



WORSHIP AND DRAMA GUIDE

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**Growing Up
Catholic**
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Introduction

Listen up! Dig deep! Jesus had a lot to say. And those who listened discovered a treasure in his words.

At first, Jesus' parables seem simple. Of course we know that the type of soil in which seeds are sown is important for plants to grow, but what does that have to do with us? And if someone asked us for food, we wouldn't be rude and give a stone instead! Or, what if we lost something important to us? Of course we would look high and low and celebrate when it was found.

It turns out, however, that the parables have a greater meaning beyond what we first see. So come along, listen, and dig deeper for the treasures of the kingdom of heaven!

Each Worship time includes:

- **Gathering**—Children enter into worship by making connections between the Bible story and their lives.
- **Worshipping**—Children worship through music, a call to worship, Bible memory, and watching a drama of the day's parable.
- **Responding**—Children reflect on the story by pondering questions and praying, and through an offering project.
- **Sending**—Children receive a sending blessing and sing a sending song.

Each session plan includes the day's Scripture, Bible background, 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 the Worship time.

Leaders for worship

Several adult leaders are needed for the Worship time:

- **Worship leader:** lead the children in worship and coordinate the other Worship time leaders.
- **Music leader:** choose songs and lead the singing; lead a worship band, if desired.
- **Drama leader:** find people for the roles and coordinate the drama, including props and rehearsals.
- **Bible memory leader:** introduce the Bible memory passage and guide children in learning portions of it each day.

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

Music

VBS music is available in the *Digging for Treasure* music collection and songbook. Music is an important part of worship, and songs will be used at regular intervals throughout the Worship time. Song can be used in each session for the following:

- Praise and gathering songs are sung at the beginning of the Worship time. You may want to choose the same songs each day so that the children learn to know them well, or you may want to sing different songs so that children sing a variety of songs.
- Prayer songs can be sung before praying together. Singing a recognized song each day will signal that it is time to talk with God.
- Sending songs can be sung at the end of each session to mark that it is time to move on to other activities.

In addition to these suggested times, play music as children enter the worship space and as they leave to go to the next VBS activity.

Worship Art Display Banner

For this optional activity, children create items during Creative Response time for a worship banner to be displayed in the worship space. On Days 1–4, the children will make a “secret” craft that has something to do with the next day’s parable. Children can try to figure out the link, but will ultimately not know the full reason for the craft until the next day, when the secret is revealed and understood as they listen to the parable during Worship time.

Be sure to work with the Creative Response leader if you would like to display the banner in the worship space.

The banner can be created from a large sheet of paper or cloth. Items will need to be attached with glue or tape. The size of the banner can be altered depending on the space in the Worship time area. Keep in mind that four days’ worth of crafts will be added to the banner—when determining its size, take into consideration the number of children and the size of the items that they will make.

Things to consider:

- **The banner will need to be accessed before each Worship time** to add the children’s crafts that represent the parable for that day.
- **It will need to be large enough** to accommodate four days of crafts by each child.
- **It will need to be made of a material** to which crafts can be glued or taped.

The banner will feature:

- **Day 1:** blank
- **Day 2:** on about one-quarter of the banner, create a scene with a path and attach the rock, thorn, and weed crafts made on Day 1
- **Day 3:** on about one-quarter of the banner, add the bread and plant/tree crafts the children made on Day 2
- **Day 4:** on about one-quarter of the banner, add the sheep and coins that the children made on Day 3
- **Day 5:** on about one-quarter of the banner, attach the doors that the children made on Day 4

Bible memory

One Bible memory passage is featured throughout the week, focusing on a section of the passage each day until the end of VBS, when the entire passage is said together.

► **Show the Bible memory poster or the Bible memory slide show presentation from the download page or the Resource CD. Invite children to read the passage with you.**

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. —1 John 4:7-9

► **The Bible memory passage is from the *New Revised Standard Version*. You may use a preferred translation.**

Motions provide a fun and easy way for children to learn the Bible memory passage. The following are suggestions:

Beloved, let us love (*make a heart with hands*)
one another, (*open arms wide*)
because love is from God; (*point up with both hands*)
everyone who loves (*make a heart with hands*)
is born of God (*point up with both hands*)
and knows (*point to head*)
God. (*point up*)
Whoever does not love (*form an X with forearms*)
does not know God, (*form an X with forearms, shake head*)
for God is love. (*make a heart with hands*)
God's love (*point up with both hands*)
was revealed (*cover eyes and then uncover them, like peekaboo*)
among us (*stretch out left arm*)
in this way: (*stretch out right arm*)
God (*point up with both hands*)
sent his only Son (*cradle arms as if holding a baby*)
into the world so that we (*open arms wide*)
might live (*crouch down, then jump up*)
through him. (*point up*)

In addition to motions, there are other fun ways to memorize Bible passages. Use these suggestions or your own ideas to make Bible memory fun and easy.

- March or clap on each syllable.
- Use rhythm instruments to create a chant.
- Toss a balloon and have children, one at a time, tap it as each word is said. Or, give children their own balloons to keep in the air, tapping them as each word is said.
- Make a word scramble. Write one word per card. Hand out the cards in no particular order, and invite children to unscramble the words and stand in line with the passage in order.
- Toss a ball or beanbag; as a child catches it, he or she must say the next word in the passage.
- Invite children to illustrate key words or phrases.
- Write one word per card and place the passage on the wall. Say the passage several times, each time removing one or more words.
- Divide into groups and have them alternate saying words or phrases of the passage.

Offering project

Digging for Treasure includes an offering project suggestion to Heifer International, an organization which works with communities to end world hunger and poverty and care for the earth. Children will be excited that as they are learning parables involving farmers, bread bakers, seeds, and sheep, they can help small-scale farmers in developing countries to feed their families by becoming more self-sufficient. Like the shepherd who found his sheep and the woman who found her lost coin, the children can celebrate their gift of generosity which will help other families to help themselves.

Of course, feel free to choose another recipient for donated funds, perhaps Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Charities, or a ministry your parish is already connected to and supports.

Heifer International

Dan West was a Christian farmer from the Midwest who went to the front lines of the Spanish Civil War as an aid worker. His mission was to provide relief, but he soon discovered the meager single cup of milk rationed to the weary refugees once a day was not enough. And then he had a thought: What if they had not a cup, but a cow? That “teach a man to fish” philosophy is what drove West to found Heifer International.

Now, nearly 70 years later, that philosophy still inspires Heifer’s work to end world hunger and poverty. Giving an animal is like giving someone a small business, providing wool, milk, eggs and more. Animal donations can provide families a hand up, increasing access to medicine, school, food and a sustainable livelihood. As little as \$20 will provide a flock of baby chicks to one family. More than that can buy goats, sheep, honeybees, ducks, rabbits, cows and more. Your VBS can choose how many and which animals to gift based on the week’s donation.

The core of Heifer’s model is “Passing on the Gift.” This means families share the training they receive, and pass on the first female offspring of their livestock to another family. This extends the impact of the original gift, allowing a once impoverished family to become donors and full participants in improving their communities.

Go to <http://www.heifer.org/gift-catalog> to see all the possible options for your donation.

You may want to show the children the two minute video clip on Heifer’s website to help them understand how gifting animals to families in need helps them.

► **To make your donation, go to Heifer.org and click on “Donate.”**

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 to the children the progress that is made. Be sure to thank children for their generosity!

Here are some ideas for an offering visual:

- **Create a treasure chest that reveals the amount of money contributed.** Take a box and paint it to look like a chest. Add a large paper coin or small “jeweled” stone to the chest to represent a certain amount of money. Or use a transparent container for the coins or stones.
- **Draw and cut out paper animals representing the animals you can gift** with the particular amount of money donated. Attach the animals to the wall to show how much money has been contributed.
- Another way to represent something small getting larger is to cut strips of paper and make a chain. Each link will represent a set amount of money.

Daily schedule

Schedule is for a 2-hour-and-15-minute Bible school session as follows:

Gather

(10 minutes)

Small groups meet to begin the session.

Worship

(25 minutes)

Small groups gather for worship. The parables are presented through a drama.

Bible/Creative/ Active Response

(30 minutes each)

Small groups rotate to participate in three stations each day. Activities focus on Bible story themes. Creative Response time includes a snack.

Send

(10 minutes)

Small groups gather for a sending blessing and dismissal.

Modified schedule

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

It's a Secret

Bible background

Jesus sometimes told stories in the form of parables. Parables use common objects and concepts to point toward a deeper meaning. Today's text is a brief introduction as to why Jesus spoke this way. And just as the parables themselves need to be unpacked to become clear, so too today's texts need to be unpacked.

The parables seem a bit mysterious. The reason Jesus gives for speaking in parables seems equally mysterious: "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven."

The verses between today's texts follow this comment by noting that some people see and hear, but they don't understand. However, at the end of today's text, Jesus adds, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear."

What does all this mean? What do eyes and ears and the kingdom of heaven have to do with stories about everyday items?

Just as the everyday items are with us, so the kingdom of heaven is here among us. Though at first it might not have been apparent to those around Jesus, if they watched and listened, they would have seen that the kingdom of heaven was not only present, but also growing. Just as the parables are not understood at the first hearing, so the kingdom of heaven is not always understood or visible to those who may be searching for it.

The kingdom of heaven did not arrive with all the pomp and circumstance that the people of Jesus' day expected. Instead, it arrived in a humble way. Though it began small, it would become so large that it would offer salvation and eternal life to those who believed. All people needed to do to notice was to open their eyes and their ears. The secrets of the kingdom of heaven have been given. God will help people understand.

Today's texts will encourage children to notice what is around them so that they can better understand what Jesus said. They too can unlock the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven if they notice the way people around them follow Jesus. Do they hear kind words spoken? Do they see caring gestures from one person to another?

As a leader, you have the honor of helping children see and hear the kingdom of heaven around them. Take a moment to ask for God's help as you lead vacation Bible school.



Today's Bible experience

Matthew 13:10-11a, 16

Purpose statement

God will help us understand.

Summary

The disciples ask Jesus why he speaks in parables, and Jesus explains that it is so they can know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.

Bible memory

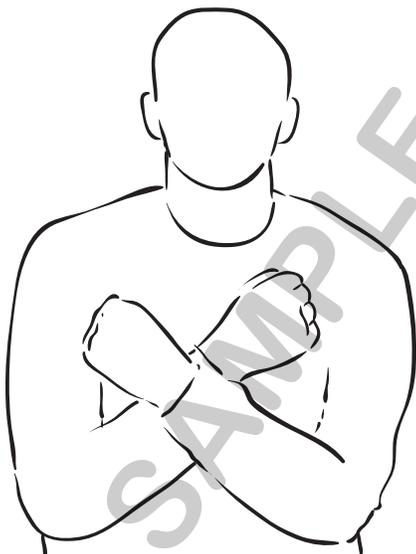
Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. —1 John 4:7-9

Session materials

- Bible
- Bible memory poster or slide show presentation, and projector
- *Digging for Treasure* music collection, songbook, and music player

Advance preparation

- Pray for everyone involved in Bible school—adults as they prepare and lead, and children as they learn.
- Read Matthew 13:10-11a, 16. Read over the Worship plan and prepare for today's worship. Practice the readings and prepare what you will say during worship.
- If a music group is leading singing, have the group practice the songs.
- Coordinate logistics with other Worship time leaders.
- Practice teaching the memory passage (p. 4).
- Learn about the offering project (p. 5) and prepare to share about it with the children. Create visuals for keeping track of the giving (p. 5).
- Display the blank Worship Art Display Banner (p. 3) in the worship space. (*optional*)



Worship plan

Gathering

1. **As children gather** in the worship space, play music from the *Digging for Treasure* music collection or have the music group sing.
2. **Welcome everyone to the first day** of vacation Bible school and introduce the theme, “Digging for Treasure.” VBS will be an exciting time of discovering treasure and learning about mysteries of the kingdom of God. What will we look for when we dig? What kind of treasure are we supposed to find?

Tell the children that as we uncover the treasure, God will help us understand what it means. As we hear stories that Jesus told, God will help us understand them. As we listen and pay attention today and throughout VBS, God will help us understand what we are to learn. Say:

Jesus told lots of stories, and we will hear some of them this week. These stories are called “parables.” Parables are special stories that teach us things. As we hear the parables, we will discover treasures about the kingdom of God.

God wants us to pay attention. Today we’ll hear a blessing that Jesus gave to help us understand. Are you ready to listen?

Worshipping

1. **Lead the call to worship.** Prepare children to help say the call to worship, inviting them to say “For God is love” when prompted. Demonstrate how to make sign language for the word *love*, which the children should sign as they speak. Practice speaking and signing several times.

Let the children know that the words you speak are from the Bible. Open your Bible and show them where Psalm 95:1-2 is found.

Leader: O come, let us sing to the Lord; (*sign “love”*)

Response: **for God is love.** (*children sign “love”*)

Leader: Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! (*sign “love”*)

Response: **For God is love.** (*children sign “love”*)

Leader: Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; (*sign “love”*)

Response: **for God is love.** (*children sign “love”*)

Leader: Let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! (*sign “love”*)

Response: **For God is love.** (*sign “love”*)

Everyone: **Amen.**

2. **Sing praise and gathering songs** from the *Digging for Treasure* music collection.
3. **Introduce the Bible memory passage.** Explain that every day the children will learn part of a passage, and at the end of VBS, all the parts will be put together.

Open your Bible to 1 John 4:7-9. Invite children to read it with you from their Bibles, the Bible memory poster, or the Bible memory slide show. Repeat today's portion, using motions or memorization ideas on page 4.

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

Explain that the Bible memory passage tells the story of God's love for us. It is because of God's love that we have Jesus' stories and can learn about the treasures of the kingdom of God.

► **Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. —1 John 4:7-9**

4. **Open your Bible** to Matthew 13:10-11a, 16 and explain that the drama will tell us about these verses.
5. **Introduce the drama.** Invite the two actors onto the stage and introduce them, using their real names. Explain that each day the actors will teach one of Jesus' stories, called parables, from the Bible. Say:

Are you ready to hear from Becky and Thomas? All right, let's give them a big welcome!

► **The dramas use the names Becky and Thomas; however, we invite your actors to use their given names. They will be the key players in each of the five dramas.**

6. **Watch the drama** (pp. 29-30).

Responding

1. **Ask the children** to think about what they saw and heard during the drama. Were there any treasures uncovered? Were there any mysteries mentioned?

Allow time for children to think silently as you reflect and ask questions.

- I wonder why Jesus told stories to the people.
 - Do you think Jesus wants us to be curious about his stories?
 - Jesus blesses our ears and eyes. He said this because that's how we hear and see. But what if somebody can't hear or see very well? (Add that Jesus wants us to pay attention with all our senses. No matter how eyes and ears work, we can still find ways to pay attention to God's Word.)
2. **Sing together one or more songs** from the *Digging for Treasure* music collection.
 3. **Share these insights from Pope Francis** (from his statements on 6/20/14):

Pope Francis has said a lot about Jesus' parables and the treasure we can find in them. Jesus used his stories to help people who were confused about what was really valuable. He saw that they were doing everything they could to try to get money and gold or to find ways to show off or to be more important. Jesus said, "Don't waste your time on those kinds of treasures! They just weight down your hearts so you always want more. I'm going to tell you about treasures that set your hearts free, like love and patience and giving to others. Then you can tell everyone the secrets of God's kind of treasure!"

4. **Pray:**

Dear Jesus, thank you so much that we can learn about you through the parables. Help us to pay attention and learn from you. We want to be closer to you. Amen.

5. **Introduce the offering project.** The offering project and visuals are suggested on pages 5. Share about the offering project and how the money that is given will help to build up the kingdom of God. Explain how the offering will be gathered, and how the visual represents the total amount of money collected each day.

Sending

1. **Explain the schedule.** Every day after Worship time, children will go with their assigned group and explore activities and make crafts related to the theme of the day.
2. **Give a sending blessing** based on Matthew 13:16. Say:

This is God's blessing for you: Blessed are your eyes! Blessed are your ears! See and hear God's Word!

3. **Sing a sending song** from the *Digging for Treasure* music collection.