

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Leader Guide

Overview

DAY	TITLE & SCRIPTURE	STORY SUMMARY	SPARK FOR CHANGE
1	How Is This Possible? <i>Nicodemus</i> John 3:1-17	A Jewish leader named Nicodemus came to Jesus at night to ask him about the amazing signs Jesus was doing. Jesus talked to Nicodemus about being born of the Spirit. Jesus compared this new birth to the blowing of the wind and told Nicodemus about God's great love for the world, believing in the Son of man, and having eternal life. Those who do what is true come into God's light.	Changemakers ask questions.
2	Who Will Fix It? <i>Five Friends</i> Mark 2:1-12	When Jesus was preaching, some people carried a paralyzed man to see him. When they could not get through the crowd, they dug through the roof and lowered the man into the house. Jesus saw their faith and forgave the man's sins. The scribes present cried, "Blasphemy!" Jesus asked which was easier—to forgive or to heal. Jesus healed the paralyzed man, revealing his authority to forgive as well. The people were amazed and glorified God.	Changemakers work together to solve problems.
3	Will There Be Enough? <i>Early Church</i> Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37	The early church demonstrated commitment and unity as they shared a common life. After the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, an ever-increasing group of people listened to the apostles' preaching and ate and prayed together. People who owned possessions sold what they had and gave the money to the apostles, who then gave the money to those in need. Everyone in the community had enough. Many who saw this joined the community of Jesus' followers.	Changemakers respond to the needs of others.
4	What Are We Building? <i>Peter and Cornelius</i> Acts 10	In Caesarea, a Roman believer named Cornelius received a vision to send for Peter in Joppa. Peter received a vision of his own in which he heard a voice telling him to eat without worrying about what was allowed by Jewish law. When Peter went to Cornelius, Peter realized the meaning of his vision was that the message of Jesus was for more than the Jews. He shared the good news about Jesus to both Jews and Gentiles.	Changemakers build bridges.
5	Can You Imagine? <i>A New World</i> Isaiah 65:17-25	Isaiah describes a vision of a new heaven and a new earth. God will rejoice in the people. There will be no more weeping. All people will live long, healthy lives. People will build houses and plant crops and have what they need. God will be close by, answering before people call. People will enjoy the fruits of their labor; predators and prey will eat together.	Changemakers create a new kind of world.

BIBLE MEMORY

Early Childhood:

You are the light of the world.
—Matthew 5:14a (NRSV)

Grades K-5:

You are the light of the world. Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

—Matthew 5:14a,16 (NRSV)

Get Connected!



Pinterest: *Growing Up Catholic Board: Changemakers Lab:*

<https://pinterest.com/growingupcatholic/changemakers-lab/>



Early Childhood Leader Guide

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WELCOME TO CHANGEMAKERS LAB

Changemakers Lab is an interactive Vacation Bible School where children learn that everyone can make a difference in the world! The five Bible stories in this curriculum explore examples of people who experienced and brought about change in the world around them. Children will meet Nicodemus, five friends on their way to meet Jesus, people from the early church, Peter and Cornelius, and the prophet Isaiah. These people provide a model for asking hard questions, working together to solve problems, caring for all people, reaching across differences, and imagining a new world.

Early Childhood Daily Schedule

BIBLE LAB (45-50 MIN)	CREATIVITY LAB (30 MIN)	ACTION LAB (30 MIN)	DISCOVERY LAB (35 MIN)
Make Friends (3-5 min) Sing (3-5 min) Give (3-5 min) Bible Story, I Wonder . . . (10 min) Bible Memory (5 min) Spark Book activities (5 min) Snack Time (15 min)	<i>Three arts and crafts options</i> <i>Optional:</i> Rest Time or Free Play (15-20 min)	Three active game options	Two sensory activities Media Connections SENDING Song Changemaker Family Cards

Items you will need:

- *Early Childhood Leader Guide*
- Early Childhood electronic files
- Early Childhood Area Poster
- Early Childhood Bible Memory Poster
- Sample copy of the *Spark Book*

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

- 7 MP3 songs
 - “We Are Changemakers”
 - “Standin’ On the Rock”
 - “Jesus Come Soon”
 - “Send Out Your Spirit”
 - “One for You and One for Me”

- “Sing Amen!”
- “Our God is Here”
- Sing-along song motion videos
- Songbook with:
 - Lyric sheet
 - Lead sheets
 - Song motions
- Day 1 Heart Template
- Day 1 Star Templates
- Day 1 Constellation Maps
- Day 2 “Five Friends” Headband
- Day 2 Animal Cards
- Day 3 Story Props
- Day 3 Robe Template

Media Connections are included in each guide and posted on the *Growing Up Catholic Pinterest page* for ease of use:

<https://www.pinterest.com/growingupcatholic/changemakers-lab/>. The items are organized by day. Additional songs, decorating ideas, snack ideas, and offering-related videos are also included.

Daily Schedule for Early Childhood

Each Early Childhood session is 2½ hours and includes four major sections: **BIBLE LAB**, **CREATIVITY LAB**, **ACTION LAB**, and **DISCOVERY LAB**.

BIBLE LAB

Each session begins with a welcome activity, several songs, and the offering project. Children will hear an interactive retelling of the Bible story, respond to wondering questions, learn a Bible memory verse, do activities from the student book *Spark Book*, and have a snack. The amount of time spent as a large group in **BIBLE LAB** 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 10–15 minutes of free play with play dough or favorite toys to ease the transition from parents and caregivers.

The Bible memory verse is Jesus' words from Matthew 5:14a from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). *If you prefer, feel free to use a different translation.*

You are the light of the world.

—Matthew 5:14a (NRSV)

CREATIVITY LAB

Three arts and crafts activities are provided for each day. “Talk About It” prompts will help you connect the activity with the Bible story and children’s experiences.

ACTION LAB

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 LAB

There are two sensory explorations provided for each day. Each activity includes “Talk About It” prompts to guide conversation. Discovery Lab also has a list of Media Connections to use as you see fit. Depending on your time frame, you may want to also include 15–20 minutes of rest time or free play.

If you have several leaders/assistants, the Creativity Lab, Action Lab, and Discovery Lab activities can be done as rotations. This would mean setting up activities in different areas and having the 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.

SENDING

Each session closes with children singing “Sing Amen!” from the electronic files while holding battery-operated tealight candles. As children leave, pass out the Changemaker Family Cards that are on pages 13–14 of the *Spark Book*. These cards include at-home activities to encourage families to explore the VBS concepts together.

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.
- **Snack table:** Set up tables for snack time as well as for student book activities.
- **Creativity Lab table:** Have a table dedicated to making art projects with art supplies stored nearby for easy access.
- **Discovery Lab table:** The discovery activities will also need a table with bins of supplies as indicated in each session.
- **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.

Action Lab (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. Consider marking boundaries with cones or jump ropes. Games can also be played in a gym or large empty room.

Decorating

Decorating is an important part of *Changemakers Lab*. Decorations set the tone and generate excitement for learning and praising God. Hang up the decorative Early Childhood Area Poster outside your meeting space.

Decorate your spaces to coordinate with the Changemakers Lab theme. Each of your lab spaces should be colorful and inviting. The Creativity Lab should be styled after an art classroom. The Action Lab should be your outdoor game space or indoor gym. The Discovery Lab should be styled after a science classroom or innovation lab. Check with a local school to see about borrowing science equipment for decorations.

Other ideas:

- Hang up a periodic table of elements in your Discovery Lab.
- Have plastic safety goggles and lab coats for the children to use for imaginative play.
- Set out art supplies for use and as decorations in your Creativity Lab.

- Hang up balloons that look like molecules. See the “Changemakers Lab” Pinterest board on the *Growing Up Catholic* Pinterest page for examples.
- Cut giant beaker shapes out of white butcher paper and paint. Post them on the wall or bulletin board.
- Set up a photo booth area for VBS pictures. Search online to find science photo booth props for added fun.

Check out the *Growing Up Catholic* Pinterest page for additional ideas: “Changemakers Lab” board. 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 calmly:

- **Support the 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 like “Hands are for helping, not for hurting” and “How does that make you feel?” Cue children to say things gently, such as “I would like a turn, please” 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 be helpful 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 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. There are seven songs provided in the electronic files. Some songs 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 are on pages 46–48 in this guide and in the electronic files. There are additional song suggestions listed in Media Connections and posted on Pinterest.

- “We Are Changemakers” (theme song)
- “Standin’ On the Rock”
- “Jesus Come Soon”
- “Send Out Your Spirit”
- “One for You and One for Me”
- “Sing Amen!”
- “Our God is Here”

If you wish to share the music with families, please purchase VBS Music (available as bulk-priced CDs or MP3 download cards). *The music in the electronic files cannot be duplicated other than for use during your program.*

Offering Project

Consult with the VBS Director to find out what the offering project is for the week. Ask the Director for the Offering Display file in the electronic files for ideas about a display.

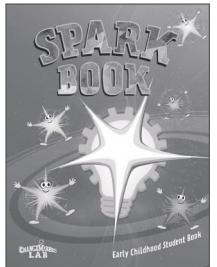
Snack Time

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

Spark Book (Student Books)

The *Spark Book* is used during **BIBLE LAB**. Each day includes a simple retelling of the Bible story and a related activity.

Each *Spark Book* contains Changemaker Family 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 pages 13–14 of each book, cut them apart, and organize them by day. The back cover of the book contains activities for families to do after VBS, so be sure to send the books 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 the videos to avoid watching ads.

A Compiled Booklist is included in the Director's folder in the electronic files. Ask a volunteer to go to the library and gather books for the entire week.

Day 1

How Is This Possible?

Scripture Text

John 3:1–17

Spark for Change

Changemakers ask questions.

Story Summary

A Jewish leader named Nicodemus came to Jesus at night to ask him about the amazing signs Jesus was doing. Jesus talked to Nicodemus about being born of the Spirit. Jesus compared this new birth to the blowing of the wind and told Nicodemus about God's great love for the world, believing in the Son of man, and having eternal life. Those who do what is true come into God's light.

Bible Essay

The Bible is regarded by many as a book of answers, but it might more accurately be a book of questions. Throughout scripture, faithful people like Moses, Gideon, Jeremiah, and Mary all ask questions of God in the face of startling circumstances. Questions were also a key part of Jesus' ministry. Jesus is asked something like 183 questions in the four Gospels—most of which he does not directly answer. Instead, Jesus frequently responded to questions by asking *more* questions. He asks more than 300 unique questions throughout Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.¹

Questions—not always with answers—are welcome, essential, necessary, and vital to follow Jesus. And though Jesus doesn't answer all our questions, he never ignores, belittles, or dismisses an honest query. We see this in Jesus' nighttime encounter with Nicodemus. Nicodemus, like Jesus, was regarded as an answer man—he was a religious scholar and leader. He was the expert; if anyone should have answers about what God wanted and what God was up to in the world, it's a Pharisee like Nicodemus!

Yet when Jesus started doing things no one had ever seen (in John 2, we see how Jesus turned water into wine and cleared the temple of moneychangers), Nicodemus finds himself bursting with questions. And so he visits Jesus at night. Perhaps he doesn't want to be seen. Perhaps he feels embarrassed that a scholar like him needs to ask questions of a small-town preacher.

Still, Nicodemus feels confident Jesus is going to give him answers: "Rabbi," he begins, "we know that you are a teacher who has come from God" (John 3:2). But what Jesus has to say about wind, birth, new life, God's kingdom, water, and the Spirit shows Nicodemus that learning at the feet of Jesus means not receiving answers, but more questions.

Just as the specific questions and answers of this extended dialogue befuddled Nicodemus, they might feel confusing to us, and especially to children. As you read this story with your group, you don't need to dwell on or delve into the exact theological content of each question (feel free to breathe a sigh of relief!). Instead, this story offers a great introduction to some very good news: the One who came to show us God's great love for the whole world (John 3:16–17) doesn't judge our questions, but welcomes them with open arms, day or night. After all, Jesus changed the world by asking lots of questions—that's a great starting point for our changemaking journeys too!

"An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it."

—Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, #183

¹ Martin B. Copenhaver, *Jesus Is the Question* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014), xviii.

Day 1 At-a-Glance

Advance Preparation

- Read John 3:1–17 and the Bible essay for Day 1 on page 6 in 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 *Spark Book* for each child.
- Communicate with volunteers about their roles and tasks.
- Create a worship area where children can gather in a circle.

	SUPPLIES	TO DO
BIBLE LAB <i>Make Friends</i> <i>Sing</i> <i>Give</i> <i>Bible Story</i> <i>I Wonder . . .</i> <i>Bible Memory</i> <i>Spark Book activities</i> <i>Snack Time</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early Childhood Area Poster• <i>Spark Books</i> (one per child)• Songs (electronic files)• Music player• Carpet squares or hand towels• Nametags (electronic files)• Marker• Glass jars or beakers• Pitcher of water• Yellow and blue food color• Bible Memory Poster• Robe• Head covering• Crayons• Supplies for chosen snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hang up the Early Childhood Area Poster.• Practice telling the Bible story.• Learn about the VBS offering project chosen by the Director.• Access songs from the electronic files: "We Are Changemakers" and "One for You and One for Me."
CREATIVITY LAB ACTION LAB DISCOVERY LAB	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supplies for chosen activities• Internet-connected device	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose activities based on the ages and interests of the children, the amount of time you have, and available supplies.• Check the relevant books out of the library.
SENDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Day 1 Changemaker Family Cards• Music player• Battery-operated tealights (one per person)• Song (electronic files)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remove and cut apart the Day 1 Changemaker Family Cards from pages 13–14 of each <i>Spark Book</i>.• Access "Sing Amen!" from the electronic files.

Bible Lab

Make Friends

Greet each child and welcome them to the Changemakers Lab. Place a nametag on each child's back. Have children sit on a carpet square or hand towel. Play an "I Spy" game to help children get to know each other. For example, "I spy with my little eye someone named Carys." Continue with references to the color or type of clothing or to the hair color of the children.

Sing

Play "We Are Changemakers" the VBS theme song from the electronic files. Encourage the children to sing the song along with you and to dance however they feel inspired. Do the motions as you sing "One for You and One for Me."

Give

Consult with the VBS Director for specifics about the offering project. Tell children about the project. Invite them to place their money in a science-related container, such as a beaker. Then set out a large glass jar or beaker of water. One at a time, have half of the children place a drop of blue food color in the water. Then have the rest of the children place a drop of yellow food color in the water. Watch the way the color changes to green. Talk about how our gifts of money and our gifts of kindness and love to other people can help things to change for them.

Teaching Tip

Preschoolers can move from activity to activity quickly! If you need extra activities, check out the "Changemakers Lab" Pinterest board. It is also helpful to have a set of picture books available that children can look at independently if they finish an activity before the rest of the group. See Media Connections in each session for ideas.



Prepare

Pretend to be Nicodemus as you tell the Bible story. Put on a robe and head covering. A towel works well as a head covering. Tie it in place with yarn, string, or a strip of cloth.

Bible Story

"Hi, I'm Nicodemus. Can I tell you a story?

It was the middle of the night. I was supposed to be sleeping, but I kept wondering about Jesus. He had been doing impossible things! I knew Jesus had to be special, and I wanted to know more. So, I snuck out to see him. (*"Walk" two fingers on the floor.*)

When I got to where Jesus was staying, Jesus was awake and ready to talk with me.

I said, 'Jesus, I know you came from God. You are doing impossible miracles. You couldn't do that if God wasn't with you, right?'

Jesus answered me, but I didn't really understand what he was saying. I was curious, though, so I asked him more questions. Jesus listened to my questions and answered each one.

That night, Jesus told me that God loves the whole world and that I am part of God's family! Jesus is God's son, and he came to share God's love with everyone. I was so glad I went to visit Jesus that night. I am so glad that God loves me and God loves you!"

I Wonder . . .

Remove the head covering and robe. Ask several wondering questions to help the children explore the story. They may want to share their thoughts and ideas, so allow time for them to do so.

- I wonder why Nicodemus went to see Jesus at night.
- I wonder how Jesus felt when Nicodemus asked him questions.
- What questions would you like to ask Jesus?
- What do you want to learn more about?
- Imagine God giving you a big hug and saying, "I love you!"

Bible Lab

Bible Memory

Read the Bible memory verse from the Bible Memory Poster, pointing to each word. Then invite the children to repeat it after you several times. Vary the volume of your voice each time, including a whisper since Nicodemus talked to Jesus at nighttime, which is a time when we are often quiet.

“You are the light of the world.”

—Matthew 5:14a (NRSV)

Spark Book (Student Books)

Give each child a *Spark Book*. Read the Bible story on page 2 and then encourage them to draw a line from a star on the left to its match on the right on page 3. Talk about Nicodemus coming to see Jesus at night. Have the children ever gone outside to look at the stars?

Snack Time

Have the 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 to the rest of the group. Say or sing a short prayer before eating together.

Option 1: Red-for-Love Snacks

Supplies: prepackaged red gelatin cups, strawberries, raspberries, watermelon, red peppers, apple, red juice, cups

Give each child red foods to eat as a symbol of love. If desired, cut the watermelon in thin slices and use a heart cookie cutter or knife to make melon hearts. Talk about how the heart shapes represent God’s love for the whole world.

Option 2: Love Trail Mix to Share

Supplies: dried strawberries, strawberry yogurt melts, cheerios, mini hard pretzels, large mixing bowl, mixing spoon, snack-sized resealable plastic bags

Invite the children to help you mix the ingredients of the trail mix in a large mixing bowl. Give each child a spoonful of trail mix to eat. Package up a small bag of snack for each child to take home and share with someone they love.

Creativity Lab

Shaving Cream World

God loves the whole world! Invite each child to help you spray shaving cream onto a baking sheet. You will need a $\frac{1}{2}$ in / 12 mm layer of shaving cream. Add drops of blue and green food color to the shaving cream. Be generous! Invite the children to help you swirl the food color into the shaving cream using bamboo skewers. You do not want the colors to be totally blended. Give each child a circle cut out from card stock. Help each child lay the circle into the shaving cream. Then pull the circle up from the shaving cream. Set the circle aside while you help other children. Help each child scrape shaving cream from their circles using a credit card or plastic bench scraper. The food color will stay on the paper and reveal a beautiful, marbled earth.

Talk About It

When Nicodemus asked Jesus about who Jesus was, Jesus told Nicodemus that God sent Jesus to share God's love with the whole world. Wow! How can you share God's love this week?

Supplies

- White card stock cut into 3 in / 7.5 cm circles
- White shaving cream
- Blue and green food color
- Bamboo skewers
- Baking sheets
- Old credit cards, hotel keys, or plastic bench scrapers

Yarn Heart Art

There are several options for creating yarn art using cardboard hearts. A Day 1 Heart Template is included in the electronic files. If there's time, have children make one heart to keep and one to share.

- Give each child a cardboard heart that has ~ 1 in / 2.5 cm scissor snips spaced around the edge. Children can wrap lengths of colorful yarn back and forth across the heart, putting the yarn in the slits to keep it in place.
- Hole punch the heart so the children can "sew" it using colorful yarn. **Tip:** Tape one end of the yarn on the back of the heart to keep it in place. Wrap tape around the other end of the yarn (similar to the sealed end of a shoelace) to make it easier to put the yarn through the holes.
- Have the children squeeze glue in lines, loops, or twists on the heart. Lay yarn on top of the glue.

Talk About It

Nicodemus wanted to learn about Jesus and God. Jesus told Nicodemus that Jesus came to share God's love with the world. Who do you love? Who could you share the yarn heart with to show your love?

Supplies

- Day 1 Heart Template (electronic files)
- Cardboard
- Scissors
- Yarn
- Glue bottles
- Clear tape
- Single-hole punch

Shape of a Family

Jesus told Nicodemus that he could be part of God's family. Provide card stock, glue sticks, and paper shapes in lots of sizes, colors, and designs so children can create shape families. Scrapbooking paper comes in many interesting designs. Circles or ovals can be heads or bodies; rectangles and squares can be bodies, arms, and legs. Include yarn to use as hair and decoration for the clothing. Once children complete their family picture, offer to write the words "We are part of God's family" on the paper. Some children may not want you to do that, which is also fine.

Talk About It

Who is in your family? Jesus told Nicodemus that he was part of God's family. We are all God's children. Even if we don't live together, we can still be a family for each other and be part of God's family. Who did you make in your picture? What do you like to do with those people?

Supplies

- Card stock
- Glue sticks
- Paper shapes in lots of sizes, colors, and designs (preferably scrapbooking paper or colorful paper)

Action Lab

Curiosity Game

Play a questions game. Have children sit in a line on one end of the play space. Stand at the opposite end. Ask a yes or no question, such as “Are you wearing blue?” Children can shout their answers. Then give an instruction, such as “If you are wearing blue, come join me.” Those children can cross the room. Work with them to come up with the next question to ask the children who are still seated. Play until everyone has crossed the room. Start over and play as long as children remain interested.

Talk About It

Nicodemus asked Jesus many questions. One reason we ask questions is to learn new things. What do you like to learn about? What question would you ask Jesus? What questions do you ask your friends or family?

Follow Nicodemus to Jesus

Hide a wooden story figure to represent Jesus somewhere in the room. Choose one child to play Nicodemus. The rest of the children can follow Nicodemus until Nicodemus finds the Jesus story figure. Then choose a new Nicodemus. Another child can hide the story figure. Encourage the leader to move in different ways, such as hopping, crawling, jumping, or tiptoeing.

Talk About It

Nicodemus went at night to find Jesus. I wonder how long it took for him to get there. Where do you think he had to go? Over a hill? Up some stairs? Across a river? Through a town?

Supplies

- Wooden story figure

Pass the Love

Pair the children and give each pair a beanbag and a ball that is soft, tennis ball, playground ball, or whiffle ball. Be sure the partners know each other’s names. The children can stand a short distance away from each other and roll the ball back and forth. Each time a child rolls the ball, instruct him or her to say, “God loves you, _____ (partner’s name).” Once they understand the concept, children can get up and toss or kick the ball to each other. Switch partners as desired or play as a whole group in a circle.

Talk About It

Jesus told Nicodemus that God loves the whole world. That means God loves you and God loves me! How does it feel to know that God loves you? How can we show that we love God?

Supplies

- Balls (soft and easy to roll), one per pair of children

Discovery Lab

Earth Sensory Bin

Pour blue and green fish tank gravel into a plastic bin. Add cups, a magnifying glass, and animals and plant toys to the bin. Invite the children to discover what is in the bin. They can sort the gravel by color, sort the toys into plants and animals, pour gravel from a cup into the bin, or play other ways with the materials. If the gravel isn't available, this could also be done with sand or soil.

Talk About It

God loves the whole world—you, me, animals, trees, water! How can we take care of the world? Each of us can share God's love with the world, just like Jesus and Nicodemus!

Supplies

- Fish tank gravel, sand, or soil
- Plastic bin
- Cups for sorting and pouring
- Magnifying glasses
- Plastic animal toys
- Plastic plant toys

Star Patterns

Stack several colorful sheets of paper and fold them in half. Place the Day 1 Star Templates from the electronic files along the fold line and cut out a large supply of stars in different colors and sizes. Plastic stars and glow-in-the-dark stars can also be purchased for this activity. Children can explore the stars in a variety of ways:

- Make patterns with the stars (large, large, small; red, blue, red, blue). Vary the complexity of the suggested patterns according to the developmental abilities of the children. If desired, cut out crescent moon shapes to add to the patterns.
- Sort the stars by size or color.
- Using the Day 1 Constellation Maps from the electronic files as a guide, lay out chenille stems to show the lines and place stars where they go for the chosen constellation.

Talk About It

Nicodemus came to see Jesus in the middle of the night. What is in the sky at nighttime? Right! The moon and stars. Nicodemus came to see Jesus when the stars were out. We can wonder about Jesus at any time of day or night!

Supplies

- Day 1 Star Templates (electronic files)
- Day 1 Constellation Maps (electronic files)
- Construction paper stars (varying sizes and colors)
- Crescent moon shapes (optional)
- Chenille stems (pipe cleaners)

Media Connections

Books

- *What Is God Like?* by Rachel Held Evans and Matthew Paul Turner
- *I Wonder: Exploring God's Grand Story* by Glenys Nellist
- *Curious George Discovers the Stars* by H. A. Rey

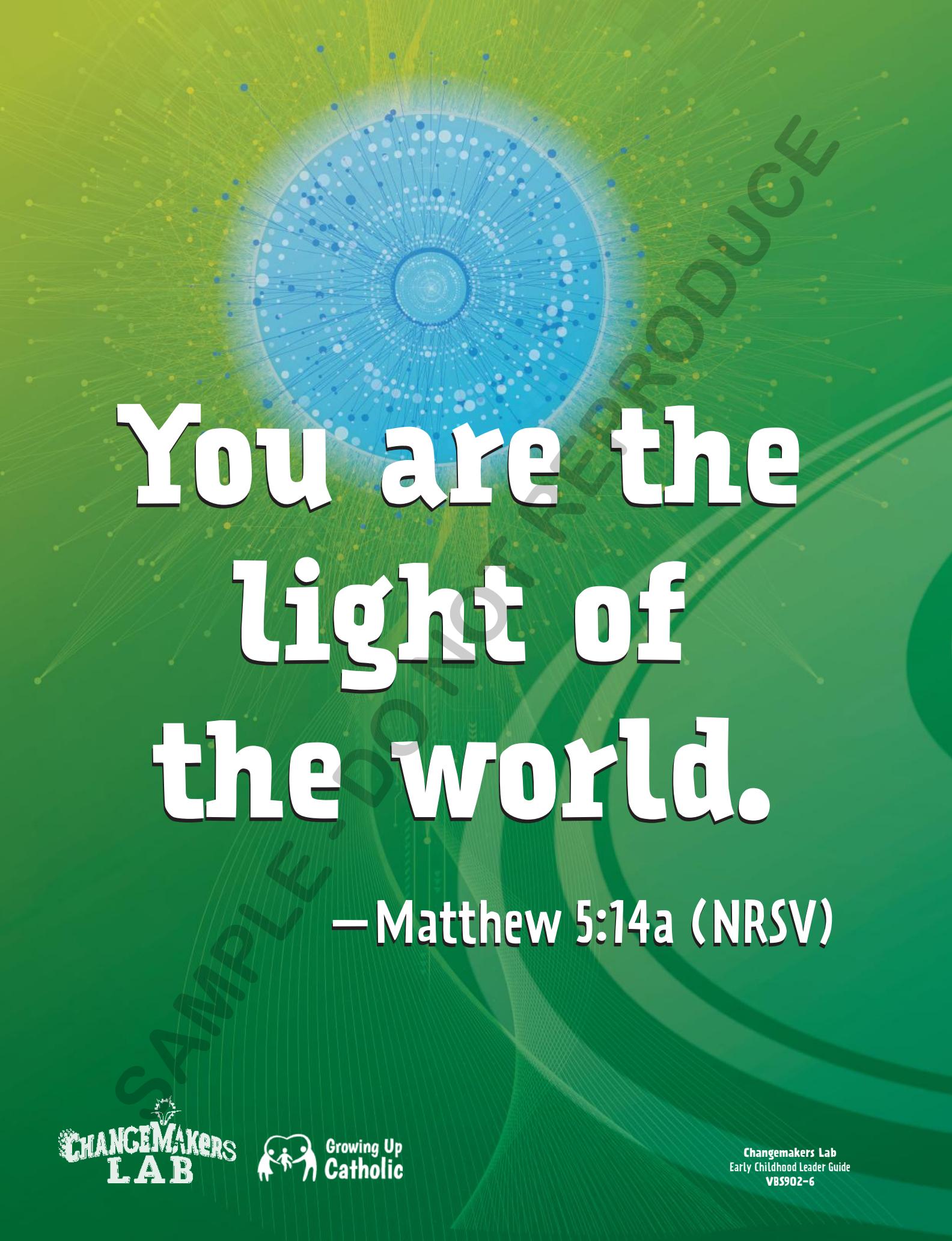
Video

- "PBS Children Talk About Curiosity and Wonder" by PBS Kids (YouTube)
- "Questions for God" by Rethink Church (YouTube)
- "John 3:1-17 - Animated Scripture Video" by Scripture in Motion (YouTube)

Sending

Gather the children in a circle. Give each child a battery-operated tealight to hold up as you sing "Sing Amen!" from the electronic files together. Alternatively, use song motions from page 48 in this guide.

Give each child the Day 1 Change-maker Family Card from the *Spark Book* to take home. The card contains activities for children and families to do together.



**You are the
light of
the world.**

—Matthew 5:14a (NRSV)