



# Monday

## JESUS IS GOD'S PROMISED SON



### BIBLE STORY

Jesus Asked Who People Thought He Was  
*Matthew 16:13-20*

### BIBLE VERSE

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."  
*John 8:12* (paraphrase)

### TODAY'S POINT

Jesus is God's promised Son.

**SPOTLIGHT QUESTION:** Who is Jesus?  
Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Son of God.

### LEADER DEVOTION

Think for a moment about a teacher who significantly impacted and brightened up your life. You may have identified this teacher because of how he or she made you feel loved, valued, and understood. This week, you have an opportunity to be that kind of teacher—one who builds meaningful relationships with children, helping them feel loved and accepted in ways they may have never experienced before. Take a moment now to stop and pray, asking God to use you to make an eternal impact on the lives of the children you teach. Continue to do so again each day of VBS.

Beyond building relationships, one often-overlooked trait of exceptional teachers is their ability to ask great questions. Great questions captivate attention, inspire deep thinking, and foster renewed curiosity and wonder. They can also reveal gaps in understanding, provide opportunities for assessment, or highlight a student's mastery of a subject.

Jesus exemplified this trait as a master teacher. His use of engaging questions was a hallmark of His teaching. Consider these examples from the New Testament, where Jesus asked thought-provoking and soul-searching questions:

- "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" (Mark 4:40)
- "Why do you break God's commandment because of your tradition?" (Matthew 15:3)
- "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and don't do the things I say?" (Luke 6:46)
- "Do you want to get well?" (John 5:6)

Let's shine the spotlight on two of the most significant and revealing questions Jesus ever asked His disciples. After spending time with His disciples in a boat, they traveled to Caesarea Philippi—a place known for its pagan gods. Against this backdrop of pagan influence, Jesus pressed His disciples for answers to these two questions:

- Who do people say that the Son of Man is?
- But you, who do you say that I am?

Scripture records the disciples answering the first question, but the second question is responded to specifically by Peter. Peter declared, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Have you ever wondered why Peter was the first disciple to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah? Surely, there was a more faithful and less controversial disciple who could have spoken up rather than the flawed and impulsive Peter.

Jesus knew Peter's weaknesses. He knew Peter would deny Him three times, yet He washed Peter's feet anyway. (See John 13.) He knew Peter would fall asleep in the garden of Gethsemane, yet He blessed Peter when God revealed to him that Jesus was the Messiah. (See Matthew 16; 26.) Jesus knew every detail of Peter's story—his failures, doubts, and triumphs—and He still chose to love and use Peter in powerful ways.

Jesus did not write Peter off as unreliable or deem him unworthy of being used for His purposes. Instead, He entrusted Peter with the opportunity to preach at Pentecost and lead His church. (See Acts 2.) Peter's story is a reminder that God sees potential where others see character flaws, and He calls us to love, lead, and serve in ways that often do not make sense to others.

### Illuminate Your Heart

- Jesus asks each of us the same question. Take this opportunity to answer it for yourself. "But you, who do you say I am?"
- It may be easy to make a declaration of words, but it is much harder to live out our belief in Jesus as our Messiah. Peter certainly struggled to walk out the words he declared. Thank God for His redemptive love for each of us and ask Him to use you this week to proclaim the good news of Jesus to each boy and girl in your care.



# TUESDAY

## JESUS IS THE PROVEN SON OF GOD



### BIBLE STORY

Jesus Died and Rose to Life  
*Mark 14:43–16:7*

### BIBLE VERSE

Jesussaid, “Iamthelight of the world.”  
*John 8:12* (paraphrase)

### TODAY’S POINT

Jesus is alive!

**SPOTLIGHT QUESTION:** Was Jesus just someone who lived a long time ago? Jesus lived, died, and rose to life again to be our Savior, now and forever.

### LEADER DEVOTION

Do you remember the first time you heard the story of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection? If you grew up in a Christian home, it may be difficult to recall that moment, and you may have never questioned whether Jesus was more than just a man who lived a long time ago. For some children in your Vacation Bible School, this week may be the first time they encounter the life-changing truth of Jesus’ resurrection and the salvation He offers each of us.

If it is hard to imagine children in your classroom not knowing about Jesus, consider this: Over the past 25 years, 40 million people have stopped attending church.<sup>1</sup> As a result, church membership in America has dropped below 50 percent.<sup>2</sup> This means we can no longer assume that every child in Vacation Bible School is attending church regularly or has even heard the true story of Jesus. What if you are the first person to tell them the truth of the gospel? How does that impact the way you prepare for this session?

It’s not just children who have never heard about Jesus and who need convictional teaching this week—it’s also people who have heard about Him but are surrounded by a world that questions and devalues the life of Jesus. To navigate an increasingly post-Christian world, children need a biblical worldview that upholds the Bible as absolute truth. A 2022 study by George Barna found that only 18% of 13- and 14-year-olds listed the Bible as their primary source of truth<sup>3</sup> and 61% “either believe Jesus Christ sinned or may have sinned while He was on earth.”<sup>4</sup> It is important that we continually point children to the Bible as the source of all truth and show them the evidence found in the Scriptures to support Jesus as the proven Son of God.

Throughout this week, children will be having “light bulb moments” as they are learning who Jesus is and how His life provides proof that He was more than just a teacher who lived a long time ago. Jesus did things no one else could do, like heal people who were sick or who had physical disabilities, provide sight to people who were blind, and turn a small amount of food into more than enough to feed the multitudes! He spoke with an authority no one had heard before. The ultimate proof came through the resurrection—the undeniable evidence that He is who He claimed to be.

### Illuminate Your Heart

- How have you experienced Jesus personally? Thank Him for being present in your life.
- There could be no greater privilege than to tell children about the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Pray for the children in your care who may be hearing this story for the first time. Ask God to speak through you as you tell the good news of Jesus.

1. Jim Davis, Michael Graham, and Ryan P Burge. *The Great Dechurching: Who’s Leaving, Why Are They Going, and What Will It Take to Bring Them Back?* (Zondervan, 2023), 5.

2. Jefferey Jones, “U.S. Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time,” *Gallup*, March 29, 2021, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx>.

3. George Barna, *Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child’s Heart, Mind and Soul* (Arizona Christian University Press, 2023), 27. (hereafter cited as *Raising Champions*).

4. *Raising Champions*, 28.



# WEDNESDAY

## JESUS IS GOD'S PLAN FOR FORGIVENESS



### BIBLE STORY

Peter Preached  
About Jesus  
*Acts 2*

### BIBLE VERSE

Jesus said, "I am the light  
of the world."  
*John 8:12* (paraphrase)

### TODAY'S POINT

Jesus is God's plan for forgiveness.

**SPOTLIGHT QUESTION:** Why do I need to respond to Jesus?

Jesus is the only way to receive God's forgiveness.

### LEADER DEVOTION

This week, the focus has been on helping children discover the answer to a spotlight question each day. These questions have laid the foundation for preschoolers to know that Jesus is God's plan for forgiveness.

Today's kids will hear the message Peter preached that immediately led over three thousand people to see their need for a Savior.

Recognizing and believing Jesus is a great teacher, a powerful performer of miracles, and a compassionate servant leader is easy for most of us. The Bible is full of events that lead us to those conclusions. However, James 2:19 reminds us, "You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe—and they shudder." Unless we also acknowledge our desperate need for Him as our Savior—the One who willingly died for our sins and offers forgiveness—we miss the good news of who He truly is. Without Him, we deserve the punishment of death for our sins. In Him, we find grace, redemption, and forgiveness only He can bring.

Children need to understand why they need forgiveness to know why they need to respond to Jesus. Recognizing personal sin is one of the signs a child is ready to decide to follow Jesus. Children must know what sin is and the problem it causes for their relationship with God. Children often define sin as a wrong choice like disobeying parents, cheating on a test, or fighting with a sibling. While those wrong choices are sin, the result of that sin makes them unable to have a relationship with a holy and perfect God. A simple definition of sin that children can easily understand is "anything we think (point to your head), anything we say (point to your mouth), or anything we do (hold out your hands) that does not please God." When children understand the impact of their sin—it separates them from God—they are often ready to answer today's spotlight question: Why do I need to respond to Jesus?

For over one hundred years, the purpose of Vacation Bible School has been to share the gospel with children so that they can understand their need for forgiveness and respond to Jesus. There is no other program, ministry, or movement that has been as effective at reaching children with the gospel than VBS. The Holy Spirit may be opening the hearts and minds of preschoolers to understand that Jesus is God's plan for forgiveness.

### Illuminate Your Heart

- Have you experienced the Holy Spirit piercing your heart in conviction and leading you to repentance? (See Acts 2:37.) When was the last time you were grieved over your sin?
- Spend some time in prayer for each of the children in your care. Ask God to help them begin to understand their need for Jesus.

