



## Worship and Drama Guide

Portions of this work copyright © 2022 The Pastoral Center / Pastoral.Center / GrowingUpCatholicVBS.com. Unless otherwise noted, Scripture text is quoted, with permission, from the *New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*, © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Adapted and reprinted with permission from *Who Is My Neighbor?* © 2019 MennoMedia. Inc., Harrisonburg, VA 22803. All rights reserved. Project Director: Mary Ann Weber; Designer: Reuben Graham

All rights reserved. This publication may not be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in whole or in part, in any form, by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior permission of the copyright owners.



# Neighbors are more than the people who live next door.

Neighbors are more than the people in our families or communities. Through five carefully chosen Bible stories, *Who Is My Neighbor?* VBS leads children on a journey to discover more about God's great love. From looking at how to be a neighbor to diving into what it means to live out our faith, this interactive VBS series will lead children deeply into Bible stories focused on God's care and compassion for neighbors close at hand and around the world. Join us as we discover neighbors near and far!

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

# About Worship time

Each Worship time includes:

- Gathering—Children enter into worship by making connections between the Bible story and their lives.
- Worshiping—Children worship through music, learning a Bible memory passage, and watching a drama that tells the Bible story.
- Responding—Children reflect on the story by thinking about questions, praying, and giving toward an offering project.
- Sending—Children receive a sending blessing and sing a sending song.

Each session plan includes the day's Scripture, Bible backgrounds, purpose statement, and Bible memory passage. Read over these sections so that you are familiar with the focus of the day. All VBS leader guides include this information so that the activities and discussions will reflect the themes presented during Worship time.

## Leaders for Worship time

Several adult leaders are needed for Worship time:

- Worship leader—leads the children in worship and coordinates with the other Worship time leaders.
- Music leader—chooses songs and leads the singing; leads a worship band, if desired.
- Drama leader—finds actors to perform the roles and coordinates the drama, including props and rehearsals.
- Bible memory leader—introduces the Bible memory passages and guides children in learning them each day.

Depending on who is available and their individual skills, some of the leadership roles may be combined.

## Music

Assemble a music team to lead the children in music during the Worship time. Lyrics, lead sheets, body movement descriptions, sing-along videos, and MP3 files are provided as part of your starter kit, and you are welcome to add your favorites to the music options as well. “Love Is What We Need” is the VBS theme song.

## Bible memory

Show the Bible memory poster or the Bible memory slide show. Invite children to read the passage with you.

### Grades K–5 and 6–8 will learn Mark 12:28b-31.

- Day 1: “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’” —Mark 12:28b-29
- Day 2: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’” —Mark 12:30
- Day 3: “The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” —Mark 12:31
- Days 4 & 5: “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” —Mark 12:28b-31

### Early childhood Bible memory:

Love the Lord your God. Love your neighbor as yourself. —Mark 12:30, 31, adapted

Note: The Bible memory passages are from the New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition. You may use a preferred translation.

## Offering project

Contact your diocese, Catholic Relief Services, local Catholic Charities, or other agency to find out about projects your VBS program can support. Choose one that suits the needs and interests of your church, and ask the agency for information and stories about the project that can be shared with the children.

## Offering visuals

Plan a visual way to recognize the amount of money contributed during VBS. Be sure to update the visual each day and point out the progress that is made. Be sure to thank children for their generosity!

Here are some ideas for an offering visual:

- Draw stick figures (neighbors) on a poster board, each figure representing a certain amount of money.
- Cut out footprints and make them “walk” around the room, each print representing a certain amount of money. The footprints symbolize walking to our neighbors.
- Cut out handprints and post them around the room, each hand representing a certain amount of money. The handprints symbolize reaching out to neighbors.
- Fill in a chart or graph according to how much money is contributed.
- Create a paper chain, each link representing a certain amount of money.

# Daily schedule

Several meeting times are included in each day: Gather, Worship, Respond, and Send. The schedule for a 2-hour-and-15-minute Bible school session is as follows:

## 1. Gather (10 minutes)

Children gather in small groups with their Group leader to begin the day. The Group leader will take attendance, answer questions, and make sure everyone is ready for VBS. The Group leader will accompany the children to the various VBS segments.

## 2. Worship (25 minutes)

All the groups will gather in one area for Worship time. This large-group experience includes a call to worship, music, offering, and a drama to present the day's Bible story.

## 3. Respond (30 minutes each)

Small groups will rotate among three Response stations each day. Activities focus on the Bible story themes; the Creative Response time includes a snack.

- **Active Response** (games and activities)
- **Bible Response** (Bible story discussion, student book activities)
- **Creative Response** (crafts and snack)

## 4. Send (10 minutes)

Children will meet in their small groups for a sending blessing and to be dismissed.

## Modified schedule

If your VBS program allows for less time, here are scheduling options:

### If you have 2 hours:

**Gather**—5 to 10 minutes

**Worship**—25 minutes

**Respond**—75 minutes

- Active—25 minutes
- Bible—25 minutes
- Creative—25 minutes

**Send**—5 to 10 minutes

### If you have 1½ hours:

**Gather**—5 minutes

**Worship**—20 minutes

**Respond**—60 minutes

- Active—20 minutes
- Bible—20 minutes
- Creative—20 minutes

**Send**—5 minutes

### If you have 1 hour:

**Worship**—15 minutes

**Respond**—45 minutes

- Active—15 minutes
- Bible—15 minutes
- Creative—15 minutes

# Day 1

# Love God and Your Neighbor



## Today's Bible experience

Mark 12:28-34

Jesus speaks of the importance of loving God and loving neighbors.

## Purpose statement

To discover Jesus' instructions to love God and neighbor

## Bible memory

"Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.'" —Mark 12:28b-29

## Fratelli Tutti

#56-86

## Bible background

Today's Scripture from Mark and its parallels in other Gospels raise questions that have dogged readers for 20 centuries: What does it look like to love God with every fiber of our being? Who is my neighbor? Who is it that we are to love and tend as faithfully as we feed and groom our own bodies? These are questions that every generation needs to revisit.

Mark's version of the dialogue about the greatest commandment moves slowly and has a contemplative feel to it. Earlier in chapter 12, hostility underlies the verbal sparring between Jesus and the religious authorities, but here, the questioner seems sincere. Perhaps he intends to make peace by focusing everyone's attention on what matters most. At any rate, a sense of awe descends as we tiptoe through this passage, wondering what it means to love God with all our strength, heart, and mind.

In some ways, Jesus' answer is conventional: even the smallest Jewish children would have known the command to love God with all your heart, and they would have seen it written on doorframes, as is described in Deuteronomy 6:4-8. However, the command to "love your neighbor as yourself" occurs only once in the Hebrew Bible (Leviticus 19:18). It comes from a rather obscure

passage about not taking revenge. Jesus binds love of God and love of neighbor together in a fresh way that reshapes our understanding of both kinds of love.

In Luke's version of this conversation, the emphasis shifts to loving our neighbors, and Jesus is pushed to define what he means by that. His out-of-the-box reply features a compassionate Samaritan acting as neighbor to the victim of a crime, which we will explore in Day 2 of VBS.

Learning to love God and others is a lifelong pursuit. Children can show their love for God through peaceful and loving relationships with others. They can show their love for others through simple actions that help make the world a good place for themselves and others to enjoy. Throwing away trash, watering a garden, and caring for pets are practical ways for children to nurture God's world and thereby show love for God and others. They can imagine that God longs for a life-giving, beautiful earth to be enjoyed by children for many years in the future.

Use this session to help the children think about concrete ways to show love to others. Make sure that the children feel loved, too.

## Session materials

- Bibles
- Bible memory poster or slide show and projector
- Offering containers

## Advance preparation

- Pray for the adults and children who will participate in VBS. May they be open to discovering who their neighbors are and how to be a good neighbor.
- Read Mark 12:28-34 and the Bible background (p. 6) to become familiar with today's story. Read the Worship plan and practice the readings.
- Prepare the Bible memory slide show, and practice teaching the passage (p. 8).
- Learn about your VBS offering project and prepare to share it with the children. Create a visual for keeping track of the giving (p. 4).
- Work with the music team, letting them know which songs you would like to sing during Worship time. "Love Is What We Need," "Everybody's Always Welcome Here," and "Love Like That" are good matches for this day.
- Work with the drama leader to make sure actors are rehearsed and props and other items are gathered.

# Worship plan

## Gathering

1. **Have the music team play music** as the children enter the worship space ("Everybody's Always Welcome Here" is a good choice). Make sure that everyone knows where to sit and feels welcome during this time. Demonstrate neighborliness by smiling, saying hello, shaking hands, and nodding at children as they gather.
2. **Greet the children enthusiastically.** Say:

*Welcome to the very first day of vacation Bible school! I'm so glad you are joining us today, and I hope you'll be back for the other days of VBS, too.*

*Today as we gathered, I greeted you like neighbors greet each other. Neighbors smile, shake hands, and say hello. Not only are you my neighbor, but the people sitting next to you are neighbors, too. Look at the person on one side of you. Now look at the person on the other side. They're your neighbors! Now that you know that, greet each other like neighbors do. Shake hands or do a fist bump, then tell each other your names. (Allow time for children to greet each other.)*

*During VBS, we're going to talk a lot about neighbors. In fact, VBS is called "Who Is My Neighbor?" We'll find out that we have many more neighbors than just the people sitting next to us. Plus, we're going to find out how to be neighborly with each other.*

*Why are we talking about this? Well, for one thing, Pope Francis wrote a long letter to us and to everyone in the world asking us to become better neighbors to people who are close to us and those who are far away. He asked us to learn what Jesus had to say about neighbors. Listen closely today and you will find out what Jesus said.*



## Worshipping

Encourage children to bring their Bible to Bible school. Help them find the stories and memory passages.

- 1. Begin worship with a movement prayer.** Invite the children to repeat it after you and to do the motions. Pray:

God, we are here to learn about you. (*Extend arms straight forward.*)  
We are here to grow in our love for you. (*Reach arms up.*)  
We are here to grow in our love for our neighbors. Amen. (*Extend arms out to sides.*)
- 2. Say a call to worship.** Have the children practice saying the words “Love God and love your neighbor,” and invite them to repeat the line throughout the call to worship. Be sure to indicate when the children are to say the words.

Leader: Jesus had many things to say about neighbors. He said,  
All: “Love God and love your neighbor.”  
Leader: Jesus wants us to follow what he said,  
All: “Love God and love your neighbor.”  
Leader: We will remember Jesus’ words,  
All: “Love God and love your neighbor.”
- 3. Invite the music team to lead singing.** Sing the theme song, “Love Is What We Need,” and other selections from the music collection. Sing other songs you know your group will enjoy.
- 4. Introduce the Bible memory passage.** Open your Bible to Mark 12 and let the children know that not only is this today’s memory verse, but it is also part of today’s Bible story! Tell them that they will learn a verse each day so that eventually, they will learn the entire Bible passage.

Invite the children to read it with you from their Bibles, the Bible memory poster, or the Bible memory slide show.

*“Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’” —Mark 12:28b-29*

Repeat the verse together several times. Explain that commandments are like rules. Commandments are things God gave us to live by so that we can honor God and each other. The commandment in today’s memory passage lets us know that there is one God. The next part of the memory passage, that will be learned tomorrow, will tell us more about how we are to honor God.

Memorizing the Bible memory verses will also be worked on during the Bible Response time.

- 5. Show the children Mark 12:28-34 in your Bible.** Explain that a drama will say more about these verses. Say:

*We will watch a drama every day during VBS. All of the dramas will tell us something about being neighbors. Listen carefully to today’s drama, because you will hear what Jesus has to say about neighbors. You will also hear at least one verse you already know!*
- 6. Transition to the drama** (pp. 27-28).



## Responding

The questions help children reflect on the story and what it might mean for them. You are welcome to choose which questions apply best to your group; you do not need to ask all of them.

1. **Ask the children what they heard** during the drama that they recognized (*the first part of the memory passage*). What else did they see and hear? Allow time for them to think silently as you ask questions. If it would work for your group, after a time of silence, give the children 30 seconds to tell a neighbor their thoughts about the questions.
  - I wonder why the scribe liked questions.
  - I wonder how we can love God with our minds.
  - I wonder why it is so important to love our neighbors.
  - What new ways of loving your neighbors might we practice today that no one would have known about in Jesus' day?
  - Imagine being part of a question and answer time with Jesus. What would you like to ask him?
2. **Introduce the offering project.** Explain that one way we practice loving our neighbors is by sharing what we have with others. Explain how the offering will be collected and how the visual represents the total amount of money collected each day.

## Sending

1. **Invite the music team to lead singing.** "We Are the Light" is a good sending song with simple lyrics to let the children know that when we act as a good neighbor our example shines for others to see.
2. **Explain the schedule.** Every day after Worship time, children will go with their assigned group and do activities and make crafts that relate to loving God and loving our neighbors.
3. **Give a sending blessing:**

*Jesus taught us many things today. As you go about your day, think about how you can show that you love God and our neighbors.*

# Bible Dramas

## Dramas help to bring the Bible stories to life in *Who Is My Neighbor?*

### Characters and costumes

Each drama includes a list of characters. Try to recruit mature individuals who can add strength to the dramas, as well as youth and children who can learn from more experienced actors. Working with several families would be ideal for having mixed ages, scheduling rehearsals, and encouraging memorization at home.

All of the dramas take place during Bible times, so characters should wear costumes such as robes with a belt and sandals. Some of the characters could also wear a headband or cloth.

### Set design

All of the dramas take place during Bible times. Though no specific set designs are needed, a few simple set pieces could add a general sense of the biblical stories.

- Place large potted plants or fig trees around the stage.
- Create a winding stone-lined path from stage left to stage right where the characters will walk.
- Add a stone or brick wall (or partial wall) at the back of the stage.
- Place clay pots in front of the wall, or grouped along the path.
- Add a stone-made fire ring.
- Add mats in front of the wall or along the path.

### Rehearsals

Create a rehearsal schedule and make sure that the actors can attend. Distribute scripts several weeks in advance and encourage actors to become familiar with their lines. Make it clear whether or not actors are to memorize the scripts. If so, give memorization goal dates. If memorizing seems too daunting, suggest that actors write their lines on small cue cards to carry with them.

Start by having actors read through the drama without moving around to allow them to get familiar with their lines. During the second read-through, begin to work with the actors on their blocking. Instruct them to move as their lines suggest. During the third read-through, give actors more concrete directions for movements. At the end of each rehearsal, take a moment or two to make helpful comments. Make sure everyone writes down your comments to them on their copy of the script.

There may be times when you wish to go through only part of a drama. Be clear in your instructions and considerate of those with smaller parts. It may be possible to practice their scenes first and allow them to leave.

Above all, have fun! The dramas were written to be enjoyed by actors and audience alike. When the characters are well prepared and rehearsals are fun, the stories will come to life and the audience will get the message.

## Day One

# Love God and Your Neighbor

### Mark 12:28-34

#### Characters

- Jesus
- Scribe
- Person
- Crowd (three to five people, may be children attending VBS)

*(Jesus and the crowd stand center stage. Jesus is talking quietly to them. Scribe and Person enter stage left.)*

**Scribe:** *(pointing to Jesus)* Look—there’s Jesus! He always has lots of good things to say. I wonder what he’s telling the people.

**Person:** *(motioning to the Scribe)* Come on, let’s get closer so we can hear better.

*(Scribe and Person slowly move closer to the crowd.)*

**Scribe:** Oh, no! It sounds like there’s an argument.

**Person:** I heard that Jesus is good at settling arguments. He always seems to know the right thing to say.

**Scribe:** I wonder if he could answer my question.

**Person:** You have a question?

**Scribe:** Oh, I have many questions. But what I really want to know is, what is the most important commandment of all?

**Person:** Commandment? You mean like a rule we should follow?

**Scribe:** Yes, that’s kind of what a commandment is. Can you imagine a place without commandments or rules? How would people know what to do or how to treat each other or how to act?

**Person:** That’s not a place where I would want to be. If there were no commandments or rules, people would do whatever they wanted to do! Some people might not be very nice to each other.

**Scribe:** But there are many commandments and in case I forget some of them, I want to make sure that still I follow the most important one. I’ll ask Jesus about it. *(raising hand and waving)* Jesus! Jesus!

**Jesus:** (*notices Scribe*) Yes? What do you want?

**Scribe:** Jesus, I have a question for you. Which commandment is the most important one?

**Jesus:** (*holds up one finger*) The first commandment is, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” (*holds up two fingers*) The second is this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.

**Scribe:** You are right, Teacher. There is no other God. And the most important thing is to love God with your whole self and to love others the way you love yourself. This is more important than all offerings or sacrifices a person could ever make.

**Jesus:** You are right. You are close to the kingdom of God.

*(Scribe and Person walk away, toward stage right.)*

**Scribe:** Wow, I knew Jesus could answer my question. Now I know without a doubt that I am to love God with my whole being, and I am to love neighbors as I love myself.

**Person:** Can you imagine what it would be like if everyone lived like that?

**Scribe:** If we all loved our neighbors as ourselves, we would treat each other the way we want to be treated.

**Person:** I want people to treat me kindly, so if I love my neighbors, I will treat them kindly, too.

**Scribe:** And I like when people do nice things for me. It sounds like I can love my neighbor by doing nice things for others.

**Person:** These commandments sure sound like a good way to live!