

SURPRISE!

STORIES OF
DISCOVERING JESUS

CREATIVE RESPONSE GUIDE

Surprise! Stories of Discovering Jesus Creative Response Guide

Portions of this work copyright © 2017 The Pastoral Center / PastoralCenter.com.
Adapted and reprinted with permission from *Surprise! Stories of Discovering Jesus*,
copyright © 2014 by MennoMedia, Harrisonburg, Virginia 22802.
Printed in United States of America
Cover design: Reuben Graham
Cover photo: Thinkstock
Writer: Aimee Reid, 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.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture text is quoted, with permission, from the *New Revised Standard Version*, © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

To order or request information, please call 1-844-727-8672 or visit GrowingUpCatholicVBS.com.



**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 craft and activity ideas are offered each day, but you are not expected to do all of them. Focus on the ones most appropriate for your groups. They are intended to be user-friendly for grades K–5, but can be adapted for other ages. Some of the crafts and activities require more adult supervision than others, depending on the age group involved, so be sure to have other adults and youth help with them. At the end of each activity is a “Think about it” section. Use the questions and conversations starters to make connections between the day’s story and the activities.

You are privileged to work with the children. Affirm their gifts of creativity. Encourage them to develop healthy relationships with each other. Pray that each child will learn and grow through having fun.

OUTLINE AND PREPARATION

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

Pay attention to how the room is set up. It is ideal to have at least two areas or tables—one for snacks and another for crafts—if space is available. Choose one craft for everyone to do, or set up craft stations around the room and allow children to choose which craft they would like to make. Take time to make the crafts and be sure directions are understood. This will also allow children to see samples of what they will make.

Some activities require more adult supervision than others, particularly with younger groups, so invite adults and youth to help you.

SNACK IDEAS

Snack suggestions are offered for the Creative Response time. The suggestions go along with the Bible stories in some way, and many times they are used to develop deeper understanding of the stories or the faith focuses.

Invite adults and youth who are not directly working with the children to prepare the snacks and to clean up afterward. Have napkins or small plates on hand, as well as cups for water or juice. Make sure children either wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before eating.

- **Day 1:** matzo bread or crackers; hummus; grapes
- **Day 2:** gingerbread cookies shaped like children; assorted frosting, sprinkles, dried fruit for decoration
- **Day 3:** small pitas; tuna salad
- **Day 4:** popcorn
- **Day 5:** monkey bread (also known as pluck-it)

Be aware of anyone with gluten intolerance or nut allergies. Have alternative foods on hand, if needed.

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. Communicate clearly 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 vary 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>
---	---	--	--

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.

Session materials

- Snack
- Napkins or small plates
- Water or juice, cups
- Hand sanitizer or wet wipes
- Materials for chosen activities (pp. 7–8)

Advance preparation

- Prepare snack.
- Choose activities appropriate for your VBS groups, and prepare materials.
- Make craft samples ahead of time to be sure you understand the directions, and so that children can see what they will make.

Snack idea: matzo bread or crackers; hummus; grapes; water or juice

Be aware of anyone with gluten intolerance or nut allergies. Have alternative foods on hand, if needed.

Saint Booklet

The one-fold booklet for **St. Albert the Great** can be used as an additional activity to teach children about asking questions and growing in freedom. Simply reproduce the pages front and back and allow the children to fold them in half and color the picture. If time allows, have them read through the story and talk through the questions during this session. Otherwise, they can take it home and use it there.

Daily plan

1. **Greet the children.** Welcome them to the first day of vacation Bible school! Explain that during this time they will enjoy a snack and make crafts that go along with the Bible story.
2. **Snack time.** Offer matzo bread or crackers to the children, along with hummus. Explain that when Jesus was a boy in today's story, he would have eaten unleavened bread that is similar to the crackers. Add that hummus is a common food in the Middle East. Offer grapes, and water or juice.
3. **Activity time.** Explain that today's activities will help us ask questions and better learn to know God, just as Jesus asked questions in the temple so that he could grow in wisdom.
4. **Clean up.** Encourage children to clean up the areas and put materials away. Decide if the projects will be taken home, displayed, or collected for other purposes. Make sure all projects have names on them.
5. **Closing prayer:** *God, you know each of us, inside and out. Guide us and help us to grow in wisdom. Amen.*

Treasured Questions Boxes

Materials

- Boxes, such as tissue boxes
- Cards copied from the reproducible page 25
- Wrapping paper or newspaper
- Tape
- Glue
- Scissors
- Decorative items such as sparkle glue, buttons, stickers
- Marker, colored pencils, or crayons; pencils and pens
- Slips of paper

In preparation, make copies of the cards on page 25, one for each child.

1. Explain what a question box is. People who have questions may write them down and put them inside of the box.
2. Each child will choose decorative paper or newspaper, and a box. Allow time for children to wrap their boxes.
3. Ask adults or youth to help young children cut a hole in the top of their wrapped boxes, large enough so that small papers may be placed inside. Older children may cut the hole by themselves.
4. Children may decorate their boxes to personalize them. Invite them to write down one or two questions that they have for God, and place them inside their boxes. Remind children that they can ask God anything!
5. Children will put a card with the Bible verses inside their question boxes, along with their questions. Talk about the verses and how they are good reminders that we can seek wisdom from God.

THINK ABOUT IT: We decorated our question boxes like treasure boxes. In today's Bible story, Jesus met with the teachers to ask questions and talk about the Scriptures. How does sharing our questions with others help us learn about God?

Goodness Shines Through

Materials

- White poster board
- Crayons in bright colors, plus black crayons
- Popsicle or craft sticks

In preparation, cut the poster board into card-sized pieces, one per child.

1. Give each child a piece of the poster board. Invite children to draw creative designs on the board using brightly colored crayons.
2. After their poster boards are filled with colorful designs, have children cover their boards (and the designs) with black crayon.
3. Demonstrate how to use the popsicle or craft sticks to gently scratch off the black crayon to reveal the colors underneath. Take time to look at everyone's patterns and designs.
4. You may want to put newspaper on the work surface for better cleanup.

THINK ABOUT IT: Sometimes we experience hard times that seem to cover up our happiness, similar to the way the bright colors were covered on the poster board. But even though we couldn't see the bright colors anymore, they were still there. How is asking God our questions like scratching a pattern onto the poster board?

Footprint Plaque

Materials

- Plastic lids with edges
- Plaster of paris
- Craft sticks
- Paper clips
- Shells, buttons, stones, other objects (optional)

In preparation, mix the plaster of paris.

1. Give children one lid each and help them pour the plaster into it.
2. Show children how the side of their fist becomes a footprint. Have them create a footprint in the plaster. Use fingertips to add toes.
3. Children will write their names in their plaster using a craft stick. Add buttons, shells, stones, or other objects to create designs around the footprint.
4. As the plaster hardens, add a paper clip at the top so that it can be hung.
5. Plaques need to dry, and may need to be taken home another day.

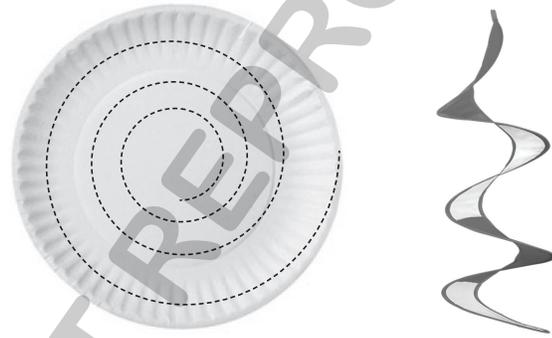
THINK ABOUT IT: Jesus traveled with his parents to Jerusalem and then stayed at the temple to talk with the leaders. Throughout VBS, many stories involve people traveling with Jesus. Your footprint plaque reminds you that you can walk with Jesus, too!

Question Spirals

Materials

- Round white paper plates
- Markers
- Scissors
- String
- Hole punch

Give each child a paper plate, or several plates if there is time. Demonstrate how to draw a spiral onto the plate, and then cut it out.



1. Explain that the spirals will be filled with questions. Spend a few minutes talking about questions of things children might be wondering. For example: Why is the sky blue? How far away are the stars? How can I make cookies? Will I ever understand long division?
2. Encourage children to think of their own questions, and write them on their spirals. They may decorate the spirals.
3. Punch a hole in the top of everyone's spiral. Give children a piece of string to thread through the hole, knotting it, so that the spiral can be hung. If you choose, hang the spirals around the room, or outside in a gentle breeze.

THINK ABOUT IT: We always have questions. Even adults have questions! Writing them down on the spirals and hanging them up is one way to ask questions. Maybe we can find the answer, or ask someone who can help us find the answer.

Reproducible page

DAY 1**Treasured Questions Boxes****Proverbs 2:3-6**

If you indeed cry out for insight,
and raise your voice for understanding;
if you seek it like silver,
and search for it as for hidden treasures—
then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.
For the Lord gives wisdom;
from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

Proverbs 2:3-6

If you indeed cry out for insight,
and raise your voice for understanding;
if you seek it like silver,
and search for it as for hidden treasures—
then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.
For the Lord gives wisdom;
from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

Proverbs 2:3-6

If you indeed cry out for insight,
and raise your voice for understanding;
if you seek it like silver,
and search for it as for hidden treasures—
then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.
For the Lord gives wisdom;
from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding.