



Bible Response Guide

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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!

About Bible Response time

Each Bible Response time includes:

- Introduction—Welcome the children.
- Bible story—Talk about the Bible story, which was presented during Worship. Do activities to support the story and ideas it presented using the student book, *Guide Book*.
- Bible memory—Do activities and motions to learn the Bible memory passage.
- Closing—End your time together with a prayer and a sending blessing.

Each day includes an Additional activities section. The activities may be used if there is more time in a session after the daily plan is completed. Consider the ages and abilities of the children so that you choose activities appropriate for the groups. In addition, a media list is included each day, should you want to present the Bible story and its ideas in another format. The media lists come from a variety of different sources that may change over time. Always check a website ahead of time before sharing something with your group.

It will be helpful to have two spaces in the Bible Response area—one section with table and chairs so that children can sit to work in *Guide Book* and do other activities, and the second section an open area where children can sit on the floor or have room to move if there is an activity that requires more space. Read the daily plans carefully so that you know the space that is needed for activities, and plan accordingly.

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 the Worship time.

Guide Book student book

Guide Book is a very helpful part of the Bible Response time. Ideally, each child will have one, plus you will want to have a few extras in case new children join VBS throughout the week.

Bible memory

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

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

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:

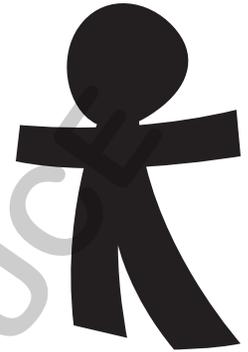
Worship—15 minutes

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

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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
- Guide Book* (one per child)
- Paper (one piece per child)
- Crayons or markers

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. 5) to become familiar with today's story.
- Read the Bible Response daily plan and choose activities appropriate for your VBS groups. Gather materials.

Daily plan

Introduction

1. **Welcome the children to *Who Is My Neighbor?***, where they will discover what it means to be a neighbor. One way to be a neighbor is to learn one another's names. Sit in a circle on the floor. Go around the circle and invite everyone to say their name. After a name is said, the children will clap according to how many syllables are in the name. (Younger children will need help with this.) For example, "I am Matthew" (clap, clap) or "I am Maria" (clap, clap, clap).
2. **Talk about neighbors.** Have children move to the table and give each of them a sheet of paper and have crayons or markers available. Ask the children to draw a picture of their street or apartment building, and add names or descriptions of people to mark where they and their neighbors live. After the children are finished, invite some of them to share their drawings with the group. Explain that this week in VBS, you will learn more about who our neighbors are and how we can be good neighbors. You may want to hang the pictures on the wall for the remainder of VBS.

Bible story

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

1. **Review the drama presented** during Worship time.
 - Jesus gave two rules to live by. Does anyone remember them?
 - Find Mark 12:28-34 and let the children know that these verses are in the New Testament, the collection of books and letters that were written after Jesus was born.
 - Pass out *Guide Book* and have the children write their names in their copy. Turn to page 4 and read the readers theater together as a review of today's story.
 - Every time the word *love* is read, have the children make the American Sign Language sign.



2. **Explain that just as Jesus** gave us two rules to live by, we also have other rules we need to follow. Ask children to share rules they have at school and at home. Do any of these rules go along with Jesus' words to love God and love our neighbor? Say:

Many of the rules we follow every day are so that we can show love and care to others. For example, at school you might have a rule that says you are to be quiet when the teacher is talking. That is so that other students can hear the teacher—and allowing other children to hear the teacher is one way we show that we care about them. Another example of a rule might be that in your family, you are not to hit your brother or sister. That is because when you hit someone, you hurt them. Instead of hurting our brother or sister, we want to show that we love and care about them. That's why families might have that rule.

Jesus' words to love God and love our neighbor are part of our everyday lives—and we might not even know it! So as you go about your day, think about Jesus' words and how you live by them.

Bible memory

1. **Today's Bible memory passage** is part of today's Bible story! Let the children know that each day of VBS, they will learn part of the passage, so that by the last day they will be able to say all of these important words of Jesus. Open your Bible to Mark 12:28b-29 and help the children find it in their Bibles. Read the verses together from the Bible, 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

2. **Divide into three groups.**

Invite the first group to say the first part of the memory verses: "*Which commandment is the first of all?*"

Invite the second group to say the second part of the memory verses: *Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel:'"*

Invite the third group to say the third part of the memory verses: "*the Lord our God, the Lord is one.*"

Continue with the three groups repeating their phrases at different volumes and speeds. For a challenge, change which group says which words. Finally, have everyone say the verse together. Remind the group that they will say these verses again on Days 4 and 5 of VBS.

Closing

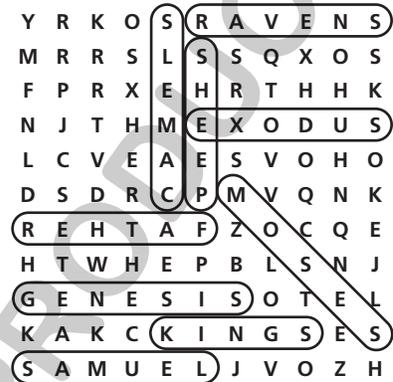
1. **Turn to page 6 in Guide Book** and read the story about Helen and her friend Tomiko who live in a prison camp. After reading the story, invite children to consider how Helen and her family's faith influenced their decisions. As time allows, explore the following questions/issues:
 - Why do you think Helen had more freedom than Tomiko? How do you think Tomiko felt about Helen signing for her? How would you feel if you were Tomiko in this situation? How would you feel if you were Helen?
2. **Pray a closing prayer:**

Dear God, thank you for everyone here at VBS—the children, the leaders, and everyone who is helping us. Help us as we learn more about who our neighbors are and how we can be good neighbors to them. Amen.

Additional activities

Additional activities can be used to extend a session, depending on the amount of time available. Consider the ages and abilities of your VBS children so that you choose appropriate activities.

1. **People in the Bible helped each other** by caring for plants and animals. In one case, a creature helped a person! Helping is one way to be a neighbor. Turn to page 5 in *Guide Book* and look up the Scripture verses and write the answers in the blanks. Find the words in the word search.
2. **Invite someone from your parish** to share about how they have said yes to God's call to love their neighbor in the work they do, in their relationships, or through a particular ministry.
3. **Have the children discuss** what they think is the greatest food, song, sport, historical figure, vacation spot, etc. Let them have a friendly debate about their different answers. Why do they think Jesus answered the scribe's question the way he did? What other answers could he have given?
4. **Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God and others.** So we know that love is important. But what does love look like?



In 1 Corinthians, Paul, a follower of Jesus, gives a description of love. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 aloud with the children, having them follow along in their Bibles.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Together, try to think of ways you've seen people show love in the way Paul describes it. Who do you know who loves in these ways?

Media list

Media connections can be used depending on how much time is available. They come from a variety of different sources that may change over time. Always check a website ahead of time before sharing something with your group.

- *Two Days and One Suitcase: The True Story of One Family's Choice of Friendship and Goodwill During World War II* by Anne E. Neuberger and Helen Hannan Parra (this is the basis for the story in the booklet)
- *Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley* by Aaron Blabey
- The Good Samaritan illustrations by Dan Burr, Vie de Jésus Mafa
- YouTube search for "The Greatest Commandment, Hillsong Kids"
- YouTube search for "Kidmo: Johnny Rogers: Love God, Love Others"
- *Good Neighbor* by Erich Bethel (also available on YouTube by searching "Love Your Neighbor as Yourself" on Mochibooks Channel)
- *Horton Hears a Who* (book or movie) by Dr. Seuss