



DAY 1 THE RELATIONSHIP BEGAN

Back in the 1500s, Nicholas Copernicus caused a planetary stir when his careful observations of the night sky led him to conclude that the center of our solar system was the sun, rather than the earth itself. Copernicus was humbled, awed, and intensely curious about “the world which has been built for us by the Best and Most Orderly Workman of all.”

Today’s Bible passage intentionally skips over the bulk of Genesis 1. Why? By shifting the focus from what God created on Day 4 (Gamma Crucis, the closest red giant star to Earth) or Day 6 (kittens!) kids can zoom in on the idea that God created the universe for them! You can emphasize that people have been created in God’s image. God gave us the ability to ponder, to create, to investigate, and to celebrate ... and the option to do those things with or without a relationship with Him.

God’s words in Genesis 1:26 and the lyrical words of John 1:1 further emphasize that nothing about creation was an accident. Jesus was with God—and was God—from the moment He released the first dazzling burst of light. Best of all, the Creator came to live in the world He created. The term John used in John 1:14 for dwelt or took up residence conveys the idea of God’s presence filling the tabernacle, and is used nowhere else in the Bible—a fitting description of His “one-of-a-kindness!”

It’s 93 million miles to the sun—one astronomical unit. The distance to the end of our solar system is more than 120 of those astronomical units! The sheer size of the universe should naturally make us catch our breath. But the most breathtaking truth this Bible study should communicate to kids is that God created them, cares for them, and loves them far more than anything in the galaxy!

ABOVE AND BEYOND

VBS isn’t just for kids—it’s for you, too! Consider these questions as you prepare to teach:

- People are God’s most precious creation. When was the last time you were reminded how much He loves you? What triggered that reminder?
- Every human is created in God’s image. How should that truth affect the way you treat every human—especially the hard-to-love ones?



DAY 2 THE RELATIONSHIP BROKEN

Growing up five miles from nowhere on acres of flat Missouri farmland, we had an evening privilege I didn't appreciate until adulthood: a panoramic nighttime view of space frosted with thick layers of twinkling stars. Even in the tiny town where I live now (population 1,051), it's hard to get a good look at the night sky. Streetlights and the glow from the mini-mart mask all but the brightest stars. Light pollution is an astronomer's enemy, obstructing a clear view of space. Today's Bible story is about a universe-polluting event that obstructed people's perfect relationship with God.

Though the Bible doesn't tell us how long, for a time in the beginning, life was perfect. Everything functioned exactly as God had designed it. Adam and Eve marveled at God's creation and reveled in each other's company. Their intimate relationship with God was unimpaired.

Satan found an opportunity to ruin that relationship. He caused Eve to doubt that God wanted what was best for her. He enticed her to believe that experimenting with the forbidden fruit was more desirable than abiding by God's wisely set rules. (Genesis 3:6)

Although she was battling the Master Deceiver, Eve had the choice to resist him—and failed to do so. And Adam? There's no record of his thought processes, but the result was the same. Sin. Shame. Excuses. Consequences. See if you can spot all those things as you read Genesis 3:7-19.

Aren't you glad the end of today's story isn't the end of the whole story? Backtrack to Genesis 3:15. Bible scholars agree it's the first glimmer of a twinkle of a hint that Jesus was coming and He would crush sin forever! As you share today's Bible story with kids, don't minimize the damage sin can do, but don't miss the opportunity to share that God has always been, and will always be, in complete control!

ABOVE AND BEYOND

VBS isn't just for kids—it's for you, too! Consider these questions as you prepare to teach:

- Think of the impact sin has had on world history and your personal history (see Genesis 6:5). How should that affect your desire to see others reconciled to God?
- Is there a particular sin that you've been treating too lightly because you know you have been forgiven for it? What needs to change?



DAY 3 THE RESTORATION PROMISED

Astronomy does play a role in Jesus' early life: after all, a remarkable stellar occurrence prompted a certain group of educated stargazers to find Him! But quite some time before those travelers arrived, Jesus' arrival was made known to a working-class carpenter, his bride-to-be, and a pair of sweet-spirited senior adults.

Joseph, Mary, Simeon, and Anna were undoubtedly familiar with God's promises that Immanuel would come to earth someday. You'll mention Isaiah 7:14 as you share today's Bible story with kids. Take a moment to check out what else was said about the Savior in Isaiah 11:1-5 and Isaiah 53:1-6. Scripture made it clear where the Savior would be born, the family from which He would come, and the role He would play in God's plan for mankind.

What an earth-shaking idea Joseph had to absorb when an angel interrupted his night's sleep to announce that he had been chosen to raise the Messiah! The angel reminded Joseph that Jesus was coming to save His people—not from earthly oppression, but from their sins. When he realized Whose child Mary was carrying, gentle Joseph cancelled his plans to cancel his engagement. Together, they welcomed God with us into the world and obediently dedicated Him at the appointed time.

It was, of course, no coincidence that Simeon and Anna were at the temple on the very same day. The consolation of Israel, for which Simeon waited, is vividly and accurately described in Isaiah 40:2. With the Holy Spirit's prompting, Simeon recognized that the baby in Mary's arms was The One. (Can't you just see the smile wrinkles crinkling on his face as he gently scooped up the baby Messiah in his hands? Can you hear Anna's delighted laugh? Don't you wish someone had taken a photo?)

Simeon and Anna praised the Savior before His work on earth was done. You know what that work truly accomplished. We're praying that you'll share that message sincerely and enthusiastically with your VBS kids!

ABOVE AND BEYOND

VBS isn't just for kids—it's for you, too! Consider these questions as you prepare to teach:

- The Holy Spirit helped Simeon recognize Jesus as the Messiah. How did the Holy Spirit help you recognize that Jesus was your Savior? (Kids may ask. Now's a good time to practice your answer!)
- Compare Luke 2:34-35 to 1 Corinthians 1:23 and 1 Peter 2:8. What do you think was the significance of Simeon's warning?



DAY 4 THE RELATIONSHIP RESTORED

Look out a window. Can you see the photons coming at you? Of course you can! They're the most basic particles of light. Produced in the 27 million degree core of the sun, they work their way slowly through its immense mass until they reach the surface. In a mere 8 minutes, they travel 93 million miles to brighten our world ... and their presence generally goes unnoticed. The supernatural absence of light was impossible to ignore on the day the Light of the World died for the world. What do kids need to know about that dark day?

Kids need to know that Jesus was in control at all times. Children are born with a strong, innate sense of fairness. When they hear how Jesus was unjustly accused and brutally treated before and during the crucifixion, that "no fair!" instinct kicks in hard. It isn't unusual for kids to perceive Jesus as a victim. You can help them understand that Jesus set aside His rights and laid down His life on purpose, for a purpose—to restore the broken relationship between God and people.

Kids need to know that Jesus died because He loves them. Eternal, irreversible separation from God is a penalty so severe that He wants us never to experience it! Jesus voiced the pain of that separation in Mark 15:34—why have You forsaken Me? You can help kids recognize that Jesus' death on the cross was substitutionary. That's a big theological word for an even bigger concept, precisely described in 1 Peter 2:21-24. Jesus satisfied the death penalty that all of us deserve because we have sinned.

Kids need to know Jesus personally! Mark's short account of the resurrection (Mark 16) provides proof that Jesus is alive. (Need more proof? Check out 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.) And because Jesus is alive, an everyday, everlasting relationship can be a reality! As you prepare for today's VBS, ask God to help you recognize and assist kids who are ready to receive Jesus as Savior.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

VBS isn't just for kids—it's for you, too! Consider these questions as you prepare to teach:

- Mark is a short, to-the-point storyteller. What details from Mark's account of the crucifixion are especially vivid to you? Why?
- Practice your answer in case a VBS kid asks you, "How do you know Jesus is alive?" or "What does it feel like to be a Christian?"



DAY 5 THE RELATIONSHIP CONTINUES

Astronomers agree that the gravitational pull of the moon has some effect on the rise and fall of the tides. Fishermen are a little less unanimous in their opinions, but it is thought that the moon also has some effect on their potential catch. Some scientific research hints that the best fishing is during a full or new moon. In today's Bible story, regardless of the lunar effect on the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee), the fish weren't biting. Peter had a disappointing night of trawling for fish, but with the dawn came hope, purpose ... and breakfast cooked by Jesus Himself!

Peter had been tagged by Jesus as the rock of the church (Matthew 16:18). When Jesus told Peter that He had prayed specifically for his strength and courage, Peter vowed he would never fail His Master (Luke 22:31–33). Within hours, Peter failed miserably. His final, silent, painful encounter with Jesus before His crucifixion is recorded in Luke 22:61-62. On the morning Jesus hailed Peter's fishing boat, Peter had not yet had an opportunity to be alone with Him—to make things right. Do you suppose that's what motivated his spontaneous leap into the water to beat his buddies to the shore?

After breakfast, Jesus took Peter aside—not to belittle him, but to empower him. Jesus affirmed that Peter's career was far from over; he was being promoted from fishing to shepherding. With the Holy Spirit's help, The Rock rocked the world for Jesus. You can read about it starting in Acts 2. Not bad for an impulsive guy with a tendency to speak before he thought!

God has a purpose for every fallible person He placed on this planet. We're thanking God that your purpose this week is to share that truth with VBS kids!

ABOVE AND BEYOND

VBS isn't just for kids—it's for you, too! Consider these questions as you prepare to teach:

- Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love Me more than these?" John isn't clear what the "these" were. What do you think Jesus was referring to? What would the "these" be if Jesus asked you the same question?
- Consider Acts 1:8. How have your past mistakes influenced the way you share Jesus with others? Have they made you bashful and fainthearted, or believable and approachable?