

**DAY 1**  
**VBS**  
CROCK BRIDGE



# STELLAR SMALL GROUP

ELEMENTARY LEADER GUIDE

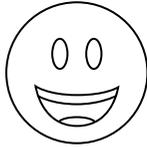
# DURING STELLAR

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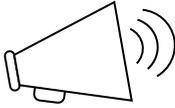
## Get Crew Leaders involved!

Guide Crew Leaders to participate right along with kids. When Crew Leaders listen, get involved, and have fun, kids do too!



## Call on kids to help.

Every day, allow kids who are paying attention to pass out supplies, read Scripture, or be your helper. Kids love feeling important and helpful!



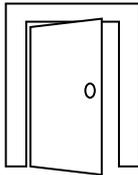
## Use an attention-getting signal.

Attention-getting signals let kids know when it's time to stop what they're doing and look at you. Examples include: **Leader:** "1, 2, 3... Eyes on me!" **Kids:** "1, 2... Eyes on you!"

**Leader:** "If you hear me, clap once!" (Clap once and wait.) "If you hear me, clap twice!" (Clap twice and wait.)

**Leader:** "Mission control to crew!"

**Kids:** "Ready for launch!" (Sit up straight and freeze like astronauts preparing for takeoff.)



## Gather outside the room first.

Gathering kids outside the room allows you to set the scene before they even enter the room and gives you the opportunity to create a big "wow" all at once.



## Repeat the daily Main Point often.

Every activity focuses on one memorable Bible truth called the Main Point. Repeating the Main Point helps kids remember it and apply it to their lives after VBS.



## Repeat expectations often and explain transitions.

Repeating expectations helps kids remember what is expected of them, creating a structured and positive learning environment. Clear transitions between activities prevent confusion and help kids shift their focus smoothly. When we take time to explain what's happening next, kids feel more secure and ready to engage.



Shine Jesus' light!

# TOKENS

This year, our kids will participate in a Token Challenge! To recognize and encourage meaningful participation and positive behavior, we will be rewarding kids with tokens throughout VBS!

- **Who is giving out tokens:** All of our volunteers will receive tokens to reward kids as they catch them engaging well in VBS.
- **What are we doing with the tokens:** Kids will work together to reach an Overall Token Goal and receive a celebration on the last night of VBS! Tokens are used to reward kids for remarkable expressions of love, kindness, great listening, participation, and memorizing our Main Points and Bible verse!
- **When are we passing out tokens:** Immediately! We want to help kids connect their positive attitudes, behaviors, and participation with the reward of the token, so as soon as you see a behavior to celebrate, pass out the reward!
- **Where are we getting tokens from:** We will have tokens available for all volunteers at check-in each night. As we use up our stash, there will be designated spots to go to for more throughout the night.
- **How do we distribute tokens:** Our volunteers will keep their eyes and ears tuned in to our kids so they can immediately reward them with a token to celebrate what we want repeated! They will praise the specific behavior that earned the reward when we give them their token. For example:
  - Active engagement during each rotation
  - Invite kids to “Show Me What You Know!” and let them earn a token by sharing the memory verse, finishing the lyrics to a worship song, sharing today’s “Main Point”, etc.
  - Displays of the fruit of the spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, self-control, gentleness
  - Demonstrating good manners, listening attentively, and following instructions the first time they're asked
  - Being respectful to volunteers, peers, and the VBS environment.
- **When do kids turn in their tokens:** There will be buckets available at each rotation for kids to drop their tokens in. All tokens will be brought to the closing session and combined so we can see how we're progressing towards our goal each night!
- **Remember, the goal of using tokens is to reinforce positive behaviors,** encourage active participation, and create a fun and rewarding experience for all kids attending VBS. Thank you for your commitment to making VBS a memorable and impactful event!

# SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH KIDS

**The word gospel means “good news.”  
It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and  
salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.**

## **The Goal: Consistent, Frequent, and Low-Pressure**

Kids can trust Christ as Savior, and many of them do! Often, the ones who trust Him have heard consistent and frequent explanations of the gospel at home and church. However, young children are very eager to please adults, so we must be careful of what we say and how we present the Gospel. The child should take the initiative. We will avoid directly asking a child if he or she wants to trust Christ as Savior, unless the child has been asking questions and showing clear signs of readiness to make this decision. We will also avoid invitations where kids raise their hand or come to the front of the room to show their desire to trust Christ. Not only do children want to please adults, but they are also prone to copy the behavior of other children. Instead, we will give children the opportunity to talk to a leader or ask questions.

## **You Are A Gospel Seed Planter**

Overall, you should see your evangelistic role as a gospel seed planter. You are laying a foundation of biblical truth and repeating the gospel message clearly, consistently and frequently, so kids will be prepared to understand and receive the gospel when they are ready. Children often need to hear the gospel message many times before they can understand and respond to it.

### **What to say:**

-  **GOD RULES.** The Bible tells us God created everything, including you and me, and He is in charge of everything. (Genesis 1:1; Revelation 4:11; Colossians 1:16-17)
-  **WE SINNED.** Since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God’s punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)
-  **GOD PROVIDED.** God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It’s something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9)
-  **JESUS GIVES.** Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God’s family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18)
-  **WE RESPOND.** We can respond to Jesus. The ABCs of Becoming a Christian(see next page) is a simple tool that helps us remember how to respond when prompted by the Holy Spirit to receive the gift Jesus offers.

# THE GOSPEL PRESENTATION

**A,B,C:** (Admit, Believe, Confess)

**Admit** that we have sinned and need God's forgiveness.

**Believe** that Jesus died for our sins and rose again.

**Confess** that Jesus is Lord and choose to follow Him

## On Tuesday (Day 3)

### In 2nd-5th Grade Small Groups:

During the lesson, Station Leaders will share the Gospel. See *page 3 in the SG Leader Guide* for explanations of how to share the Gospel.

Kids will use the Response Card to share their thoughts about following Jesus. They will tell us they want to Wait, they Already follow Jesus, they are Ready to follow, or they have Questions about it.

Crew Leaders will collect the cards as kids finish and let Station Leaders know who in their crew has Questions or is Ready to follow Jesus. Station Leaders will lead any kids who have *Questions* or are *Ready* to step into the hallway and have an in-person conversation with one of the counselors.

Prayer Requests - Give to prayer team to pray over (send cards, if manageable)

Follow Jesus - give to a designated spiritual counselor to have a one-on-one conversation with the kid

Baptism - give to a designated spiritual counselor to have a one-on-one conversation with the kid

As crews finish collecting responses from their kids, the Station Leader will pass out the next activity. This will give kids something to work on quietly while other crews are still responding.

Counselors will take their kids back to their crews when they are done talking.

Station Leaders will turn in their entire stack of cards to \_\_\_\_\_ (who for your campus?) so that each kid can be appropriately followed up with in the weeks to come.

**Children's Ministers will preselect spiritually mature leaders to be available in the halls to have one-on-one conversations with kids about their next steps!**



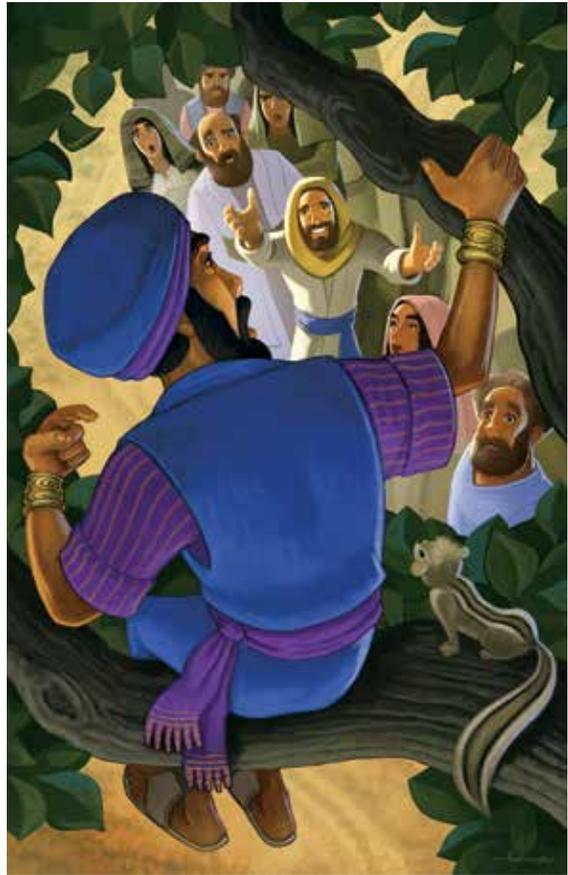
## The Light of Jesus Changes Hearts!

**Bible Story:** Jesus accepts Zacchaeus. (Luke 19:1-9)

**Bible Verse:** “The Son of Man came to look for the lost and save them. (Luke 19:10)

### Leader Insights

- Zacchaeus’ role reminded God’s people of the dark oppression they faced. Jesus—an astounding teacher and leader—provided a ray of hope!
- The Roman government employed Jews like Zacchaeus to collect its overwhelming, heavy taxes. People paid taxes on everything from land to property, as well as customs on imports and exports. That’s why many Jews viewed tax collectors as Jewish traitors who served the hated Romans.
- Tax collectors gathered a higher tax than required, pocketing the difference for themselves. Since Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector—a high position with many officials under him—he became rich from the over taxation of his people.
- Many wealthy priests called the fertile city of Jericho home. In addition, its situation on a border would yield rich customs duties for local tax collectors.
- Welcoming a popular rabbi into his home for a meal would’ve been a huge honor for Zacchaeus. However, Jesus said he needed to stay at Zacchaeus’ home! Scholars suggest that Jesus still had 17 miles on his trek to Jerusalem. He’d need an overnight stay in Jericho before departing.
- The name *Zacchaeus* means “pure one.” Interesting, in light of the salvation he received through Jesus (Luke 19:9).



### Why It Matters Today

Zacchaeus was a man who made bad choices, but when he met Jesus, everything changed! Jesus didn’t ignore or reject him—He showed love and kindness, and that changed Zacchaeus’ heart. Just like Zacchaeus, we all need Jesus to help us make right choices and love others well. When we follow Jesus, His light shines in us and helps us grow to be more like Him. No matter who we are or what we’ve done, Jesus’ love can change our hearts!

# DAY 1: Prepare your space.

## Day 1 Supplies:

- Day 1 Small Group Posters
- Day 1 Sycamore Tree Posters
- Greenery and decorative plants (optional)
- NIV Bible
- containers for collecting "taxes" (optional)
- disposable pie plates (1 per Crew)
- trays or cookie sheets (1 per Crew)
- whole milk (~3/4 cup)
- purple, blue, and green food coloring (1 container of each color per Crew in a rotation)
- dish soap
- small bowl
- cotton swabs (1 per Crew)
- bucket
- 12x12 heavy duty cardstock in various colors
- cellophane in various colors
- rubber bands (1/kid)
- Stickers, star cutouts, or sequins
- Markers or crayons
- Glue sticks or tape
- hole punch
- Scissors
- Aluminum foil (for a shiny rim effect, optional)
- Yarn or ribbon (optional, to wear around neck)

## Before You Blast Off

- Hang sycamore tree posters around your room. Decorate the room with fake trees, plants, greenery so it feels like you're in a tree. (optional)
- Hang or display Day 1 Small Group Posters so they are visible to kids. Each day, you will add the next day until all 4 days are displayed.
- Prepare disposable pie plates and test the dish soap experiment. Have supplies set out and ready for each crew.
- Prepare telescope tubes by rolling heavy duty cardstock in various colors and securing with tape/ staples.
- Using a hole punch, create two holes on each end for kids to tie their string.
- Precut cellophane into circles to cover one end of telescope.
- Precut yarn into lengths long enough for kids to wear telescope around their necks. (suggested for elem ~ 26-28 ")



**VBS @ ROCK BRIDGE SMALL GROUP PLAYLIST**

## SPACESHIP TIP

As you welcome Crews each day, keep an eye out for kids or leaders with any physical challenges. Be prepared to modify activities so everyone can feel included in the fun! For example, if an activity has everyone crawling, you might say, “Crawl, scoot, or pretend to crawl.”

## WHAT WE FOUND

Kids got really into paying their “taxes”—so much so that our Bible leader had a hard time holding everything. We had three Crews in our rotation, and seeing our Bible leader struggling to hold everything added a fun, comical effect. But if you have more than three Crews, consider having a laundry basket on hand in which to collect taxes.

## SPACESHIP TIP

Expect lots of groans and complaints as kids give up their things. What a great way to evoke a bit of the frustration felt by the overtaxed people in Jesus’ time!



## Welcome Crews

**SUPPLIES:** Day 1 Small Group Posters, Day 1 Sycamore Tree Posters, Greenery and decorative plants (optional), NlrV Bible

Greet Crews outside your room.

Introduce yourself to all the kids and crew leaders.

Hold your Bible.

### SAY

Welcome to VBS! Each day, I get to share with you a totally true adventure from the Bible. In today’s story, Jesus is making some friends, but not the kind of friends people expected him to make.

We’ll find out about one of the friends he made, but first there’s a tax to get into the room today. Taxes were a big deal back in Jesus’ time—I guess they are today, too. A tax means you have to pay.

Look kids over skeptically.

Hmm, it looks like you didn’t bring much money with you. That means I get to take your stuff.

As kids pass you to enter the room, playfully take things like shoes, Crew bags, hats, or anything else kids might have.

Crews gather on the floor.

## Get Shorter

### SAY

Point out the sycamore pictures greenery, and invite kids to imagine you’re in a treetop.

We’re in a tree because this is where that friendship with Jesus began! But I need to back up a little bit, so let’s climb down.

Lead kids in standing and pretending they’re climbing down a tree. They’ll remain standing.

The guy in our Bible story was named Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a short guy...but *that* wasn’t the problem. Jesus loves people of every size! The problem was Zacchaeus’ heart. See, he was kind of small on the *inside*.

Here’s what I mean. Sometimes people say you’re a “big person” when you do the right thing. That doesn’t mean you’re tall—it means your *heart* is big!

Shake your head. Well, Zacchaeus wasn’t known for doing the right thing.

His job was a tax collector.

Being a tax collector made Zacchaeus a little smaller on the inside. Let’s be Zacchaeus’ heart. Squat down a little with me.

Lead kids in squatting to get a little bit shorter.

**SAY** In Jesus' day, tax collectors took money from people to give to the government. And *no one* likes to give away their money! Scootch down a little more.

Lead kids in squatting a little bit more.

But that's not all tax collectors took! Back in Bible times, most tax collectors also took *extra* money the government didn't need, and they kept that for themselves. Kind of like I did when you came in the room! That can make someone small on the *inside*.

Lead kids in getting on their knees.

And eventually, they got really, *really* rich from stealing people's money! Zacchaeus was the *chief* tax collector, so he was super rich.

Lead kids in sitting on their feet.

All those things made Zacchaeus' *heart* pretty small. He was a person *nobody* liked to see. If you saw Zacchaeus coming toward you, you might walk the other way. But he was also small on the outside. Zacchaeus was short!

## See Over a Crowd

**SAY** One day, Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was coming to town! He wanted to see Jesus because *everyone* had been talking about him. Call out the name of a famous person from today who *you'd* really want to see. Allow responses.

Well, Jesus was that celebrity for Zacchaeus. But huge crowds had gathered. And being short, Zacchaeus couldn't see in a crowd very well.

**ASK** Think about a time you were too short to see over a crowd. What did that feel like?

Share your own example (maybe from childhood), and then instruct kids to share examples with their Crews.

**SAY** Sounds like we've all felt like Zacchaeus. Well, he knew he could see if he had a boost! So Zacchaeus ran ahead of the crowd, climbed a tree, and waited for Jesus to pass by. Let's climb back up into our tree.

Lead Crews in standing and pantomiming climbing a tree.

Up in the tree, Zacchaeus could see Jesus coming. Look!

Point in the distance.

I think that's him coming now! Zacchaeus couldn't wait for Jesus to pass by.

And when he did, Zacchaeus got the surprise of his life. Jesus looked up in the tree and noticed Zacchaeus. Let's read what Jesus said.



Read Luke 19:5. Display the Bible Story Picture.

**Quick! Jesus wants to come to our home! Let's climb down the tree!**

Lead kids in pantomiming climbing down the tree, then have everyone sit down.

**Zacchaeus got to bring Jesus to his house! But it wasn't just that. Did you notice what Jesus said? He didn't say, "Hey, you! Guy in the tree!" He said, "Zacchaeus." Jesus knew Zacchaeus by name!**

**That's so exciting! Imagine waiting to meet your favorite celebrity, and then they notice you and call you by name.**

**Jesus wanted a real friendship with Zacchaeus.**

Touch your chest. **Maybe that made Zacchaeus feel a little bigger on the inside.**

**While all this good stuff was happening *inside* Zacchaeus' house, outside the door was a different story. People got mad! Remember, they didn't like Zacchaeus because Zacchaeus stole from them.**

**Cross your arms and make a mad face. Allow time.**

**People didn't like Zacchaeus. But Jesus shined love and friendship to him, and that changed Zacchaeus' heart.**

**Jesus' love changed Zacchaeus. It couldn't make him bigger on the outside, but it made Zacchaeus bigger on the inside. So little Zacchaeus did a big thing. Get on your knees to show how Zacchaeus grew a little on the inside.**

Have kids stand up on their knees.

**He promised Jesus he'd give half of his money to the poor.**

Have kids stand up, but scrunch over a bit.

**And then he promised that whatever money he'd stolen from people, he'd pay back—times four! I wonder if he *felt* four times bigger!**

Have kids stand tall and proud.

**I guess I can be like Zacchaeus, too!** Return everyone's items.

**Zacchaeus didn't grow taller that day with Jesus, but he grew as a person. Jesus' love and acceptance changed him forever!**

**Today, our Main Point is **The Light of Jesus Changes Hearts!****

**Can you say that together with me?**

Point to Main Point Poster. Repeat 2-3 times.



**ASK** Silently think of a person it's hard for you to get along with. You won't say that person's name. Just think of it in your mind. Pause.

**SAY** Let's think about what Jesus did to love and accept Zacchaeus. He called him by name—Zacchaeus' own name, not a mean name. Jesus spent time with Zacchaeus. Jesus took the first step, reaching out in kindness.

**ASK** Thinking about what Jesus did, what's one thing you can do with that person you need to get along with?

**SAY** Now talk about that in your Crew. Your Crew has 90 seconds to share. After one minute, give a 30-second warning. After 90 seconds, call attention.

**+** Making peace is one way we can shine Jesus' light! Zacchaeus was a man who made bad choices, but when he met Jesus, everything changed! Jesus didn't ignore or reject him—He showed love and kindness, and that changed Zacchaeus' heart. Just like Zacchaeus, we all need Jesus to help us make right choices and love others well. When we follow Jesus, His light shines in us and helps us grow to be more like Him. No matter who we are or what we've done, Jesus' love can change our hearts! Let's pray.

Jesus, thank You for loving us and changing our hearts, just like You did for Zacchaeus. Help us to shine Your light by showing kindness and making right choices. In your name, amen.

Tomorrow we'll find out another way Jesus shined his love to the world! See you then!

## SPACESHIP TIP

Here's a pro teaching tip: Create a welcoming environment where *all* kids feel free to share their thoughts. Rather than looking for a "right" answer, respond by simply repeating what a child said. That allows everyone to hear soft-spoken kids. Follow up responses with "Oooh, that's an interesting idea!" or "Good thinking!" You'll find more kids engage and eagerly share rather than waiting for one person to share the correct answer.

## Do an Experiment

**SAY**

**SUPPLIES:** disposable pie plates (1 per Crew), trays or cookie sheets (1 per Crew), whole milk, purple, blue, and green food coloring (1 container of each color per Crew in a rotation), dish soap, small bowl, cotton swabs (1 per Crew)



**Watch the time!**

Try to keep this activity moving quickly so kids have plenty of time to create their telescopes!

**Zacchaeus was a tax collector who made some pretty bad choices. He took money unfairly and didn't treat people well. But when Zacchaeus met Jesus, something incredible happened—his heart changed completely! Today, we're going to do an experiment that shows what it looks like when something powerful breaks apart the old and makes something new!**

Have Crews get out their pie plates and set them on trays or cookie sheets in case of spills. Pour approx. 3/4 cup whole milk into each Crew's plate (just enough to cover the bottom). Then have Crew Leaders scatter several drops of food coloring around the plate like polka dots. You may want to demonstrate this.

Have a volunteer from each crew come up to you with a cotton swab and get one end of the cotton swab soaked with dish soap. For best results, they should have a lot of soap on their cotton swabs.

When the volunteers return to their Crews, they'll stick the soapy end of the cotton swabs into the middle of their pie plates, hold them very still, and watch what happens. The reaction should last for a long time!

Let other kids take turns adding soapy cotton swabs to the milk and holding them still. Stirring will ruin the experiment.

**SAY**

As you pass out supplies, share what each one represents:

**The milk represents Zacchaeus before he met Jesus—stuck in his old, selfish ways.**

**The food coloring represents sin, mistakes, and all the wrong choices he made.**

**The soap represents Jesus!**

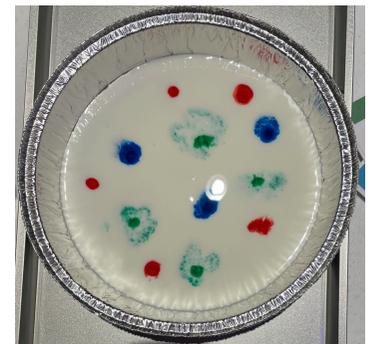
**Let's take a look at what happens when Jesus comes into the mix!**

**The Light of Jesus Changes Hearts!** Just like the soap didn't let the milk stay the same, Jesus didn't let Zacchaeus stay the same! He changed his heart, and Zacchaeus became a new person—someone who wanted to follow Jesus and do what was right. When Jesus called Zacchaeus out of the tree and spent time with him, Zacchaeus' heart completely changed. He stopped cheating people and started giving back to those he had wronged.

**WHAT WE FOUND**



Liquid food coloring was hard to find in stores when we did our field test, so plan ahead in case you need to order online. We forgot to remove the safety seal, which added an extra step for the first group of Crew Leaders.



**WHAT WE FOUND**



Keep the drops of food coloring toward the middle of the milk and drop at least 20 drops!



## Make Galaxy Gazers (telescope craft)

**SUPPLIES:** heavy duty cardstock (various colors), cellophane (cut into circles), Stickers, star cutouts, or sequins, Markers or crayons, Glue sticks or tape, Scissors, Aluminum foil (for a shiny rim effect, optional), Yarn or ribbon (optional, to wear around neck)



**SAY** Now let's see how things in space can get along and work together! Let's make telescopes!

Just like Zacchaeus had to look for Jesus, we can use our "telescopes" to remind us to keep our eyes on Him! When we focus on Jesus, His light changes our hearts and helps us live for Him.

Ahead of time, fold the cardstock paper into a cylinder and secure it with glue or tape. Use a variety of colors so kids can pick their own.

Kids can decorate the outside using stickers, drawings, or star cutouts to make it unique. For a shiny effect, glue a small ring of aluminum foil around one end to resemble a real telescope. Attach a cellophane circle to one end.

If desired, punch two holes near one end and tie yarn or ribbon through them to create a strap for wearing around the neck.

Once finished, encourage kids to look through their telescope and imagine seeing Jesus' light shining all around them, just like Zacchaeus saw Jesus and his heart was changed!

**ASK** What do you think Zacchaeus saw when he looked at Jesus, and how did it change him?

How can we "look" for Jesus in our everyday lives?

**SAY** It's time for you all to blast off to your next station! I can't wait to see you tomorrow!

