



EARLY (CHILDHOOD

LEADER
GUIDE





EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER GUIDE

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Pinterest: [GrowingUpCatholic](https://www.pinterest.com/GrowingUpCatholic/come-to-the-table)
<https://www.pinterest.com/GrowingUpCatholic/come-to-the-table>
"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 (45–50 min)	TASTE (approx. 90 min)	SHARE (5–7 min)
Make Friends (3–5 min) Sing (3–5 min) Give (3–5 min) Bible Story, Questions (10 min) Bible Memory (5 min) <i>A Scoop of Stories</i> student booklet (5 min) Snack Time (15 min)	Creation Activity Station (art activities) Sprout Activity Station (active games) Discovery Activity Station (science explorations) Optional: Rest Time or Free Play (15–20 min)	Song Prayer Family Diner Cards Dismissal

Items you will need:

- ☐ *Early Childhood Leader Guide*
- ☐ Early Childhood supplemental files
- ☐ Early Childhood Area Poster
- ☐ Sample copy of *A Scoop of Stories* student booklet (You will also need one *A Scoop of Stories* student booklet for each child.)

The **supplemental files** include teaching aids and materials related to Early Childhood. Each leader should be given access to the relevant materials. The folder includes the following:

- Seven songs as sing-along videos and in MP3 format
 - “Lead Us to Your Table”
 - “Table of Life”
 - “We Live to Love”
 - “Where Shall We Go”
 - “Many Voices, One Song”
 - “The House That Love Is Building”
 - “Eucharistic People”
- Chord charts
- Song motions
- Days 1–5 Bible Memory Game
- Days 1, 4, 5 Story figures
- Day 2 Bread and Fish
- Day 2 Miracle Squares
- Day 3 Zacchaeus Figures
- Day 5 Fish Template
- Day 5 Storytelling Props

Media Connections are included in each guide and posted on the **Growing Up Catholic Pinterest page** (see page 1). The items are organized by day. Additional songs, decorating ideas, snack ideas, and offering-related videos are also included on Pinterest.

DAILY SCHEDULE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

Each Early Childhood session is **2½ hours** and includes three major sections: **COME**, **TASTE**, and **SHARE**.

COME

Each session begins with a welcome activity, “get to know you” conversation prompt, several songs, and the offering project. Children will hear an interactive retelling of the Bible story, respond to wondering questions, learn a Bible memory passage, do activities from the *A Scoop of Stories* student booklet, and have a snack. The amount of time spent as a large group for **COME** can vary significantly depending on the needs of your group. The chart on page 2 provides an approximate use of time, but you will need to tailor it to your situation. You may want to start with 10 to 15 minutes of free play with play dough or favorite toys to ease the transition from parents and caregivers.

The Bible memory passage is John 6:35a from the New Revised Standard Version - Catholic Edition (NRSVCE). *If you prefer, feel free to use a different translation.*

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life.”

TASTE

There are three types of activities provided for **TASTE**:

- **Creation Activity Station:** Three arts and crafts activities are provided for each day. “Talk About It” prompts will help you connect the activity with the Bible story.
- **Sprout Activity Station:** Three active games are provided for each day and are designed to be done outside, if you have adequate space and supervision, but could be adapted for smaller indoor spaces. “Talk About It” prompts can be used at the close of each game to help children relate the game to the Bible story and their own experience.
- **Discovery Activity Station:** There are two sensory explorations provided for each day. Each activity includes “Talk About It” prompts to guide conversation.

If you have several leaders/assistants, these activities can be done as rotations. This would mean setting up activities in different areas and having children rotate between them. A leader would need to be at each area to coordinate and supervise each activity. Alternatively, keep the whole group together. Clean up one activity before moving to the next one. If you choose this option, it’s helpful if the materials for each activity are already organized so they can be pulled out easily.

TASTE also includes a list of Media Connections to use as you see fit. Depending on your time frame, you may want to also include 15 to 20 minutes of rest time or free play.

SHARE

Each session closes with the song “We Live to Love” and a prayer. Pass out the Family Diner Cards that are on page 12 of the *A Scoop of Stories* student booklets. These cards include at-home activities to encourage families to explore the VBS concepts together.

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.

SETTING UP

Inside: If space is available, set up the main room with these areas:

- **Gathering place:** This should be open floor space where children can gather in a circle for group activities and the Bible story. Provide a carpet square or hand towel for each child, which cues them where to sit throughout a large group activity.
- **Table area:** Set up tables for snack time as well as for student booklet and art activities.
- **Reading corner:** Set up a comfortable area with picture books, pillows, blankets, and stuffed animals. Children can use this area if they arrive early or if they need a quiet space to be alone.
- **Play area:** Set up a child-sized table that has a colorful tablecloth, battery operated candles, a centerpiece, child-friendly place settings, cloth napkins, and toy food. You could also include cooking supplies, such as mixing bowls and spoons, empty egg cartons, and pots and pans. Open this area if children arrive early or whenever they need a less structured activity. See the “Decorating” section for how to change this area from day to day.
- **Rotations:** If you will conduct the **TASTE** activities as rotations, you could set up and decorate a Creation Activity Station area, a Sprout Activity Station area, and a Discovery Activity Station area.

Outside: If possible, use an open grassy area where children can safely run and play. For safety reasons, this area should be away from the street or parking lot. Games can also be played in a gym or large empty room.

Decorating

Decorating is an important part of *Come to the Table*. Decorations set the tone and generate excitement for learning and praising God. Hang the decorative Early Childhood Area Poster up outside your meeting space. Put a welcome mat outside the door.

Decorate the Early Childhood area to look like an outdoor picnic, fancy banquet, or a Bible-times home. You may want to change the look from day to day. These ideas could apply to the look of the whole room or to just the play area.

- **Banquet (Day 1):** Put “fancy” tablecloths on the table. Have battery-operated candles around the room. Create a homemade “chandelier” to hang from the ceiling. See ideas on the Pinterest board. Have fancy dress-up clothes and plastic jewelry that children can wear while they are in that area.
- **Picnic (Days 2, 5):** Create the look of an outdoor picnic. Cover tables with checkered tablecloths

that look like picnic blankets. Set out picnic baskets with toy food and plasticware. Create large trees and hang clouds from the ceiling. Ideas for creating trees are on the Pinterest board. If using this for Day 5, create a pretend campfire. Search online or on Pinterest for DIY ideas.

- **Bible-times home (Days 3, 4):** Collapse a table so that it is on the floor. Put cushions around the edge of the table. Add other items that would suit the time period. See Pinterest for ideas.

Check out the *Growing Up Catholic* Pinterest page for additional ideas: <https://www.pinterest.com/GrowingUpCatholic/come-to-the-table/>. There is a board with a section for decorations.

Creating a Safe, Welcoming Environment

Young children thrive with consistency and predictability. They enjoy repetition and feel safe when they know what will happen next. The Early Childhood sessions are written to provide this sort of predictability and repetition from day to day. Challenges are bound to come up, especially because the children may not know each other or the leaders. Here are some ideas for responding:

- **Support children as they address conflicts.** When conflict arises, stop what you are doing to address the situation. Use simple language and coach children about how to communicate with each other. Say things, such as “Hands are for helping, not for hurting” and “How does that make you feel?” Cue children to say things, such as “I would like a turn” or “I was using that. Please give it back.”
- **Speak calmly and respectfully.** Your tone of voice and choice of words is important when giving instructions, redirecting behavior, and communicating with individual children. This sets an example of how you want the children to interact with each other. Use children’s names when speaking to them. This shows that you know and respect them as individuals.
- **Use proximity.** If a child is struggling, it can help to sit near the child. This communicates that you care for the child and allows you to redirect the child quietly as needed.
- **Respond to the needs of individuals.** Some children have a hard time separating from parents and caregivers or do not like sitting in a large group. Do what you can to attend to the needs of individual children. A child might need to go sit in the reading corner alone for a bit or might need to hug a stuffed animal toy. These small accommodations can make a big difference.

MUSIC

Young children love music, rhythm, and movement so it's important to include songs throughout the day. We provide seven songs. Some are used every day, while others can be used whenever it works for your group. The music can be sung or simply played as background music while children are doing their activities. Song motions, lyrics, and lead sheets can be found in the Songbook. There are additional song suggestions listed in Media Connections and posted on Pinterest.

- "Lead Us to Your Table"
- "Table of Life"
- "We Live to Love"
- "Where Shall We Go?"
- "Many Voices, One Song"
- "The House That Love is Building"
- "Eucharistic People"

Please note that music in the download cannot be duplicated, distributed, used in your parish-wide Masses, or otherwise used outside the VBS experience! If you wish to share the music with children and their families, purchase *Come to the Table* CDs or MP3 licenses which are sold separately. To use the songs in Sunday Mass, please report usage under your regular music licensing program.

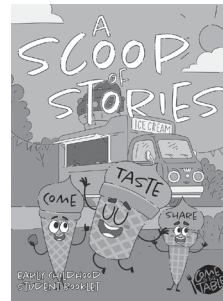
OFFERING PROJECT

Consult with the VBS Director to find out what the offering project is for the week. The options provided by *Come to the Table* are related to providing food for people who are hungry. If your group will join with the older children for opening worship, offerings are collected in lunch boxes or bags. That can also work if you meet separately. Add your contributions to what the rest of the children in VBS are collecting or make your own offering display and track what you've raised. Ask the Director for the Offering Project Resources file for ideas about a display.

SNACK TIME

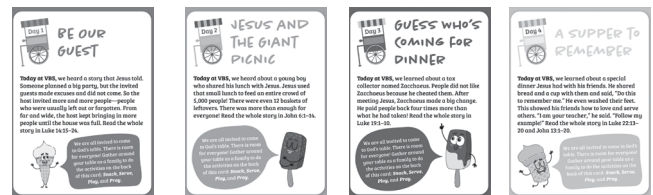
Each session has several snack options. Some are simple while others are more time-consuming. Some could be prepared with the children. Otherwise, invite youth and adults to prepare and serve the snacks. Have napkins or small plates as well as cups for juice or water. Be sure children wash their hands. Say or sing a prayer before eating together. Be aware of any food sensitivities or allergies and provide alternate foods as needed.

A SCOOP OF STORIES STUDENT BOOKLETS



The *A Scoop of Stories* student booklet is used during **COME**. Each day includes a simple retelling of the story and a related activity.

Each *A Scoop of Stories* student booklet contains Family Diner Cards that are sent home on Days 1–4. These quarter-page cards contain activities to encourage children and their families to extend their learning from VBS. The cards will be distributed at the end of each day, so remove all the cards from page 13 of each book, cut them apart, and organize them by day. The back cover of the booklet contains Family Diner activities for families to do after VBS, so be sure to send the booklets home at the end of the week.



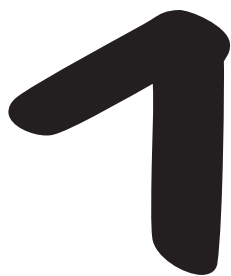
USING MEDIA CONNECTIONS

Each session includes a variety of books and online resources to extend children's understanding of the Bible story. These can be used in a variety of ways:

- Set up a book corner for children to read books independently.
- Set up a media center with a laptop or tablet that has the chosen videos or websites bookmarked. A volunteer will need to staff this area to help children view the chosen items.
- Show a video or read a book to the entire group.

Preview both books and videos and cue videos to avoid watching ads.

A Compiled Booklist is included in the Director supplements. Ask a volunteer to go to the library and gather books for the entire week.



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.
- ☐ Pray for the children and adults who will participate in VBS today.
- ☐ Read through the session plan and decide which activities you will use. Be sure to have one *A Scoop of Stories* student booklet for each child.
- ☐ Communicate with volunteers about their roles and task.
- ☐ Create a worship area where children can gather in a circle.

	SUPPLIES	TO DO
COME <i>Make Friends</i> <i>Sing</i> <i>Give</i> <i>Prepare</i> <i>Bible Story</i> <i>I Wonder . . .</i> <i>Bible Memory</i> <i>A Scoop of Stories</i> <i>Snack Time</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Area Poster <input type="checkbox"/> <i>A Scoop of Stories</i> student booklets (one per child) <input type="checkbox"/> Songs <input type="checkbox"/> Days 1, 4, 5 Story figures <input type="checkbox"/> Days 1–5 Bible Memory Game <input type="checkbox"/> Music player <input type="checkbox"/> Toy food <input type="checkbox"/> Streamers or ribbons <input type="checkbox"/> Lunch box or offering basket <input type="checkbox"/> Large clear vase or jar <input type="checkbox"/> Spoon <input type="checkbox"/> Uncooked rice <input type="checkbox"/> Brown rectangle (paper, felt, or cloth) <input type="checkbox"/> Green circle (paper, felt, or cloth) <input type="checkbox"/> Gray square (paper, felt, or cloth) <input type="checkbox"/> Pencils, crayons	Prepare the Days 1–5 Bible Memory Game. Prepare the Days 1, 4, 5 Story figures. Practice telling the Bible story. Learn about the VBS offering project chosen by the Director. Access song and supplemental resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Lead Us to Your Table,” “Many Voices, One Song” • Days 1, 4, 5 Story figures • Days 1–5 Bible Memory Game
TASTE Activity Stations <i>Creation</i> <i>Sprout</i> <i>Discovery</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Supplies for chosen activities <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop or tablet with Internet connection	Choose TASTE activities based on the age and interests of children, the amount of time you have, and available supplies. Check books out of the library.
SHARE	<input type="checkbox"/> Day 1 Family Diner Cards <input type="checkbox"/> “We Live to Love” song <input type="checkbox"/> Music player	Remove and cut apart the Day 1 Family Diner Cards from page 13 of each <i>A Scoop of Stories</i> student booklet. Access “We Live to Love” song.



COME

Teaching Tips

The **Days 1–5 Bible Memory Game** will be used each day, so be sure to prepare this in advance. The poster and instructions are found in the supplements.

The **Days 1, 4, 5 Story figures** as well as the brown rectangle for storytelling will be used again on Days 4 and 5, so save them.

Young children do not have a strong concept of the value of money. For the **offering**, what is most important is the act of giving, not the amount of money given. Have coins on hand so that if a child did not bring an offering, you can give the child some coins to add to the offering. This allows everyone to participate, and no one will feel bad for not contributing.

Sprout includes active, outdoor games. Be sure to have adequate supervision and a safe location for children to run and play. Young children will need more than just four cones to mark the corners of the play area. Line the perimeter of the game area with cones for a better visual of the boundaries or lay out jump ropes or ropes around the perimeter so it is clear where children need to stay.

MAKE FRIENDS

Play “Lead Us to Your Table” (download) as children arrive. Gather in a circle and sing a welcome song to the tune of “Frere Jacques” (Are You Sleeping?).

C-O-M-E. (*Gesture “come” with your left hand.*)

C-O-M-E. (*Gesture “come” with your right hand.*)

Come with me! (*Gesture “come” with both hands and then point to yourself.*)

Come with me! (*Gesture “come” with both hands and then point to yourself.*)

We will be together, (*extend open arms towards the group*)

sharing with each other, (*mimic giving something to your neighbor*)

you and me, (*point to the children and then to yourself*)

you and me. (*Point to the children and then to yourself.*)

Pass a piece of toy food around the circle. Whoever has the toy can say his or her name and a favorite food. If a child does not feel comfortable speaking, simply tell the rest of the group the child’s name and everyone can say hello to the child.

SING

Provide streamers or ribbons for each child. Turn on “Lead Us to Your Table.” Lead children around the room, encouraging them to copy what you are doing with the streamer. For instance, wave it high or low, out to the side, or in large circles. Rotate leaders as desired. Alternatively, teach children the song motions.

GIVE

Tell children that you will be collecting money to help provide food to people who are hungry and don’t have enough to eat. (Consult with the VBS Director for specifics about the chosen offering project.) Provide a bowl of uncooked rice and have each child scoop a small spoonful of the rice into a large clear vase. You will add to this vase every day. Explain that if we all give a little of what we have, we can help feed people who are hungry. If we all give just one penny it adds up to a lot of money by the end of the week. Show children the lunch box or lunch bag where they can place their offerings. Play “Many Voices, One Song” (download) as quiet background music during offering time.

Say a prayer of thanks for the gifts the children brought. Pray for people who do not have the food they need.

PREPARE

Lay out a brown rectangle, cut from fabric, felt, or paper to represent a table. A short distance away, lay out a gray square for the city, and a green circle for the country. Use the Days 1, 4, 5 Story Figures when indicated. Before you begin, set five story figures on the gray square and five figures on the green circle. The Host and Helper will be placed by the brown rectangle. Have dried beans to use as food.

BIBLE STORY

A man invited some friends to come over for a special dinner. (*Set the Host story figure next to the brown rectangle.*) He set the table with lots of food. (*Sprinkle dried beans on the brown rectangle.*) When everything was ready, he called for his helper. (*Set the Helper story figure next to the Host.*) He said, “Go find all the friends that I invited. Tell them that dinner is ready!”

The helper went to the first friend. (*Move Helper next to one of the people on the gray square.*) “Come, dinner is ready!”

But the first friend said, “I just bought a field. I have to go see it. I’m sorry, but I can’t come.” (*Remove the person from the scene.*)

The helper went to the second friend. (*Move Helper next to another person on the gray square.*) “Come, dinner is ready!”

But the second friend said, “I just bought five pairs of oxen and I need to try them. I’m sorry, but I can’t come.” (*Remove the person from the scene.*)

The helper went to the third friend. (*Move Helper next to another person on the gray square.*) “Come, dinner is ready!”

But the third friend said, “I just got married. I’m sorry, but I can’t come.” (*Remove the person from the scene.*)

The helper went back to the man who was having the dinner. (*Move Helper next to Host.*) “None of the people you invited are able to come.”

The host felt angry. “I have made this great dinner, and now no one is coming! Go out into the town and invite people to come. Invite people who don’t have enough food to eat. Invite people who are not able to see or walk.” The helper did this, and many people came. (*Move Helper to the gray square. Move all the people from the gray square next to the brown rectangle.*)

But there was still room in the house! The man said, “Go out into the countryside. Invite everyone you can find to come to my dinner. I want my house to be full!” (*Move Helper to the green circle. Move all the people from the green circle next to the brown rectangle.*)

More and more people came until the house was full!

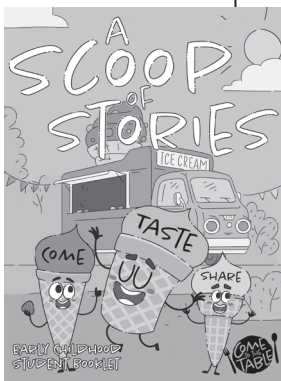
I wonder . . .

Ask several wondering questions to help children explore the story. They may want to share their thoughts and ideas, so allow time for that.

- I wonder how the man felt as he was getting everything ready for the special dinner.
- I wonder how far the helper had to go to find all the people.
- Imagine a house filled with people. Imagine everyone eating and talking and laughing together.
- I wonder what it’s like to eat with people you’ve never met before.
- Who would you invite to your house for a special dinner?

Teaching Tip

If the strip is on the wall, put removable putty adhesive on the back of each card. The children can then tack the cards on the wall below the corresponding pictures of the strip.



BIBLE MEMORY

Read the verse printed below. Ask children about foods they like to eat. Bread is one of the foods that can fill us up when we feel hungry. Jesus said that he was like bread. Jesus can fill us with peace and love and joy.

■ **Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life.”**

—John 6:35a (NRSVCE)

Gather around the prepared Days 1–5 Bible Memory Game (supplements). Lay the strip on the floor or tape it onto the wall at children’s eye level. Read Jesus’ words, pointing to each word on the strip. Then mix up the six cards and work together to put them in the correct order. Children can refer to the strip to see the correct order.

A SCOOP OF STORIES STUDENT BOOKLETS

Read the story on page 2 of the *A Scoop of Stories* student booklet aloud. When indicated in the story, sing the song to the tune of “Skip to My Lou.” If you aren’t familiar with the tune, either watch a video of it on YouTube or simply chant the words rather than sing them.

On page 3, children can draw food on the plate and write names or draw pictures of people at the bottom. *Option:* Provide glue sticks and pictures of food cut from magazines. Children can glue the food pictures onto the plate rather than draw.

SNACK TIME

Have children wash their hands and gather at the table. Choose one or two children to serve as snack helpers and pass out napkins or plates and cups. Say or sing a short prayer before eating together.

Option 1

Create a feast by placing various snack items onto trays and in bowls and set them on the prepared banquet table to look like a feast. Food ideas may include cut-up fruits and vegetables, crackers or graham crackers, pretzels, popcorn, cheese cubes or string cheese sticks, and small chocolate bars or candies.

Option 2

Create a banquet table snack. Use a large (rectangular) graham cracker to represent the table. Spread cream cheese or frosting on top of the graham cracker. Have a variety of small snacks children can stick to the top, such as grapes cut in half, chocolate chips, small slices of fruit, pretzels, O-shaped cereal, or candy-coated chocolate candies. Once they have added food to their “table,” provide teddy bear graham snacks for them to set around the “table” to represent the guests.

TASTE

CREATION ACTIVITY STATION

Prepare Your Place

Create placemats. Give each child a piece of construction paper or card stock. Children can trace a dessert plate and a cup onto their placemat to look like a place setting. Provide craft supplies (markers, crayons, food stickers, scissors, ribbon, glue) so children can decorate the placemat. Use the placemats during snack time and then send them home at the end of the week. Make several extra placemats for children who begin attending after the first day of VBS.

Option: Cover the mats with clear adhesive shelf paper for durability. Or lay waxed paper over the placemat and tape or staple it at the edges.

Talk About It

Placemats can be used to make the table look special for a meal. What else could you and your family do to make a meal extra special? (*light candles, add flowers or another centerpiece, play music, make good food, invite friends, decorate the house*) I wonder what food you would serve if you had friends over. I wonder what you would talk about with your friends.

Supplies

- ☐ Construction paper or card stock
- ☐ Dessert plates
- ☐ Cups
- ☐ Markers or crayons
- ☐ Food stickers
- ☐ Glue
- ☐ Ribbon
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Clear adhesive shelf paper or waxed paper (optional)

Enough for All

Give each child a large ball of play dough. Have children mold their dough into a food they like. Instruct them to make enough for each child present. (If there are five children, they would make five “blueberries.”) When done, give everyone a paper plate and have children share their “food” so that everyone has one of each. You may want to provide cookie cutters or food molds to speed up the process.

Variation for Older Children:

Challenge them to make a food that matches the color of their play dough (*blue blueberries, orange carrots, brown bread*).

Talk About It

The man in the story makes a special dinner and shares it with his friends, neighbors, and even people he has never met before. I wonder how sharing your play dough food made you feel. What else can we share besides food? Why is it sometimes hard to share?

Supplies

- ☐ Play dough (recipe available on Growing Up Catholic Pinterest page, Come to the Table board)
- ☐ Cookie cutters and/or food molds (optional)
- ☐ Paper plates

Everyone Is Invited

Set up a letter writing center that has various types of paper, envelopes, scissors, tape, stickers to represent postage stamps, crayons, and other decorating supplies. Children can create their own invitations to a pretend party. Set up a “post office” where children can pretend to mail their invitations. Cut a slit in the side of a packing box where children can insert the invitations to be mailed.

Tip: Instead of purchasing envelopes, collect return envelopes from junk mail or bills, or make simple envelopes by folding over a piece of paper and stapling or gluing the sides. Someone may also have old address labels that could be used.

Talk About It

As children work, encourage them to pretend they are having a special dinner or a party. Who are they going to invite? What kind of food will they have? What will they do with their friends? Talk about how it would feel if the friends did not come as well as the joy they might feel while eating and playing with friends. Encourage children to think of someone new they could invite.

Supplies

- ☐ Various types of paper
- ☐ Envelopes
- ☐ Markers or crayons
- ☐ Stickers
- ☐ Glue sticks
- ☐ Tape
- ☐ Washable inkpads and stamps
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Packing box

TASTE

SPROUT ACTIVITY STATION

Come to the Party

Write the word *yes* on four green pieces of paper and *no* on two red pieces. Secure papers to the floor in a 2x3 grid with tape, laying them so that the two red pieces are not next to each other. Have the children line up a short distance away from the grid. Ask the first child a question from the list below. The child then tosses the beanbag. If it lands on a green paper, the whole group must pretend to do what was asked (*pretend to dance, pretend to eat, pretend to wash dishes*). If the beanbag lands on a red piece of paper, everyone freezes in place while counting to five. Then ask a question to the next child in line. Continue in the same fashion until everyone has had at least one turn to toss the beanbag.

Questions:

- Will you dance at my party?
- Will you eat at my party?
- Will you help me do the dishes?
- Will you set the table?
- Will you blow out the candles?
- Will you stir the soup?
- Will you sing at my party?
- Will you run and get the tablecloth? (*Run in place.*)

Talk About It

What do you like to do at a party? How would you feel if your friend said he or she would come to your party but didn't really come?

Supplies

- ☐ Four pieces of green construction paper
- ☐ Two pieces of red construction paper
- ☐ Beanbag
- ☐ Tape

Find a Seat; It's Time to Eat!

God welcomes everyone, and we can welcome each other. This game is played like musical chairs, except there are no losers. Place the chairs back-to-back with one less chair than children. Turn on "Lead Us to Your Table" and have the children walk around the chairs as the music plays. Tell the children to find a seat when the music stops. Stop the music. The child without a seat should ask the group, "Can I come to the table?" Have all the children stand up and say, "Yes!" The child without a chair then sits in any chair he or she likes before starting the game over. If chairs are unavailable, lay tea towels or colored paper on the ground to be the seats.

Talk About It

How did it feel when you didn't have a seat? How did you feel when everyone said you could come to the table? Who usually eats at your table at home? Who else could you invite to have dinner with you?

Supplies

- ☐ Chairs (one less than the number of children)
- ☐ Music player
- ☐ Tea towels or colored paper (optional)

Set the Table

Race to set the table. Split children into teams of five and line up at one end of the play space. At the other end, lay towels on the ground to represent "tables," one per team. Give each team items in the following order: placemat, napkin, paper plate, paper cup, and toy food item. The first child runs to the other end of the play space, lays out the placemat, runs back to tag the next person in line, and sits down. Each child follows with an item. The first team to set its table completely sits down and wins.

Note: Cutlery is not included because it's unsafe for children to run with sharp objects, even plastic ones. If you want to include fork, knife, and spoon, you could cut those shapes out of paper for children to carry.

Talk About It

Your team worked together to set the table. How does it feel to be part of a team? Would you like to do the whole job by yourself or did you like working with others? Does your family work together to get ready for your meals? What job could you do to help at home?

Supplies per team

- ☐ Bath towel or beach towel
- ☐ Placemat
- ☐ Napkin
- ☐ Paper plate
- ☐ Paper cup
- ☐ Toy food item
- ☐ Paper knife, spoon, fork (optional)

DISCOVERY ACTIVITY STATION

Feely Foods

Gather several fruits and vegetables that have a textured skin or shell that is removed before eating. For instance, you could use a pineapple, avocado, banana, orange, lemon, grapefruit, squash or pumpkin, cantaloupe, watermelon, and sunflower seeds in the shell. Avoid foods like peaches or grapes that would be damaged when handled by children. Place each food in a separate paper lunch bag or pillowcase to keep it hidden. Have children sit in a circle with the hidden food in the center. Allow each child a turn to feel inside the bag, without looking. Tell the children not to say what it is until everyone has felt it. Once everyone has a turn, ask the group to guess the food. Provide hints as needed (color, taste, how/where the food grows).

Option: Sample these foods during your snack time.

Talk About It

God created lots of foods that we feel and taste differently. Which foods were bumpy? Rough? Smooth? Fuzzy? Which of these foods have you tried? Which do you like? Not like? If you could create a new fruit or vegetable, what color would it be? What would it taste like?

Supplies

- ☐ Fruits and vegetables that have a natural, textured skin or shell
- ☐ Lunch bags or pillowcases

Stone Soup

Show the video “Stone Soup Story for Children” by Kids Learning Videos (YouTube) or read the book *Stone Soup* retold by Heather Forest. Set out a large cooking pot and place a stone in it. Then set out a large supply of colorful pompoms and cotton balls. Provide tongs, plastic tweezers, or training chopsticks so children can add these “vegetables” to the soup. Work together to think of foods that are the color of the pompom “vegetables.” If you have toy vegetables and larger tongs, those could be included in the activity as well.

Talk About It

Invite children to name people they would like to share this “soup” with, such as family members or friends. Ask about other foods that the children would like to make or share. Have they baked or cooked anything with a family member? What did they enjoy about that?

Supplies

- ☐ *Stone Soup* retold by Heather Forest (printed book or YouTube read-aloud)
- ☐ Stone or rock
- ☐ Craft pompoms
- ☐ Cotton balls
- ☐ Tongs, plastic tweezers, or training chopsticks
- ☐ Soup pot
- ☐ Toy vegetables (optional)

Media Connections

- *Stone Soup* retold by Heather Forest
- *It's Okay to Be Different* by Todd Parr
- *Spork* by Kyo Maclear
- *Stone Soup* read-alouds (YouTube)
- *Horace and Morris but Mostly Delores* by James Howe
- *Bee-Bim Bop!* by Linda Sue Park
- “Jesus Loves the Little Children” (YouTube)
- “The Parable of the Great Banquet” by Kidswise (YouTube)
- “All God’s Critters Got a Place in the Choir” by Quaker-Speak (YouTube)
- *The Poor Invited to the Feast* artwork by Vie de Jesus Mafa
- “The Parable of the Great Banquet” by KidsHub TV and by Kidz Church/Trinity Cheltenham (YouTube)

SHARE

Gather the children in a circle and sing “We Live to Love.” Song motions are in the Songbook.

Pray:

God, thank you for loving all people and caring for everyone’s needs. Help us to be kind to each other as you are kind to us. Amen.

Give each child the Day 1 Family Diner Card from the *A Scoop of Stories* student booklets to take home. The card contains activities for children and families to do together.