



# SPROUT

ACTIVE  
GAMES  
LEADER  
GUIDE







## SPROUT LEADER GUIDE

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***Credits for Sprout Leader Guide and Sprout supplemental files:***

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## Get Connected!



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"Come to the Table" board



# WELCOME TO COME TO THE TABLE!

*Come to the Table* is a one-week Vacation Bible School (VBS) curriculum that explores five stories about Jesus from the Gospels of Luke and John. These stories show Jesus eating with unexpected people, providing food for a crowd, demonstrating humility, and extending welcome and forgiveness. When you eat with Jesus, anything can happen!

The curriculum begins with Jesus' parable of the great feast and invites children to journey alongside Jesus as he feeds 5,000 people, befriends a tax collector, washes his disciple's feet, and both forgives and challenges his friend, Peter. Through these stories of Jesus, children learn that everyone is welcome at God's table where there is always enough. *Come to the Table* invites children to see that God loves and welcomes all people and challenges them to share that same love and hospitality in their everyday lives.

Each day begins with the invitation to **COME**. Children will participate in relationship-building activities, songs, prayer, Bible memory, and a dramatic presentation of the Bible story. Then children will **TASTE** by rotating through three activity stations and eating a snack. In closing worship, children will be challenged to **SHARE** the love of God with everyone they meet.

COME (35 min) Children start in small groups and then gather for worship.	TASTE (90 min + snack) Small groups rotate between three activity stations and have a snack.	SHARE (10 min) The large group gathers for worship and dismissal.
<b>Set the Table (10 min)</b> (small groups)  <b>Gather (10 min)</b> (large group, Call to Worship, songs, offering)  <b>The Main Course (15 min)</b> (large group, Bible memory, drama, Table Talk questions, prayer)	<b>Create &amp; Discover (30 min)</b> (art and science projects)  <b>Dig In (30 min)</b> (Bible study)  <b>Sprout (30 min)</b> (active games)  <b>Snack Time (15 min)</b>	<b>Songs</b>  <b>Family Diner Cards</b>  <b>Blessing</b>  <b>Dismissal</b>

Items you will need:

- ☐ *Sprout Leader Guide*
- ☐ Sprout supplemental files
- ☐ Sprout Area Poster

The **supplemental files** include teaching aids to accompany the leader's guide. Each Sprout Leader should be given access to them so as to print pages for the chosen activities. The Sprout supplements include the following:

- Day 1 Bites Bingo Card
- Day 3 Hearts and Coins
- Day 4 "Order's Up" List
- Day 4 Picture Orders
- Day 4 "Love Overflows" Cards

# WELCOME TO SPROUT!

Get outside and play some active games! Physical activity is crucial in child development. Research has shown that active play in the natural world has many benefits, including physical health benefits, improved mood, and increased attention span.

Sprout is one of three 30-minute **TASTE** Activity Stations following **COME** (opening worship). Each Sprout session includes three parts: Connect, Explore, and Bless.

Each session plan also includes a **Bible background essay** to read in preparation for leading, and an **At-a-Glance Chart** to aid in planning.

## CONNECT

Gather the children for a brief recap of the Bible story and provide instructions for the chosen games for the day. Because these are active games, it is essential to establish clear behavioral expectations and to explain the boundaries of the play area so that all children are safe.

## EXPLORE

Choose from the game options. The At-a-Glance Chart at the beginning of each session gives a summary of the type of game and activity level to help you decide which games to offer. Consider your group size, space, and number of volunteers. It's best to be prepared with more games than you think you will need. That way you have a backup plan if one of the games doesn't work for a group, or if there is a change due to weather or supervision.

Each game option includes "Talk About It" prompts to help the children connect the game to the Bible story and their own experiences.

## BLESS

Work together with the children to clean up materials in preparation for the next group, and then gather the children for a short prayer of blessing.



# SETTING UP

It's ideal if Sprout activities are done outside in a field. An empty parking lot can also work, provided no cars are allowed to drive into it. Being outside is not possible for many churches, so games can also be played in a gymnasium or other large empty room. Make modifications to the games as needed based on your available space.

Although some activities require little setup, others may require preparation work, such as gathering supplies, printing items from the supplemental files, or arranging the space in a particular way. Instead of purchasing new items for activities, check to see if you can get donations from church members.

There is a Sprout Area Poster in the VBS Physical Kit. Use it to designate a gathering place where children will come for Connect and Bless. This will also be the place to have "Talk About It" conversations after each game.

Have field markers, such as cones, to set boundaries for some of the games. For example, if children will be playing tag in a field or parking lot, it will be important to mark boundaries. For tag and running games with a small group, a 20 x 20 ft / 6 x 6 m space is enough.

Depending on the weather, have a large cooler of water and cups available in case children get thirsty. Have first aid supplies on hand in case of injury.

## CHOOSING ACTIVITIES

There are several factors to consider when choosing activities, including available supplies, age of children in the group, number of volunteer helpers, group size, available space, and length of time. If you know of children who have physical limitations, be sure to make modifications so that they can participate in the games.

Sprout activities are purposefully created to provide a variety of levels of engagement and energy. Activities are varied and include cooperative and competitive games. Provide a variety of activities throughout the week.

Be prepared to redirect the group to a second or third game in case of rain or if the group is not connecting with the selected activity. It's best to have a backup plan rather than scramble in the moment to come up with something different.

## LEADING CONVERSATIONS

After playing each game, gather briefly near the Sprout Area Poster to discuss the experience. Discussion questions are provided in the "Talk About It" section of each game description. However, you know your group best! Feel free to take the conversation in a different direction. The goal is to help children connect their experiences with the Bible stories.

When leading conversations, never force children to answer, but invite them to share if they are comfortable. Ask open-ended questions, and refrain from asking questions that require a simple yes or no. If a child stumps you with a question or comment, thank the child for providing a response, and say that you will do some research and get back to him or her. Be sure you follow through. This lets children know that they have been heard, and that you care about responding to their curiosity.

# SAFETY

It is important to ensure the safety and well-being of all children in VBS, particularly during active games. Educate yourself about any safety protocols and policies that your church already has in place. If there is not a specific policy, discuss the following types of questions and make a plan with your VBS Director:

- How many volunteers should be on hand for supervision (one adult for every 5–10 children)?
- How will you keep track of which children have asthma, bee sting allergies, other allergies, or medications?
- What safety supplies will you have, such as drinking water, a first aid kit, sunscreen, or a cell phone?
- What happens when a child needs to use the restroom?
- If someone is injured, what protocol will you use to get help, inform parents/guardians, bring comfort, treat wounds, and record details of the incident?
- Is there a medical professional who can be on-site to assist in case of injury?

Establish safety rules and clear expectations for children so they are mindful of their limitations and are cautioned about any potential issues. Adult leaders should demonstrate how to safely tag people. Tagging should be done with a gentle hand on the back, leg, arm, or shoulder. Depending on the amount of space and number of children, you may want to tell children to walk briskly instead of run.

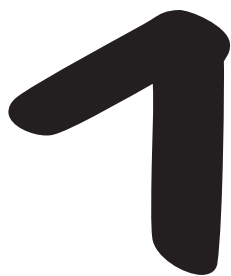
Allow opportunities for children to drink water, especially if the activity requires high energy.

Being clear about your emergency protocol and the individual cautions for your children can prevent a minor injury from becoming a serious issue.

# SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

Children may be hesitant to play one of the games. Do not force participation. Encourage and invite, but do not ostracize children or guilt them into participating. Children may be reluctant to participate for a variety of reasons, including being tired, anxious, hot, uninterested, or insecure. Some children struggle with physical activities and may be embarrassed about being slow or uncoordinated. One option is to invite them to participate in other ways, such as by keeping score, being a referee, reading instructions, or setting up the playing field.

Offering a variety of activities, including some that are low energy, is one way to make sure that all children can participate. Another way to encourage participation is to have adults join in the games. Keep the atmosphere fun and light, reducing the pressure for children to keep up with their peers. You may want to avoid competitive games altogether. There are plenty of other options.



DAY 1

# BE OUR GUEST

## Scripture Text:

Luke 14:15–24

## Food for Thought:

Everyone is welcome at God's table.

**"There is room for everyone in the church and, whenever there is not, then, please, we must make room, including for those who make mistakes, who fall or struggle.... The Lord is clear. The sick, the elderly, the young, old, ugly, beautiful, good and bad... Everyone, everyone, everyone!"**

**Pope Francis  
August 3, 2023**

## Bible Essay:

Who is welcome at God's table? The answer might surprise you!

The parable of the great feast is the focus of today's session, but the preceding verses offer important background for understanding the parable and the theme of this session. Jesus is having dinner at the home of a prominent Pharisee (a "religiously serious" leader). It is the Sabbath, but that doesn't stop Jesus from breaking Jewish law to heal a man who is sick. Jesus notices that the guests are vying for the important seats at the dinner table. He then teaches the guests that at God's table, the humble are exalted, the stranger is invited, and all are welcome. Social status, wealth, and power don't matter here; come as you are! This is God's table, where the poor, ignored, and excluded receive the extravagant and warm hospitality of God. It's a reminder for us that we should invite and welcome all to our eucharistic celebrations. Jesus doesn't want us to exclude anyone!

Jesus doesn't stop with just a lesson about where to sit and how to treat guests. He tells the dinner guests a parable of a great feast to reveal who God is and what God cares about. This is the focus for children today. This story, like so many of Jesus' parables, stretches and challenges the listener. The host invites many friends, who initially agree to come, but then some back out on the day of the feast. They have more pressing things to do—visiting a purchased field, trying out some new oxen, enjoying the early days of a marriage.

The host doesn't have patience for these excuses and sends his servant to invite people until his house is full. He specifically tells the servant to look in the streets and alleys to find people who are poor, people who can't walk, and those who can't see. Even after doing this, there is still room. So the servant goes far and wide inviting people until the house is full.

Jesus closes the story by restating the sad reality that not everyone is interested in this alternate way of being in community; some want to carry on with life as usual. It can be hard to embrace a world where the last are first and the least are the greatest, especially if you have been living in a position of privilege.

The good news is that God (the host of the feast) offers an invitation to all people. No one is left out! Everyone is welcome to come to God's table. Those who come do so in response to God's generous hospitality. May all the children in your group experience welcome and hospitality this week!





# DAY 1 AT-A-GLANCE

## Advance Preparation

- ☐ Read Luke 14:15–24 and the Bible essay for Day 1 on page 6 of this guide.
- ☐ Read through the Sprout session plan. Choose games to play, depending on the space, group size, and amount of time you have. Gather needed supplies.
- ☐ Communicate with volunteers about their roles and tasks.

## SESSION PLAN

### Connect

Welcome the group and briefly review the Bible story, referring to the Bible story summary on page 6 as needed. Set behavioral expectations and give instructions about the chosen games for the day.

### Explore

Play one or more of the chosen games. Leave time at the end of the session to return materials and prepare the space for the next group.



OPTIONS	TYPE	SUPPLIES	TO DO
<b>Join the Feast</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperative</li> <li>• Medium energy</li> <li>• No preparation</li> <li>• No cleanup</li> </ul>		Practice the listed actions, adapting as desired.
<b>“Ready, Set, Dine” Relay</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competitive</li> <li>• High energy</li> <li>• Some preparation</li> <li>• Some cleanup</li> </ul>	<b>For each team:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> One tablecloth</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Five plastic plates, cups, napkins, forks, and spoons</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> One pitcher of water</li> </ul>	Gather a set of supplies for each team.
<b>Find a Seat; It’s Time to Eat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get to know you</li> <li>• Competitive</li> <li>• Medium Energy</li> <li>• Minimal Preparation</li> <li>• Some Cleanup</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Chairs	Set up chairs in a circle, one less than the number of players.
<b>Bites Bingo</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get to know you</li> <li>• Cooperative</li> <li>• Low energy</li> <li>• Some preparation</li> <li>• No cleanup</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Day 1 Bites Bingo Cards (supplements) <input type="checkbox"/> Pencils	Print Day 1 Bites Bingo Cards (supplements), one per child.

### Bless

Gather the group and say a closing prayer. Pray:

**God, thank you for loving and welcoming everyone. Help us to make others feel welcome and included this week at Vacation Bible School. Amen.**

# EXPLORE

## Join the Feast

Players spread out at least an arm's reach away from any other player, facing the adult "host." The host and several helpers should demonstrate each listed action before beginning play. The host will then call out one of the actions. Players work in small groups or alone to complete the action as quickly as they can. When an action is called that requires a group of players to work together, remind players to include others who may be looking for a group. Encourage children to work with different people each time a new action is called.

### Actions:

- **Set the table:** Get into groups of four. Hold hands in a circle as though you are a table.
- **Eat your veggies:** Sit down by yourself and pretend to eat.
- **Time for dinner:** Find a partner and pretend to ring a large dinner bell together.
- **Sweep the crumbs:** Pretend to sweep the floor with a broom.
- **Wash your hands:** Find a partner. One person pretends to be the faucet and the other person washes their hands.
- **Wash the dishes:** Get in groups of three. Two children make the sink and the third person pretends to wash dishes in the sink.
- **Stir the soup:** Pretend to stir a large pot of soup.

### Talk About It

In our story today, Jesus told the host of the banquet feast to invite everyone, not just his friends and family. In this game, it was important to include others and work together to complete the actions for the feast. What challenges did you have as a group? Why is it sometimes difficult to work with others? What might be challenging about inviting someone you don't know well to come over for dinner?

## "Ready, Set, Dine" Relay

Divide the group into teams. Each team lines up. Place one set of supplies across the play area from each team. Each set has one tablecloth, five plates, cups, napkins, forks and spoons, as well as one pitcher of water. When the leader says go, the first player in each line runs and spreads out the tablecloth on the ground (or on a table). Player 1 runs back and tags the next player. Player 2 runs and lays out the plates as if setting the table. Continue on with Player 3 laying out the napkins, Player 4 the forks, Player 5 the spoons, Player 6 the cups, and Player 7 filling the cups. The first team to completely set its table and have everyone sit down around the table is the winner. For larger groups, send two children at a time. For smaller groups, each child can take multiple turns.

### Talk About It

When you invite people over for dinner, what do you do to get ready? (*make food, clean, set the table*) Jesus told the banquet host to invite people who may have nowhere else to eat. Have you ever done this? Who could you invite to eat at your table at home or school? What is difficult about inviting new people?

### Supplies (for each team):

- ☐ One tablecloth
- ☐ Five plastic plates, cups, napkins, forks, and spoons
- ☐ One pitcher of water

## Find a Seat; It's Time to Eat!

Set up a circle of chairs with one less chair than the number of players. All players except one (the caller) sit down. The caller stands in the middle of the circle and calls out, "You are invited to God's table if you \_\_\_\_\_." For example, "if you like basketball" or "if you have curly hair" or "if this is your first time at Vacation Bible School." All the players to whom the phrase applies must get out of their seat and find a new seat. At any time, the caller can say, "Everyone is invited!" and everyone must get up and find a new seat. Players cannot sit in the seat they were previously in. Whoever is left without a seat is the next caller. Play for a specified amount of time or until everyone has had an opportunity to be the caller.

### Talk About It

God's invitation and welcome is for everyone. What similarities or differences did you notice between yourself and others in this game? God has uniquely created and loves every one of us! Have you or someone you know ever been left out? How does that feel? How could you welcome someone who has been excluded?

### Supplies

- ☐ Chairs (one less than the number of players)

## Bites Bingo

Give each player a Day 1 Bites Bingo Card (supplements) and a pencil. Players mingle and ask other players whether they like a specific food pictured on the card. If Player 2 answers yes to what Player 1 asks, Player 2 writes either his or her full name or initials on Player 1's bingo space. If the answer is no, Player 1 can ask about one other food before needing to move on to a different player. Depending on time, players could try to get four names in a row or fill their whole bingo card.

### Talk About It

We all have different foods that we enjoy or foods that we don't care for. Yet we all receive the invitation to come to God's table to be filled. What do you imagine God's table might look like? What kind of food might God serve to us?

### Supplies

- ☐ Day 1 Bites Bingo Cards (supplements), one per child
- ☐ Pencils

