

GREAT BIG beautiful WORLD

Sprout Leader Guide

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**Growing Up
Catholic**
A ministry of The Pastoral Center

Welcome to **GREAT BIG beautiful WORLD**

Great Big Beautiful World is a one-week Vacation Bible School (VBS) curriculum that embraces Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si* and our call to care for our common home. It begins with the creation story in Genesis 2 and includes psalms, stories of Jesus, and the vision of a new heaven and new earth in Revelation. This comprehensive look at the biblical story reveals God's deep love for all of creation, including each child. *Great Big Beautiful World* invites children to see the ways God cares for the earth and challenges them to be part of caring for and preserving the created world.

Each day starts with relationship-building, joint worship, music, prayer, and a dramatic presentation of the Bible story. This is a time to SOW seeds of friendship, joy, generosity, and wisdom. These seeds will GROW as children explore, create, play, and learn about God's story at three response stations. In closing worship, children will be challenged to GO out into the world to care for the beautiful world God made.

SOW (35 min) <i>Children start in small groups and then gather for worship.</i>	GROW (90 min + snack) <i>Small groups rotate between three activity stations and have a snack.</i>	GO (10 min) <i>The large group gathers for worship and dismissal.</i>
Seeds of Friendship (10 min) (small group) Seeds of Joy (10 min) (large group, music, prayer) Seeds of Generosity (5 min) (offering) Seeds of Wisdom (10 min) (Bible memory, Bible drama)	Dig In (30 min) (Bible study) Create & Discover (30 min) (art and science activities) Sprout (30 min) (active games) Snack Time (15 min)	Songs Creation Care Cards Closing Prayer Dismissal

Items you will need from the VBS kit:

- *Sprout Leader Guide*
- Sprout electronic files
- Sprout Area Poster

The **electronic files** include related teaching aids to accompany the leader guide. Each Sprout Leader should be given access to the relevant folder in order to print pages for the chosen activities. The Sprout folder includes the following:

- Day 1 Plant and Animal Cards
- Day 1 Discussion Prompts
- Day 2 Nature Quest Checklist
- Day 3 Customizable Planting Notes
- Day 5 Garden Cleanup Game Questions

WELCOME TO SPROUT!

Get outside and enjoy God's *Great Big Beautiful World* by playing active games! Physical activity is crucial in child development. Research has shown that active play in the natural world has many benefits, including better physical health, improved mood, and increased attention span. It has also been shown that children who are highly connected to nature are more likely to do things that protect the natural world, such as recycling, limiting water use, and turning off lights.

Sprout is one of three 30-minute **GROW** response stations following **SOW** (opening worship). Each Sprout session includes three parts: Connect, Explore, and Bless.

Each session plan also includes a **Bible essay** to read in preparation for leading, and an **At-a-Glance Chart** to aid in planning.

CONNECT

Gather the children for a brief recap of the Bible story and provide instructions for the chosen games for the day. Because these are active games, it is essential to establish clear behavioral expectations and to explain the boundaries of the play area so that all children are safe.

EXPLORE

Choose from four game options. The At-a-Glance Chart in each session gives a summary of the type of game and activity level to help you decide which games to offer. Consider your group size, space, and number of volunteers. It's best to be prepared with more games than you think you will need. That way you have a backup plan if one of the games doesn't work for a group, or if there is a change due to weather or supervision concerns.

Each game option includes Talk About It prompts to help the children connect the game to the Bible story, creation themes, and their own experiences.

BLESS

Work together with the children to clean up materials in preparation for the next group, then gather the children for a short prayer of blessing.

Setting Up

Because *Great Big Beautiful World* is creation-themed, it's ideal if Sprout activities are done outside in a field. An empty parking lot can also work, provided no cars are allowed to drive into it. Being outside is not possible for many churches, so games can also be played in a gymnasium or another large empty room. Make modifications to the games as needed based on your available space.

Although some activities require little setup, others require preparation work, such as gathering supplies, making copies from the electronic files or arranging the space in a particular way. Instead of purchasing new items for activities, check to see if you can get donations from church members.

There is a Sprout Area Poster in the VBS physical kit. Use it to designate a gathering place where children will come for Connect and Bless. This will also be the place to have Talk About It conversations after each game.

Have field markers, such as cones, to set boundaries for some of the games. For example, if children will be playing tag in a field or parking lot, it will be important to mark boundaries. For tag and running games with a small group, a 20 x 20 ft / 6 x 6 m space is enough.

If an activity requires children to handle outside objects like dirt, allow time for children to wash their hands before rotating to the next GROW response station.

Depending on the weather, have a large cooler of water and cups available in case children get thirsty. Have first aid supplies on hand in case of injury.

Choosing Activities

There are several factors to consider when choosing activities, including available supplies, age of children in the group, number of volunteer helpers, group size, available space, and length of time. If you know of children who have physical limitations, be sure to make modifications so that they can participate in the games.

Sprout activities are purposefully created to provide a variety of levels of engagement and energy. Activities are varied and include cooperative games, competitive games, games that review material, and games that encourage sharing. Provide a variety of activities throughout the week.

Be prepared to redirect the group to a second or third game in case of rain or in case the group is not connecting with the selected activity. It's best to have a backup plan rather than scrambling in the moment to come up with something different.

Leading Conversations

After playing each game, gather briefly near the Sprout poster to discuss the experience. Discussion questions are provided in the Talk About It section of each game description; however, you know your group best! Feel free to take the conversation in a different direction. The goal is to help children connect their experiences with the Bible stories and creation themes.

When leading conversations, never force children to answer, but invite them to share if they are comfortable. Ask open-ended questions, and refrain from asking questions that require a simple yes or no. If a child stumps you with a question or comment, thank them for their response, and let them know that you will do some research and get back to them. Be sure you follow through. This lets them know that they have been heard, and that you care about responding to their curiosity.

Safety

It is important to ensure the safety and well-being of all children in VBS, particularly during active games. Educate yourself about any safety protocols and policies that your church already has in place. If there isn't a specific policy, discuss the following types of questions and make a plan with your VBS Director:

- How many volunteers should be on hand for supervision (e.g., one adult for every 5–10 children)?
- How will you keep track of which children have asthma, bee sting allergies, other allergies, and medications?
- What safety supplies will you have, such as drinking water, first aid kit, sunscreen, and cell phone?
- What happens when a child needs to go inside to use the restroom?
- If someone is injured, what protocol will you use to get help, inform parents, bring comfort, treat wounds, and record details of the incident?
- Is there a medical professional who can be onsite to assist in case of injury?

Establish safety rules and clear expectations for children so they are mindful of their limitations and are cautioned about any potential issues. Allow opportunities for children to drink water, especially if the activity requires high energy.

Being clear about your emergency protocol and the individual cautions of your children can prevent a minor injury from becoming a serious issue.

Supporting Children's Participation

Children may be hesitant to play one of the games. Do not force participation. Encourage and invite, but do not ostracize children or guilt them into participating. Children may be reluctant to participate for a variety of reasons, including being tired, anxious, hot, uninterested, or insecure. Some children struggle with physical activities and may be embarrassed about being slow or uncoordinated. One option is to invite them to participate in other ways, such as keeping score, being a referee, reading instructions, or setting up the playing field.

Offering a variety of activities, including some that are low energy, is one way to make sure that all children can participate. Another way to encourage participation is for adults to join in the games. Keep the atmosphere fun and light, reducing the pressure for children to keep up with their peers. You may want to avoid competitive games altogether. There are plenty of other options.

DAY 1

GOD CREATES

Scripture Text: Genesis 2:4b–23

Laudato Si': #62–69, 75

Seed of Faith: God created a beautiful world.

Story Summary:

From the dust, God formed and breathed life into a person. Then God made every tree and a river that flowed from Eden. God planted a garden in Eden as a home for all created things. God gave instructions to care for the garden and to eat the fruit from every tree except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God made all the animals and brought them to the person to be named. While the man slept, God took one of his ribs and created a woman as a helper and companion.

Bible Essay:

As we prepare to share God's *Great Big Beautiful World* with children, we begin at the very beginning—in the book of Genesis. We are perhaps more familiar with the creation story from Genesis 1, where God speaks creation into being and pronounces it good, but we have chosen to focus on the second account of creation in Genesis 2. Here, we see a more intimate view of God's handiwork.

God's hands get dirty in this creation story! God forms a human being out of the dirt and breathes life into him. God creates trees and plants, and then rivers of water to nourish them. God plants a garden in Eden to be a home for the man and instructs him “to till it and keep it,” not to “dominate and subdue” it as some have wrongly interpreted before (*LS* #66–67). God invites the man to join in the creative process and gives him the fruit of all the trees—except for the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

All is not good in this story, for God sees that the man is alone. God creates animals and brings them to the man to name, but none among these is a suitable partner for the man. So God creates a woman from a rib taken from the man's side. The man and woman live together in the garden, caring for and enjoying God's beautiful world.

Children can easily relate to a God who digs in the dirt, forming animals and people. They can imagine kneeling beside God, getting their hands dirty, and squealing with delight at what they create. Like a loving parent, God provides a safe and comfortable home for the man and woman and attends to their needs. As you dig into this story with children, help them to notice the many good things in this beautiful world that God has created.

Children are typically on the receiving end of caregiving. Parents, teachers, trusted adults, and extended family members care for children's daily needs. This story invites children to consider how *they* can become caregivers for creation. Just like the first person in the garden, we too have a responsibility to tend to the world God made (*LS* #68–69).

Day 1 At-a-Glance

Advance Preparation

- Read Genesis 2:4–22 and the Bible essay for Day 1 on page 6 of this guide.
- Read through the Sprout session plan. Choose games to play, depending on the space, group size, and amount of time you have. Gather needed supplies.
- Communicate with volunteers about their roles and tasks.

SESSION PLAN

CONNECT

Welcome the group and read the Bible story summary on page 6 of this guide. Set behavioral expectations and give instructions about the chosen games for the day.

EXPLORE

Play one or more of the chosen games. Leave time at the end to return materials and prepare the space for the next group.

OPTIONS	TYPE	SUPPLIES	TO DO
Cattle, Birds, Wild Animals, Oh My!	“Get to know you” Low energy Minimal preparation No cleanup	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Day 1 Plant and Animal Cards (electronic files)• Day 1 Discussion Prompts (electronic files)	Copy and cut apart the Day 1 Plant and Animal Cards (electronic files).
River Race	Competitive High energy No preparation No cleanup	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cones or other boundary markers	Use cones to mark out a large playing area.
Steal the Forbidden Fruit	Competitive High energy No preparation No cleanup	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ball• Cones or other boundary markers	Use cones to mark out a large playing area.
Animal Relay	Competitive High energy No preparation No cleanup	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cones or other boundary markers	Use cones to mark out a large playing area.

BLESS

Gather the group and say a closing prayer. Pray:

Loving Creator, thank you for the world you have made. Thank you for making each of us in a special way. Help us love and care for the world the way you do. Amen.

EXPLORE

Cattle, Birds, Wild Animals, Oh My!

Print and cut out the Day 1 Plant and Animal Cards from the electronic files. Each child will need one plant card and one animal card. Ideally the cards will be reused for multiple groups, but make extras in case they get lost or crumpled.

1. Hand out one plant and one animal card to each person (utilizing cards from left to right, top to bottom). Instruct them not to say the animal or plant they have. Make sure each person has two cards and she or he understands what the paper says. Be sure people who have matching animals don't also have matching plants.

2. Say:

We're going to play a game to get to know each other and to talk about the Bible story. I will give you an instruction to help you find a group. After you find your match, please wait quietly for the next instruction.

3. Read aloud a mingle instruction and discussion prompt from the Day 1 Discussion Prompts (electronic files), allowing time for groups to discuss. Repeat this several times. Adult leaders can move from group to group to help facilitate conversation.

Talk About It

Use discussion prompts from the electronic files.

Supplies

- Day 1 Plant and Animal Cards (electronic files)
- Day 1 Discussion Prompts (electronic files)

River Race

Remind children that the river in Eden had four branches: Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates. If you have a large group, create four "rivers." Each "river" begins with two people holding hands. (Smaller groups can start with two "rivers.") The pairs of children will then chase and attempt to tag children who are not paired. Anyone who is tagged then joins the "river" that tagged them. When everyone has been tagged, count the number of people in each "river." The longest "river" wins. If it is a tie, one person from each "river" can run away. Continue playing until those children are tagged again and there is a winner.

Talk About It

What do you know about rivers? Why are they important? (*habitat for fish and other creatures, drinking water, drain surface water, help plants and trees grow, used for transportation and recreation, irrigation for crops, used to power hydroelectric plants, create a beautiful world*)

Supplies

- Cones or other boundary markers

Steal the Forbidden Fruit

In preparation, use cones or other markers to set boundaries for a playing field.

1. Form two even teams and have them stand on opposite sides of the playing field from one another.
2. Number each person so that each one has a partner across the field from one another.
3. Place a ball (forbidden fruit) in the center of the play area.
4. Explain the rules of the game:

When I call your number, run to the center of the field and grab the forbidden fruit before the other person with your number grabs the fruit. Once you have the fruit, you must get the fruit back to your line before you are tagged. If you do, your team gets one point. If the other person steals the fruit before you get it, you need to try to tag that person before he or she reaches the line. If someone is tagged, the game is reset, and nobody scores.

5. Play this game, calling out different numbers each round, resetting the ball (forbidden fruit) each time.

Talk About It

In the Bible story, the people were supposed to stay away from the fruit on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Have you ever been told to stay away from something, but you wanted to go near it anyway? Sometimes it is tempting to disobey the rules. How can rules be helpful? How would the game have been different if no one followed the rules?

Supplies

- Ball
- Cones or other boundary markers

Animal Relay

Divide into teams of three, four, or five people. Each team needs to have the same number of people. Assign the first person in each team to be a kangaroo, the second person to be an elephant, the third to be a frog, and so on. (You can vary the animals; just be sure they have a variety of movements.) As a group, decide what each animal is required to do. For instance, the elephant can run but must be raising and lowering one arm and “trumpeting” like an elephant. Run a relay race, with each person acting like her or his animal as the person moves from the start to a designated spot (use a cone or another marker) and back to the start. Play until one team is finished and all members of the team are sitting down.

Talk About It

Which animal do you think God created first? What animal would you have created? Imagine having to come up with names for many, many animals.

Supplies

- Cones or other boundary markers

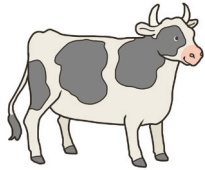
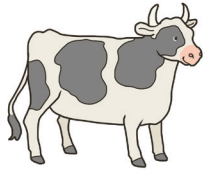

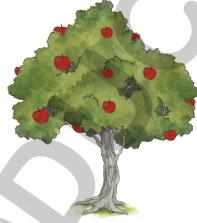








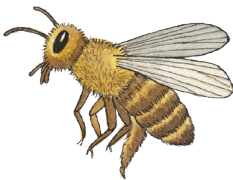
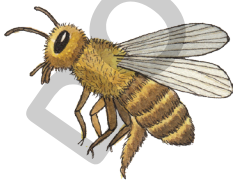




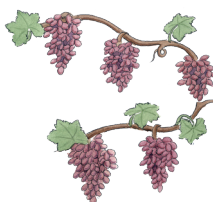
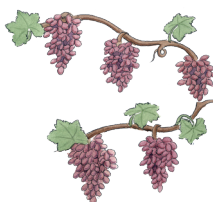


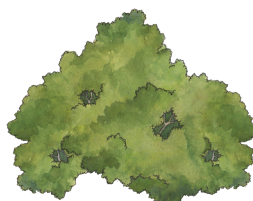
Day 1 Discussion Prompts

Use the mingle instructions and discussion prompts for the game “Cattle, Birds, Wild Animals, Oh My!”

Mingle Instructions	Discussion Prompts
<p>Say: Without talking, make the sound of your animal, and find the other person(s) with the same animal.</p>	<p>Tell your partner some of your favorite things: your favorite subject at school, favorite thing to do outside, and favorite flavor of ice cream.</p>
<p>Say: Without talking, find other animals who move like yours (fly, walk, slither).</p>	<p>Say your name. Say what animal you would become if you had to choose one. What do you like about that animal?</p>
<p>Say: Without talking, make two groups: one for animals who have feathers, and one for animals who do not.</p>	<p>Feathers group: As a group, name as many birds as you can think of.</p> <p>No-feathers group: Name things that your animals have in common.</p>
<p>Say: Without talking, find the other person(s) with the same plant as you.</p>	<p>What do you think it would have been like to have seen God create everything?</p>
<p>Say: Without talking, get into two groups: one group for edible plants, and one group for inedible plants. You be the judge!</p>	<p>Edible plants group: As a group, name all the edible plants you can think of.</p> <p>Inedible plants group: If you were in the garden, do you think you would have been tempted to eat the only thing that was forbidden? Why or why not?</p>
<p>Say: Without talking, find a partner you haven't talked with yet.</p>	<p>Lay your four cards in any order you want. Choose a sound for your plants and animals to create a rhythm pattern to perform for the group. For example:</p> <p>Card order: Cow, apple tree, frog, cactus Performance: moo, crunch, “ribbit,” ouch</p> <p>Say your rhythm pattern several times to the large group.</p>

Day 1 Plant and Animal Cards

Copy and cut apart the cards for use with the game "Cattle, Birds, Wild Animals, Oh My!" Each player will need one plant card and one animal card.

Cow 	Cow 	Apple Tree 	Apple Tree 
Owl 	Owl 	Dandelion 	Dandelion 
Cat 	Cat 	Blueberry Bush 	Blueberry Bush 
Bee 	Bee 	Cactus 	Cactus 
Snake 	Snake 	Grapevine 	Grapevine 
Bird 	Bird 	Bush 	Bush 