

SURPRISE!

STORIES OF
DISCOVERING JESUS

ACTIVE RESPONSE GUIDE

Surprise! Stories of Discovering Jesus Active Response Guide

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

INTRODUCTION

Jesus surprised the people he met! People in the temple were amazed by the conversations and questions they had with a boy named Jesus. Hungry people in a crowd had more than enough food to eat when Jesus provided plenty of food. Two travelers were sad that Jesus died, but then they were surprised when Jesus started walking alongside them! With each surprise, people discovered more about Jesus.

Are you ready to be surprised by Jesus? Are you ready to ask questions and discover more about him? Then come along on the journey, open your eyes, and see what you will find!

Several games and activity ideas are offered each day, but you are not expected to do all of them. Focus on the activities most appropriate for your group. The ideas are intended to be user-friendly for grades K–5, but can be adapted for other ages. Some of the activities require a large space, so think about outdoor places that can be used, such as a lawn, parking lot, or nearby park. Some of the activities require more adult supervision than others, depending on the age group involved, so invite other adults and well as youth to help. Regardless of which activities are chosen, the *Surprise!* themes will be extended in fun and creative ways.

OUTLINE

The daily plan includes the Bible background, faith focus, and memory verses. Read them to understand how the activities and games connect with the theme, and to guide you as you interact with the children. The variety of games and activities allows you to be flexible and consider the needs and abilities of your groups when planning each segment.

PRIMARY CHILDREN

Primary children are both endearing and challenging, and often open and affectionate. They may enjoy doing things on their own one minute, but want the leader's attention and guidance the next. Projects completed independently, though imperfect, are more satisfying than those completed by the leader.

Primary children think mainly about themselves and need encouragement to consider others and their needs. Sharing is hard for them, but repeated intervention is effective. Always acknowledge the children's feelings, even while correcting inappropriate actions. If you treat children with respect you will have encouraged positive behavior because primary children look up to their leaders and try to emulate them.

Primary children have lots of ideas and want to share them. They need space to express themselves and feel they are contributing to the group.

MIDDLER CHILDREN

At this age, children are becoming less self-centered and are able to understand another's point of view. They are big on fairness and rules, and will quickly tell you when something is unfair. Clearly communicate your expectations about group behavior. Follow through on your expectations. When working on a new skill or project, middler children show amazing focus and determination. They take criticism seriously, so try to frame comments in a positive way. Middlers tend to have best friends and can exclude others. Peers are important to them. While some still want to please their leaders, others are beginning to challenge authority. Model respect in your words and actions.

Children at this age show great developmental differences (physical, intellectual, psychological, social, and spiritual). Be aware of these differences and provide opportunities for everyone to contribute as they are comfortable. For example, reading abilities can range greatly. Be sensitive to any child's reluctance to read aloud. Many children are eager to read and comfortable doing it, while others find it difficult or embarrassing.

Middler children are full of energy and enthusiasm. Their bodies are growing and need physical activity. Whenever possible, provide opportunities to move around.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Schedule is for a 2-hour-and-15-minute Bible school session. For other session times, see below.

<p>GATHER (10 minutes) Small groups meet to begin the session.</p>	<p>WORSHIP (25 minutes) Small groups converge for worship. A drama presents the Bible story.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>SEND (10 minutes) Blessing and dismissal in small groups or in total group assembly.</p>
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Modified schedule

If you have 2 hours:

Gather—5 or 10 minutes
Worship—20 minutes
Respond—75 minutes
 Active—25 minutes
 Bible—25 minutes
 Creative—25 minutes
Send—5 or 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

**DISCOVERING JESUS
IN THE TEMPLE****Biblical background**

The Bible shares just this one story about Jesus' boyhood. It is an important one for children, helping them to understand that Jesus was young once, too.

At age 12, Jesus travels with his parents to Jerusalem to observe the Passover festival. We know from Mary and Joseph's presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple that they observed traditional religious events and rituals. It is no surprise that they make the journey to Jerusalem for Passover. Their faith is a natural part of their life and part of their identity.

Most of the story takes place after the event, as the family travels home. After a full day of walking, Mary and Joseph discover that Jesus is not with them. They are traveling with a group—a community of family and friends—and assumed Jesus was walking with others.

When they realize Jesus is missing, they return to Jerusalem and search for three days until they find him in the temple. Jesus is with the teachers, talking, listening, and asking questions. The teachers are surprised and amazed at his understanding!

When Mary tells Jesus how worried they were, he responds, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (v. 49). Neither Mary nor Joseph fully understands, but Mary treasures the experience.

This story reminds us to take children and their faith experiences seriously, as the teachers did with the young Jesus. Young children are capable of reflecting about God, so embrace their enthusiasm and allow their faith to grow.

Hearing a story about Jesus as a boy allows children to see him as someone who understands them. When Jesus was in the temple, he asked questions as many children do. As a result, he grew in wisdom. Children will learn that they can ask questions, too, and learn and grow in their faith.

Today's Bible experience

Luke 2:41-52

Summary

Jesus' parents travel home to Nazareth after observing Passover in Jerusalem and discover that 12-year-old Jesus is not with them. They return to Jerusalem and find Jesus in the temple, asking questions and talking with the teachers.

Bible memory

"Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them. —Mark 10:14b-16

Faith focus

We can ask questions and grow in wisdom.

Advance preparation

- Choose games and activities appropriate for your VBS group.
- Find appropriate places for the activities. Some are best done indoors, while others may be done outside at a nearby park, lawn, or parking lot.
- Prepare supplies needed for each activity.

Daily plan

1. **Greet the children.** Ask volunteers to share one exciting or interesting thing from their previous VBS session.
2. **Introduce the activity time.** Today's activities focus on seeking wisdom and asking questions as ways to grow in our faith, just as Jesus asked questions and grew. Explain the directions for the chosen activities. Afterward, take time to discuss the questions listed after each activity, making connections between the activity and the Bible story.
3. **Close in prayer:** *God, we give thanks for our bodies that grow. We give thanks for our minds that can learn your ways. We give thanks for our spirits that can hear your voice speaking to us. Amen.*

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

Unwrapping Wisdom

Materials

- Box
- Wrapping paper or newspaper
- Tape
- Scissors
- Small candies or other treats, one per child
- Slips of paper with verses about seeking wisdom (page 25), one per child
- *Surprise!* CD

In preparation, place small candies or other treats inside a box. Copy reproducible page 25 and cut apart the slips of paper, and place them inside the box along with the treats. Wrap the box with several layers of wrapping paper or newspaper.

1. Invite children to sit on the floor in a circle.
2. Play the CD as the children pass the box around the circle. Stop the music at various intervals. When the music ends, the child holding the box needs to (a) ask a question or make a comment about today's Bible story and (b) unwrap a layer of paper.
3. Continue until all layers are removed from the box. Open it and show everyone what is inside.
4. Pass the box around the circle again so that all may select a treat and a piece of paper.
5. Read the Bible verses aloud while enjoying the treats.

THINK ABOUT IT: The box had many layers of wrapping paper. We didn't just unwrap one layer to discover what was inside. We unwrapped many layers. How might the process of unwrapping many layers be an example of the way we are to seek wisdom?

We shared the process of unwrapping the box. Can you think of ways that you benefit from connecting with others as you learn about God?

Finding Information

Materials

- Several items that are symbolic of seeking information or wisdom, such as Bibles, magnifying glasses, dictionaries, phones, songbooks, tablets, and others

1. Select one child to begin the game. The child will hide one object somewhere in the room. The other children will close their eyes and turn their backs so that they cannot see where the object is hidden. (Or, the children may need to leave the room while the object is hidden.) Signal the group after the object is hidden.
2. As children search for the object, the one who hid it will say "Wiser" to encourage those who are moving close to the object.
3. The one who finds the object hides the next one.
4. After all objects are hidden and found, look at them and think about what they might have in common. (They can be used to obtain information or increase learning about the world, God, or others.)

THINK ABOUT IT: How do people look for information? How do you find out what you need to know? What are some ways we can learn about God?

Guessing Game

Materials

- Cards from page 26
- Scissors
- Beanbag or soft ball

1. Invite children to sit in a circle.
2. Choose one child to act as the wise person and select a card, keeping the content of the card secret.
3. Explain that all of the cards have words that relate to today's Bible story. The group may ask 20 questions of the wise person in order to try and discover what is on the card.
4. To play, select a child to be the guesser, who will hold the beanbag or ball. The guesser will ask a question of the wise person in order to try and discover what is written on the card. The question must be able to be answered either "yes" or "no."
5. The guesser then tosses the beanbag to another member of the circle, who asks another question of the wise person.
6. Continue until someone in the circle believes that he or she knows the answer. The group will confer, and if the group believes the guess is correct, they may ask the wise person. This counts as one of the 20 guesses.
7. If a guess is correct, select another wise person. Repeat the process using the other cards.

THINK ABOUT IT: What were some of the trickier words to discover? What do you think made them tricky? What do you think drew Jesus to stay and talk with the community of teachers at the temple?

Yarn Surprises

Materials

- Pieces of yarn, one color per group of four children, one yarn per child

In preparation, hide the yarn in various places around the room.

1. Explain that there are pieces of yarn around the room, and allow time for the children to find them. After a child has found a piece, he or she will sit on the floor and wait for others to find their pieces.
2. Have the children get into groups according to the color of yarn they found.
3. Invite children to think creatively and discover many things they can do with the yarn. To get the children thinking, here are some ideas: tie hair, make a bracelet, braid it, create outlines of letters or pictures, and so on. How many things can the groups think of?
4. Allow time for groups to share their creative thinking with others.

THINK ABOUT IT: You needed to discover the yarn, and then figure out ways to use the yarn. How did your group work together to discover uses for the yarn? Were there any surprises in how the yarn was used? During VBS we are going to discover stories about Jesus, and some of them will surprise us!

Reproducible page

UNWRAPPING WISDOM

With God are wisdom and strength; he has counsel and understanding. —Job 12:13

*You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. —Psalm 51:6*

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools
despise wisdom and instruction. —Proverbs 1:7*

*To get wisdom is to love oneself;
to keep understanding is to prosper. —Proverbs 19:8*

*I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a
spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him. —Ephesians 1:17*

*Happy are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. Happy are
those who keep his decrees, who seek him with their whole heart. —Psalm 119:1-2*

*But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full
of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. —James 3:17*

*From there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him if you
search after him with all your heart and soul. —Deuteronomy 4:29*

Reproducible page

GUESSING GAME

Cut the cards out for use in the guessing game.

TEMPLE	TEACHER	QUESTION
TRIP	MOTHER	FATHER
FRIEND	BOY	