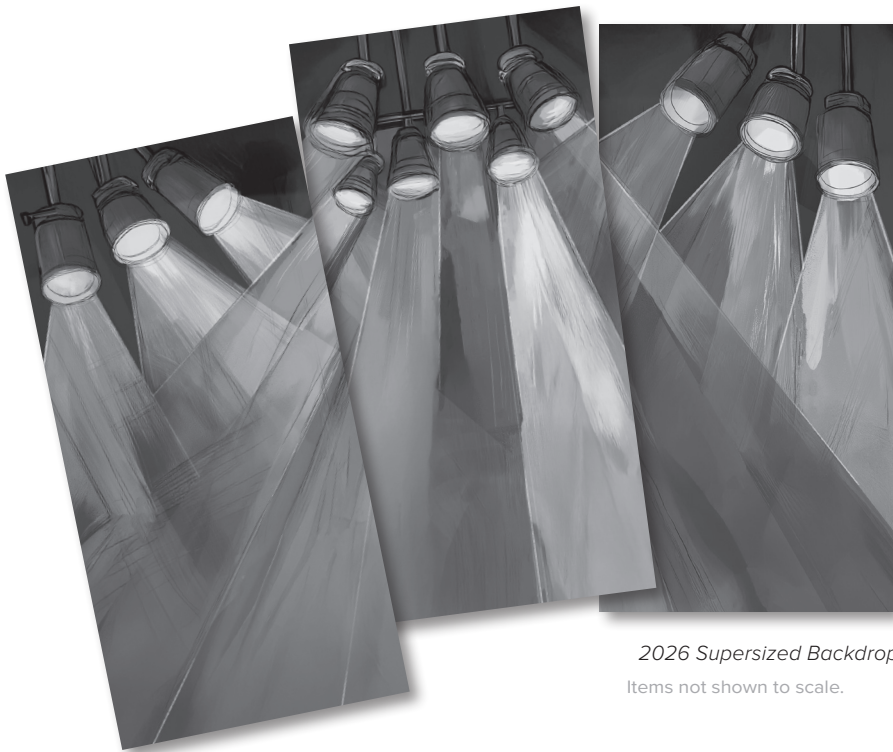
DECORATING IDEAS

FOCAL WALL

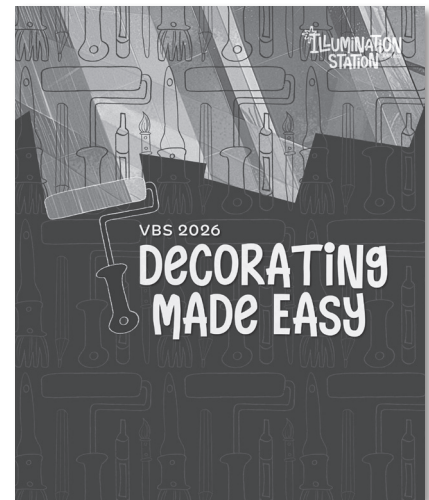
As you determine how to set up your Bible study area, you may want to select one wall as your focal wall to display teaching items from the kit such as the “VBS Scripture Poster” (kit item 2) and the daily session posters. Prepare to change out the remaining kit items as they are called for each day.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS

- Display the *VBS 2026 Supersized Backdrop* (9798384538561).
- Place a *VBS 2026 Bible Study Location Sign* (9798384538608) at the entrance of the room.
- Hang the *VBS 2026 String Flags* (9798384538226) from the ceiling.
- Set up an area in the room for snacks or crafts. Use the *VBS 2026 Tablecloths* (9798384538189) to cover the tables.
- See *VBS 2026 Decorating Made Easy* (9798384536987) for more decorating ideas.



2026 Supersized Backdrop
Items not shown to scale.

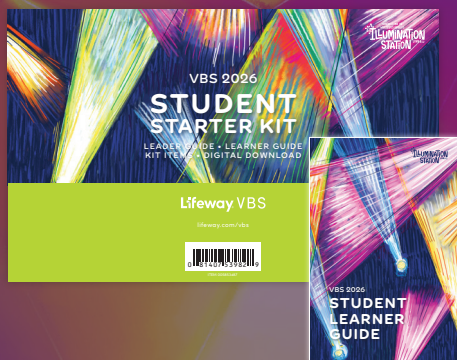


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