



# BIBLE ADVENTURES

Elementary Station Leader Manual



## Group resources really work!

This Group resource incorporates our R.E.A.L. approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it's:



**Relational**—Learner-to-learner interaction enhances learning and builds Christian friendships.

**Experiential**—What learners experience through discussion and action sticks with them up to 9 times longer than what they simply hear or read.

**Applicable**—The aim of Christian education is to equip learners to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

**Learner-based**—Learners understand and retain more when the learning process takes into consideration how they learn best.

## Bible Adventures

### LEADER MANUAL

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# BEFORE YOU GET ROLLING...

- ▶ **Choose a room for your Bible Adventures.** Since you'll actually be experiencing the Bible stories, you don't want to be right next to a room with a lot of noise. Ideally, your room should be large and off by itself a little. *You'll* be making some noise, too! After all, kids aren't just sitting still or staying put during *these* Bible Adventures!
- ▶ **Create a unique setting each day.** But wait! We've made it easier than ever! One big difference between Rocky Railway and other VBS programs is that kids become part of the Bible story—with their hearts, minds, and emotions. Part of that experience comes when you create a unique setting each day. But don't worry—we're The Easy VBS. So setup is...well...easy! At our field test, we used few decorating supplies. The ones we did use, we used again and again to create different settings.
- ▶ **Work with the VBS Director to collect necessary supplies.** Almost all the supplies we used are easy to find around the church, from church members, or from Group. (Okay, we did have the Big Blue Sky Wall Hanging from past field tests. You may already have supplies from past summers with Group, too!) You might want to list supplies in your church bulletin and ask church members to donate or lend items such as foam slabs, cardboard boxes, and plastic greenery. In the supply lists, items shown with an asterisk (\*) are available from Group Publishing or your Group VBS supplier.
- ▶ **Determine the number of Crews you'll have in each rotation.** At Rocky Railway VBS, kids join mixed-age Crews—groups of up to five elementary-age kids and one adult or teenage leader. Plan on having one-fourth of the total number of Crews in each of your rotations. For example, if your VBS has 20 Crews, you'll be working with five Crews (approximately 25 kids and five leaders) during each session.
- ▶ **Use an attention-getting signal.** Attention-getting signals let kids know when it's time to stop what they're doing and look at you. You can use the Train Whistle (available from Group Publishing or your Group VBS supplier) or another signal of your choice. The first time kids come to your station, introduce and rehearse your attention-getting signal. Once kids are familiar with the signal, you will automatically regain their attention when you use it.



Train Whistle

- ▶ **Repeat the daily Bible Point often.** Every activity at Rocky Railway focuses on one simple, memorable daily Bible truth called the Bible Point. Repeating the Bible Point again and again will help children remember it and then apply it to their lives after VBS. Each time kids hear the day's Bible Point, they reach up and pull down (as if they're pulling an old-fashioned train whistle) and shout "Trust Jesus!"
- ▶ **Call on kids' Crew roles.** Every day, kids within a Crew choose one of five jobs: Guide, Kit Carrier, Prayer Person, Schedule Supervisor, or Thank You-er! Kids love having a special job every day, especially when those jobs get called on.
- ▶ **Get Crew Leaders involved!** Be sure Crew Leaders understand that you expect them to participate right along with the kids. Over the years, we've discovered that when Crew Leaders listen, get involved, and have fun, kids do too! So get everyone in on the fun!



"Trust Jesus!"

## BIBLE POINT

Day 1

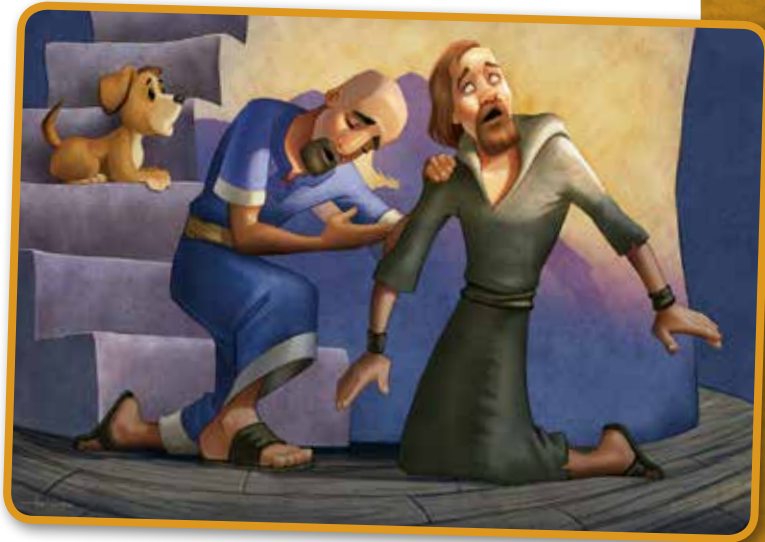
Jesus' power helps us do hard things.

**Bible Story:** Ananias helps Saul. (Acts 9:1-19)

**Bible Verse:** "For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength."  
(Philippians 4:13)

### Consider This...

- ▶ The Bible makes it evident that God often asks his followers to do hard things. Noah built an ark. Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son. Mary bore the Son of God. Ananias had the terrifying job of reaching out to Saul.
- ▶ To understand the difficulty of Ananias' job, it's important to realize just how much Saul hated the early church. He approved the stoning of Stephen, arrested Christians in Jerusalem, and set his sights on imprisoning Christians living in Damascus. Christians ran away from Saul—not toward him!
- ▶ Ananias' name means "protected by the Lord." It's likely that his parents didn't know the importance of such protection during this important, history-altering mission.
- ▶ In Acts 9:15, God doesn't ease Ananias' misgivings with words of comfort or empowerment. He simply shares his life-changing plan for Saul and urges Ananias to go.
- ▶ Because of his selection and obedience, Ananias got to be the first person to welcome Saul as a Christian. In spite of any misgivings or fear, Ananias warmly greeted Saul with the phrase "Brother Saul."



### Why It Matters...

Jesus still asks his followers to do hard things. The kids at your VBS know it's hard to forgive when someone hurts their feelings. They've experienced the difficulty of splitting time between parents' homes after a divorce. Kids can tell you how tough it is to make new friends, do what's unpopular, learn a new skill in school, and reach out in friendship to someone who's lonely. That's why today's activities will encourage kids with the truth that Jesus' power can fortify them through life's challenges. Just as Ananias drew strength from God's reassurance and plan, kids will come away with renewed inspiration that *they* can trust in Jesus' power to tackle the hard things they face.

# DAY 1

## BIBLE POINT: Jesus' power helps us do hard things.

**BIBLE STORY:** Ananias helps Saul.  
(Acts 9:1-19)

**BIBLE VERSE:** "For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength."  
(Philippians 4:13)

### SING & PLAY EXPRESS

- ▶ Learn the Day 1 Bible Point and verse, and meet Bible Memory Buddy Ramsey.
- ▶ Sing Rocky Railway VBS songs.
- ▶ Meet Cam Track, an engineer who needs some power to get his train back on track.



### BIBLE ADVENTURES

Encourage Ananias to do the hard thing God has asked of him, and experience a trust fall to feel what it means to trust Jesus.



### CHEW CHEW SNACKS

Chew Chew Track



### KIDVID™ CINEMA

Dominic relies on Jesus' power to take a tough karate test... after failing many times.



### IMAGINATION STATION

Try to keep their Off-Rail Rollers on track, and remember that Jesus' power helps them do hard things.



### ROCKY WRAP-UP

- ▶ See who is starring in today's Spotlight VBS.
- ▶ Get a little help learning a tough "train track trick," then have a surprise visit from Ananias.
- ▶ Receive a ram-bunctious Bible Memory Buddy.



### LOCO MOTION GAMES



On Track to Splash



Runaway Train



Hold the Track Line

▶ At **Rocky Railway VBS**, the daily Bible Point is carefully integrated into each station's activities for unforgettable Bible learning. See how your station reinforces today's Bible Point.



# DAY 1

## Before Kids Steam Your Way

- ▶ Create a first-century-home atmosphere by placing blankets or rugs on the floor and covering the walls with Wooden Plastic Table Covers. Place greenery around, and also place flicker lights and rope lights where they'll add subdued lighting.
- ▶ Make an oversize fake mustache from construction paper. Add a masking tape loop on the back so your helper can stick it to his upper lip.
- ▶ Practice with "Ananias" several times so you're comfortable with your exchange and kids will find it easy to follow along.

## Welcome Kids

Greet kids outside your Bible Adventures room, and introduce yourself. Hold up the Bible, and explain that today you'll be exploring a totally true Bible story from the book of Acts, chapter 9.

Say that you're happy to invite your new friends into your home, then escort Crews into your room. During this time, Ananias needs to be hidden from Crews.

**Say:** **When people come to visit me, I want them to be comfortable. One way that happens is for guests to get to know one another better.**

**Talk with your Crew about something that comes easily to you. Maybe it's hard for other kids to dribble a basketball, but for you it's easy. Maybe music comes easily to you, or math.**



### STAY ON TRACK

Having a dedicated helper in Bible Adventures is essential. Because so much goes on behind the scenes to make each day's Bible story leap to life, you'll need someone at the ready. Bible teaching is a team sport!

### SUPPLIES YOU'LL NEED EVERY DAY

- ▶ *Hands-On Bible*\*
- ▶ Train Whistle\*
- ▶ small blankets or throw rugs (1 per Crew per rotation)
- ▶ helper (more than 1 would be great!)
- ▶ poster paper and marker (optional)

\*available from Group Publishing or your Group VBS supplier

### DAY 1 SUPPLIES

- ▶ adult helper to play Ananias
- ▶ 1 oversize paper mustache
- ▶ masking tape to attach the mustache to your helper's face
- ▶ flicker lights and rope lights
- ▶ Wooden Plastic Table Covers\*
- ▶ greenery
- ▶ fist-size stone
- ▶ 2- or 3-foot length of chain
- ▶ wooden spoon

### FIELD TEST FINDING

Here's a great optional idea. On poster paper, write the questions kids will discuss in their Crews. Hang the paper on a wall, and cover it with another sheet of paper. Reveal each question when it's asked so Crew Leaders and kids can refer to it. Easy reference!

Say: **As for me...**

Briefly share something that comes easily to you. Then ask kids to share with their Crews something that comes easily to them. After Crews have a chance to talk, get their attention and ask them to talk about this:

**? What's something that's hard for you to do?**

As Crews talk, wander over to the door and open it a crack so your helper can easily hear when it's time to burst into the room.

After Crews talk, get their attention and continue speaking.

**We all have things that are hard for us to do—jobs that seem too big to do or stuff that seems too complicated to even try. When you run into something like that, remember this: JESUS' POWER HELPS US DO HARD THINGS! (Trust Jesus!)**

**I can remember a time I had something hard to do. It was when I was—**

## Surprise!

Ananias will burst noisily through the door, flustered and frantic, wearing a fake mustache and carrying a rock, a length of chain, and a wooden spoon. As quickly as safely possible, and apologizing as he goes, Ananias will rush over to you and crouch down behind you.

From this point on, follow this script with Ananias. It doesn't have to be word for word, but it should stay close.

**Leader:** Ananias! What are you doing?

**Ananias:** What does it look like? I'm hiding!

**Leader:** Hiding from who?

**Ananias:** *(In a stage whisper)* From everyone!

**Leader:** Well, *that's* not going to work. Stand up and tell me what's going on. By the way, everyone, this is my friend Ananias. Ananias, these are my new friends.

**Ananias:** Hi, people I don't know in my friend's house.

**Leader:** So why exactly are you hiding?

**Ananias:** It's Saul—he's here in Damascus to arrest anyone who loves Jesus! And I love Jesus!

**Leader:** Oh, I guess you—

**Ananias:** *(Interrupting)* He's thrown lots of Jesus' friends into prison, and he's *here!* In *Damascus!*





**Leader:** So I guess you haven't heard—

**Ananias:** (*Interrupting*) About how Jesus appeared to Saul? And how a bright light shone around Saul and Saul heard Jesus' voice? And then Saul fell on the ground? And how then he was blind? And how his buddies led him here to Damascus? (*Pauses.*) Yeah, I heard all that.

**Leader:** So why are you hiding? And why are you wearing that silly mustache?

**Ananias:** (*In a stage whisper*) It's a disguise.

(*Leader pulls off the mustache.*)

**Ananias:** Owww! Thanks—now you've blown my cover!

**Leader:** Trust me, it wasn't working. (*Hands the mustache to Ananias.*)

**Ananias:** Well, God came to me in a vision this morning and told me I should go to Straight Street and when I got there to ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul.

**Leader:** Wow!

**Ananias:** And then I should place my hands on Saul and pray for him so Saul will be able to see again.

**Leader:** So why are you here instead of doing what God asked you to do?

**Ananias:** Because when Saul is able to see, guess what he's going to see! *Me!* And Saul arrests Christians and throws them in jail! (*Holds up the rock.*) He throws rocks like this at Christians! (*Holds up the chain.*) He locks Christians up in chains. (*Holds up the wooden spoon with a puzzled look.*) And I'm not sure what he'd do with this, but I don't want to find out! Why is God asking me to do such a *hard thing*?

**Leader:** Maybe my new friends here (*motions to Crews*) know something you should know: **JESUS' POWER HELPS US DO HARD THINGS. (Trust Jesus!)**

**Ananias:** Okay, but this is a *really* hard thing. A *super* hard thing. I'm afraid...and I'm not sure I can do it. Have you ever had something hard to do and you weren't sure you could do it?

**Leader:** I have—and my friends have, too. We were just talking about it.

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## Try a Trust Fall

**Say:** It's easy to talk about trusting Jesus. But what does it really feel like to trust him? Let's try something!

Ask Ananias to stand facing the kids, and position yourself a couple of feet behind him, with one foot braced behind the other so you can easily break his fall and keep him upright. Tell him you want him to do something hard and fall backward. Tell Ananias to stand stiff as a board and then to raise his arms; you'll slip your arms beneath his to catch him and break his fall.

**Falling backward on purpose is hard—and scary. Is that how you're feeling about seeing Saul?**

Ananias nods enthusiastically and admits it's exactly like that.

**Let's give everyone a chance to see what that's like.**

Ask Crew Leaders to stand up. Have kids take turns practicing the trust fall with their Crew Leaders. Remind kids to cross their arms in front, stiffen their bodies like a board, and then fall backward into the Crew Leader's arms. Quickly remind Crew Leaders how to position themselves so they can most easily be braced to catch kids, with their hands against kids' backs.

When all kids have had a turn, have Crews sit again.

## Talk About Hard Things

**Say:** Earlier we talked about some things you find hard to do, like math or somersaults. But I'm wondering if there's something hard happening in your life right now. Maybe you're worried about heading to a new school or you've had a fight with a friend and you wonder if you'll ever be friends again. In my life...

Share a very brief story about something hard that's happening in your life.

**That's something hard happening in my life. In your Crews, talk about something hard happening in your life. Maybe you're getting ready to move far away or you've had a fight with a friend. Crew Leaders, you share first.**

When Crews have finished sharing, call attention back to yourself, and then turn to Ananias.

**Did you hear everyone talking? It sounds like everybody goes through hard things. Would you feel better if you knew about some of those hard things our friends have faced?**

When Ananias agrees, ask several volunteers to share what hard things they've had to do. Together with Ananias, thank kids for sharing.



### FIELD TEST FINDING

Have fun with this! At our field test, our wide-eyed Ananias at first wouldn't do it and feigned being scared. When he eventually leaned back, it was to the applause of delighted kids.

### STAY ON TRACK

There's great power in having the Station Leader share an age-appropriate story first. It models what you're asking kids to do and sets the bar for vulnerability. If you share something personal and "real," kids will, too! Plus, you're demonstrating that this is a safe place to share what's really happening in their lives.

**Say:** So you know what God has asked you to do. You know you're not alone—that we've all had to do hard things. And you know this: **JESUS' POWER HELPS US DO HARD THINGS.** (*Trust Jesus!*)

**Now all that's left is for you to go do what you need to do. You ready?**

Ananias hems and haws, clearly not enthused...or ready.

**Would you feel better if I pray for you? Prayer is just talking to God. Can I talk to God and ask him to give you the courage to do what he's asked you to do?**

Ananias eagerly agrees.

## Pray Together

Briefly ask God to give Ananias courage as he goes to meet Saul. Thank God that when we have to face hard things, we don't have to face them alone.

Ananias then squares his shoulders, takes a deep breath, and, as he makes his way through the kids, offers his hand to give a "low-five" and thank kids for their encouragement.

At the door Ananias starts to put on his mustache, then pauses and doesn't put it on. Instead he says he doesn't need to worry or be afraid because **JESUS' POWER HELPS US DO HARD THINGS.** (*"Trust Jesus!"*)

After Ananias slips out into the hallway—and gets out of sight before kids leave your room—continue talking.

**Say:** I hope we get to find out how that all turns out for Ananias. May be he'll stop by later and tell us.

**What I just did for Ananias, you can do for people you know who have hard things to do. You can ask God to help them do hard things.**

**Crew Leaders, that's something you can do right now for the kids in your Crew. Let's pause and have you pray for your Crew right now.**

Allow time for Crew Leaders to pray for their kids.

When you hear the Director's signal, wrap things up.

**It sounds like you have to go. Thanks for visiting me today—and I hope I'll see you tomorrow, too, for another totally true Bible Adventure!**

Go to the door and thank kids for coming as they leave.

When you hear your Director's signal, dismiss kids to their next destination.

## FIELD TEST FINDING

This conversation gave Crew Leaders valuable insight into kids' hearts and lives. Responses ranged from parents getting a divorce to switching schools to hearing that a friend doesn't want to be friends anymore. These conversations, on *Day 1*, create such a relational atmosphere!



## STAY ON TRACK

Ananias will make a return visit at today's Rocky Wrap-Up closing! There, he'll thank kids for their encouragement and tell them what happened when he obeyed God. We've included a copy of Ananias' script on page 10. It's also in the Rocky Wrap-Up Leader Manual. Just be sure to communicate with your helper playing Ananias!

## Ananias' Return (Rocky Wrap-Up, Day 1)

**Rocky Wrap-Up Leader:** So while we're...

*Ananias enters from the back and rushes toward the stage.  
Leader spots him.*

**Leader:** Wait...is that Ananias? Come on up here, friend!

**Ananias:** Whew! I'm just back from seeing Saul.

**Leader:** I heard you were too afraid to see Saul.

**Ananias:** I was, but my friends here reminded me that **JESUS' POWER HELPS US DO HARD THINGS! (Trust Jesus!)**

**Leader:** So what happened?

**Ananias:** Well, I found the house and went in, and there was Saul. He hadn't eaten for three days, but he was still scary.

**Leader:** What did you do?

**Ananias:** I said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus—who appeared to you on the road—sent me so you can get your sight back and be filled with the Holy Spirit." I put my hands on his shoulders, and BAM! These weird, scaly things fell off his eyes, and he could see again!

**Leader:** That's incredible!

**Ananias:** I know! Then he was baptized and had something to eat. And I came here to let you all know how it turned out!

**Leader:** It sounds like God has some big plans for Saul.

**Ananias:** Just like he has big plans for everyone here. And we can do it, too, because **JESUS' POWER HELPS US DO HARD THINGS! (Trust Jesus!)** Well, I have to run. Thanks for your help, friends! *(Waves to kids as he exits.)*

Keep the mustache in a safe place for Day 5.

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## BIBLE POINT

Day 2

Jesus' power gives us hope.

**Bible Story:** Paul encourages others in a storm and shipwreck. (Acts 27)

**Bible Verse:** “So be strong and courageous, all you who put your hope in the Lord!” (Psalm 31:24)

### Consider This...

- ▶ After Paul became a follower of Jesus, he fervently shared the news of Jesus everywhere he went. In Jerusalem, Paul encountered a group of men who opposed his teachings. These men began a riot, accusing Paul of spreading false doctrine and of defiling the Temple. Guards arrested Paul and threw him in prison. The following years included trials, death threats, secret transfers to other prisons, and finally a trip to Rome where Paul could plead his case before Caesar.
- ▶ In Acts 27:9, Paul notes the sailing season in connection with Jewish observances. Sailors typically only sailed from Pentecost (May–June) through Tabernacles (after the Day of Atonement in late September or early October). Roman sailors resisted sailing in November, as it typically proved dangerous.
- ▶ The sailors battled the fierce storm for at least three days, using every trick they knew to secure the ship and survive hurricane-force winds and waves. Finally, the weary seamen lost hope of ever being saved. At this low point, Paul shares the hopeful news given by God.
- ▶ God’s message of hope, conveyed through Paul, rang true for the soldiers, the sailors, and the prisoners. God’s angel assured Paul that “none of you will lose your lives” (Acts 27:22). However, after the shipwreck, the soldiers planned to kill the prisoners so they wouldn’t escape. (Roman law mandated that a soldier who lost a prisoner had to take that prisoner’s place!) “But the commanding officer wanted to spare Paul, so he didn’t let them carry out their plan” (Acts 27:43). And, just as the angel said, not even a *prisoner* died.



### Why It Matters...

In many ways, Paul was powerless in the stormy sea. He didn’t have experience as a sailor. Guards held him prisoner. And, of course, *he* couldn’t stop the crashing waves and howling winds. But Paul *did* have Jesus’ power on his side!

In the same way, the kids at your VBS may feel powerless through life’s storms. The world can seem turbulent, dark, and confusing. Bad news crashes over us. Fear blows relentlessly, leaving kids feeling hopeless. Yet God promises to strengthen us with *his* power! And we can trust that God’s promises are true. Like Paul, we have Jesus’ power on our side. Today, celebrate that truth and give kids the hope of victory and comfort during life’s uncertainties.

# DAY 2

## BIBLE POINT: Jesus' power gives us hope.

**BIBLE STORY:** Paul encourages others in a storm and shipwreck. (Acts 27)

**BIBLE VERSE:** "So be strong and courageous, all you who put your hope in the Lord!" (Psalm 31:24)

### SING & PLAY EXPRESS

- ▶ Learn the Day 2 Bible Point and verse, and meet Bible Memory Buddy Ava.
- ▶ Sing Rocky Railway songs.
- ▶ Share God Sightings, and add a Track Sticker to a special poster.
- ▶ Hear how Cam is discouraged and hopeless about delivering the trainload of treats.



### BIBLE ADVENTURES

Join a ship's crew, and find hope amid a windy, wavy, wild storm with prisoner Paul.



### CHEW CHEW SNACKS

Bagel Tunnel



### KIDVID™ CINEMA

Analiz uses her music to bring Jesus' hope to her sick grandmother and so many others!



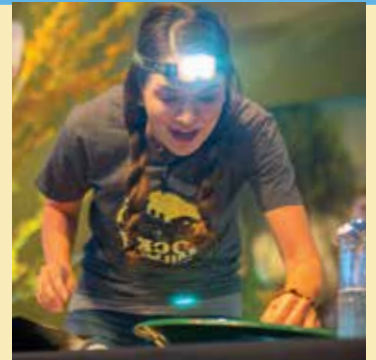
### IMAGINATION STATION

Play with cool Hope 'n' Hovers to remind them that Jesus' power gives them hope.



### ROCKY WRAP-UP

- ▶ Watch for familiar faces in today's Spotlight VBS.
- ▶ Search for hidden "gold," even when it seems hopeless to find it. Then celebrate when they find it!
- ▶ Receive a winged and wonderful Bible Memory Buddy.



### LOCO MOTION GAMES



Walking Lightly



H.O.P.E. Ball



Tunnel Run

At **Rocky Railway VBS**, the daily Bible Point is carefully integrated into each station's activities for unforgettable Bible learning. See how your station reinforces today's Bible Point.



# DAY 2

## Before Kids Steam Your Way

- ▶ Place Big Blue Sky Fabric Backdrop around the room, a foot or two from the wall itself. If possible, use Magnetic Hooks to attach it to the ceiling, hiding the existing wall covering. That way, when you pull it down, you'll be decorated for tomorrow!
- ▶ Position fans so when you turn them on, the fabric will billow. It's a great (and simple) special effect! If you have a smaller room, one or two fans will be adequate. Add extra fans if your room is larger, so the fabric billows and kids get a sense of noise and chaos.
- ▶ Prepare your gangplank by placing a furring strip across two cedar fencing pickets. This gives the gangplank some "give" as kids walk on it while entering the room. Place the gangplank from the doorway to the "ship."
- ▶ Place blankets on the floor in the shape of a ship—a long, narrow rectangle. Place a folded sheet of paper at the front of your ship in an inconspicuous spot.
- ▶ Prep "sea biscuits" by breaking up one rice cake to put in each wicker basket.
- ▶ Set cargo boxes outside the room.
- ▶ Get ready for big action, big imagination, and big fun! Today's adventure will immerse you (and kids) in a pretend stormy sea. Your energy, sense of humor, and imagination will guide kids to jump into the story with enthusiasm and wonder.

## All Aboard

Greet Crews outside your Bible Adventures room. Enthusiastically welcome them, and give high-fives to kids as they arrive.

Hold up a Bible and say: **Today's totally true story from the Bible may get your feet wet as we discover how JESUS' POWER GIVES US HOPE. (Trust Jesus!)**

**Speaking of hope, I hope we don't run into any problems today. We'll get on a ship, and I always get a little seasick out on the open sea. You might not want to stand too close to me—that could be a huge mistake!**

**But the weather is supposed to be calm, so it sounds like smooth sailing. Ready to go aboard?**

Point to the pile of cargo boxes.

### DAY 2 SUPPLIES

- ▶ empty food boxes or burlap sacks stuffed with lightweight material (1 item per person per rotation)
- ▶ 2 spray bottles filled with water
- ▶ 1 or 2 helpers
- ▶ Stormy Seas sound effects (downloaded from group.com/vbsTools)
- ▶ media player for sound effects
- ▶ box fans (multiple speeds if possible)
- ▶ gluten-free rice cakes (1 per Crew)
- ▶ small wicker baskets (1 per Crew per rotation)
- ▶ two 1"x6"x6' cedar fencing pickets
- ▶ one 1"x3"x8' furring strip (found in home improvement stores)
- ▶ Big Blue Sky Fabric Backdrop\* (or large blue sheets) to define your boat area
- ▶ Magnetic Hooks\*
- ▶ sheet of paper

\*available from Group Publishing or your Group VBS supplier

### STAY ON TRACK

Furring strips are thin strips of wood used in construction to level surfaces or create space for insulation or dampness. While you can use any small objects to create a sense of "give" on your gangplank, we found these to be inexpensive and just the right size.



**Say:** **There's some cargo over there that needs to be stowed on the ship, so would you carry a box as you come aboard?** Direct kids to the cargo boxes, and as they pick up boxes, open the door and encourage all kids to walk on the gangplank as they enter the room. Have them stow the boxes along the side of the boat area. (This helps define the space.)

**Getting on the ship is tricky—you have to board using this gangplank. Watch your step, and keep your balance!**

## Set Sail

Lead kids to walk on the gangplank into the room. When everyone's "aboard," pick up the folded sheet of paper and pretend to read it as your helper removes the gangplank.

**Say:** **Uh-oh. Listen to this: (Read) Dear [your name], I'm feeling a little green around the gills today, so I won't be able to sail the ship. But you used to sail, so you be in charge. Have a fun voyage, and thanks for your help. The captain.**

**It's been a while since I sailed a ship, but it'll come back to me. Sort of like riding a bike, right? Except wetter. And with no wheels.**

**Everyone on your feet and let's make this place ship-shape!** Have kids stand, and lead them through a series of instructions, such as the following:

- ▶ **Help me hoist those sails!** (Pretend to pull on a rope.)
- ▶ **Swab this deck!** (Pretend to mop floor.)
- ▶ **Haul up the anchor and be quick about it, sailors!** (Pretend to pull a rope and lift an anchor.)

**Okay, fire up the engines!** When nothing happens, continue: **Oh, that's right. It's Bible times, so there are no engines. We'll have to get power another way. What should we do?**

When someone suggests wind, point out there isn't any and ask kids to try blowing toward the ceiling and then flapping their arms.

**Oh well, we're stuck until the wind comes up. We might as well sit down. We're powerless to do anything.**

## Talk About Feeling Powerless

**Say:** **While we're waiting, let's talk about something: Tell about something you'd like to change in your life but you feel powerless to do anything about it. As for me, I feel powerless about...**

Share an age-appropriate thing in your life. Model the vulnerability you'd like to see shared in Crews.



Say: How about you? Maybe there's a bully in your life you wish would go away or a broken friendship you don't know how to fix. Ask:

**?** What's something in your life you feel powerless to do anything about?

Give Crews time to share. As Crews wrap up talking, at your signal, have your helpers turn the fans on low to billow the fabric walls.

## Hear From Prisoner Paul

Say: Thanks for sharing. It's no fun to be powerless. It feels hopeless. But today we're learning about a new kind of power: the power of Jesus. And **JESUS' POWER GIVES US HOPE!** (Trust Jesus!)

Look up in surprise and delight. **Hey, we have wind! Let's go!**

Pretend to gently turn the ship's wheel as you continue: **Should be an easy trip, unless that prisoner chained up down below is right. He said our ship would sink, the cargo would float off, and we shouldn't be sailing today. But he's not a sailor, so let's not pay any attention to him.**

**His name is Paul, and from what I hear, he's a Christian who got in trouble because he keeps telling people about Jesus after God changed his heart from hating Jesus-followers to being a Jesus-follower. The emperor of Rome doesn't want people following Jesus, because the emperor wants people to follow him.**

**But Paul kept talking, and now he's off to Rome to stand trial in front of the emperor himself. I wouldn't want to be in Paul's sandals!**

**I heard some of you might be Christians, too. If you don't mind, here's a question for you:**

**?** If you could tell a person who didn't know Jesus something about Jesus, what would you say? Talk about that in your Crew. Crew Leaders, you go last.

**And here's another question for us as a whole group:**

**?** Since Paul was told not to talk about Jesus and he did it anyway, what do you think Paul's punishment should be?

**Thanks for sharing. If you talk about Jesus, you probably won't get chained up and stuck in the bottom of a ship like prisoner Paul down there.**

At this point, have a helper mist you with one of the spray bottles from a hidden position. **Hey! Did anyone else feel that?** Wipe your face. **There it is again!** Wipe your face and look up. **Guess that's rain I'm feeling.**

### FIELD TEST FINDING

Our leader shared about his feeling of powerlessness when his sister had a chronic illness. His depth and "reality" modeled a deeper level of sharing that really made Crew conversations meaningful.

### FIELD TEST FINDING

Usually we let leaders share first. But this time, letting leaders go last gave them the chance to hear what their kids thought about Jesus and then to share their own stories of who Jesus is to them. It became a place to share a brief story of what it means to know Jesus!

## FIELD TEST FINDING

In most rotations, kids gave a variety of answers about Paul's punishment. But in one rotation, an older boy yelled "Boil him in oil!" and then boys couldn't wait to impress one another by tossing out tortures. If a kid hijacks your large-group discussion, say, "Sounds like some of you want to hurt Paul. Does anyone have another idea? Anyone think he should be set free?" and you'll be back on track.

**Say:** I'll go below and check the charts in case we're heading into bad weather. I'll check on Paul while I'm down there, too. While I'm gone, you all better talk and come up with a plan for what you'll do if this ship sinks!

As Crews respond, briefly leave the room or move to the back of the room. Reappear in about 60 seconds.

## Sail a Stormy Sea

**Say:** Bad news, mates. Down below there's water sloshing around. That means we're heading into rough seas. I hope that Paul guy wasn't right about what's coming our way. Things could get rough—really rough!

**Can you feel it? The wind's kicking up...**

Have a helper turn down the lights, start the "Stormy Seas" sound effects, and gradually raise the volume. Have your helpers turn the fans to medium so the fabric will billow. Your helpers will mist Crews with water, and you'll shout instructions as you lead kids in actions.

**Everybody, lean to port—that's to your left! Pause. Now starboard—that's to your right! Pause. We'll try to hug the shoreline before this ship breaks up! Quick—help me haul in those sails!** Pretend to pull on ropes and gather in armfuls of canvas.

**This storm just won't stop! It has been going on for days! It's hopeless! Time to lighten the ship by tossing cargo. Throw those boxes overboard!** Direct kids to shove boxes into the "sea." **This looks bad!**

**I'll check to see if Paul's still okay. Hunker down till I get back on deck.** Pretend to go below deck again. Return with baskets of rice cakes. Meanwhile the storm still rages, but the misting will stop.

## Swim for Shore

**Say:** Paul said we should eat; we're gonna need our strength. He had these sea biscuits and gave them to us. Everyone grab a biscuit and eat it—fast!

Distribute rice cake baskets, and keep talking as kids eat their bits of rice cake.

**Good news and bad news! Bad news: Paul says the ship's going down. Good news: None of us will drown. Paul says Jesus will take care of us all! And...is that the shore over there?** Stand up and shield your eyes, then point into the distance.



## FIELD TEST FINDING

We discovered that we needed our helpers to stop the "rainfall" when our leader gave instructions. Raindrops falling on your head is just too distracting!

**Say:** I can't see much through the rain... Anyone else see the shore?

Encourage kids to look. Then gather kids and hunker down together. **We'll try for the shore, but I have a tough decision to make. In situations like this, I'm supposed to kill the prisoner so he won't get away.**

**But Paul gave us food and says his friend Jesus will take care of us, so maybe I should let him live. What do you think?** Let kids advise you.

**Okay! I'll let him go!** Yell to unseen sailors below deck. **You, down below deck, unchain the prisoner!** Turn back to kids. **Now let's cut those anchors and make for shore! The storm's getting worse.**

Have your helpers resume misting Crews. Crank up the fans to high. Turn up the volume of the soundtrack. Pretend to lose your footing and almost fall as you stand.

Shout: **We're running aground! The ship's breaking apart! You're gonna have to jump overboard and swim for it, mates!**

Quickly get in front of kids at the edge of the ship. Stretch your arms out wide to keep kids on the ship. Pretend that you're going to jump overboard, and just as kids start to follow you, yell: **I'll count to 3, and when I say "3," we'll jump overboard. One! Two! Freeze!**

Freeze in place. Have a helper turn up the lights, turn off the fans, and abruptly cut the soundtrack.

**Whew! My heart is racing! Everyone sit down—I have to sit before my legs give out!**

After kids sit, continue.

**Imagine being on that ship as it splintered under you...and you dropped into huge waves crashing against the shore. Lightning flashing, wind howling—it must have been awful.**

**But Paul was right. Not one person on that ship was lost. Trusting in Jesus gave them hope in this shipwreck situation.**

**Circle up with your Crew again. Earlier you talked about situations that left you feeling powerless. Ask:**

**?** **Talk again, this time about how Jesus' power might give you hope in those situations. How might Jesus' power make a difference? Leaders, this time you go first.**

Allow time for Crews to talk. Don't rush this—good stuff will happen.

Draw attention back to yourself.



**Say:** Thank you for sharing. I know that my friendship with Jesus powers up the hope I have for [reference the situation you shared earlier]. I'm so glad I know Jesus!

And I know that praying about my situation—talking with God about it—is helpful. Crew Leaders, would you take a minute to pray for your kids? Ask that **JESUS' POWER WILL GIVE THEM HOPE.** (Trust Jesus!)

Allow time for Crew Leaders to pray for their Crews, then thank kids for coming. Invite them to come back tomorrow for another totally true Bible adventure.



**Bible Story:** Peter and John teach about Jesus. (Acts 3:1–4:31)

**Bible Verse:** “He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless.”  
(Isaiah 40:29)

### Consider This...

- ▶ In the name of Jesus, Peter and John healed a lame man at the Temple gate. The man celebrated the miracle so loudly that a crowd gathered. Peter, making the most of this instant audience, stood up and boldly shared the good news of Jesus.
- ▶ The priests who heard Peter’s message were most likely Sadducees. Sadducees didn’t believe in the resurrection, nor did they believe in the existence of angels or spirits. These leaders also maintained loyalty to the Roman government and sought to maintain the status quo.
- ▶ At the time, most Jews could read and write, but few—if any—received rabbinical training. Such an education would have made them skilled at lengthy theological discussions. So when Peter and John boldly preached before the Sanhedrin (a crowd of highly trained priests), the judges marveled at their ability and noted that they must have been with Jesus.
- ▶ After Peter and John’s release from prison, the church gathered around them for prayer and praise. It’s interesting to note that they *don’t* pray for the persecution to stop but that God would give them the boldness to continue sharing the news of Jesus *in spite of* their suffering.



### Why It Matters...

Like Peter and John, most kids at your VBS are ordinary and “untrained.” Speaking out about their faith can be intimidating, especially in the face of a culture that often feels “anti-Christian.” Many kids feel shy about praying before a restaurant meal, inviting a friend to church, or even mentioning Jesus in regular conversation. Other kids may feel unsure when it comes to showing Jesus’ love, playing with a new friend, or reaching out to someone who’s lonely. Today, give kids the chance to practice speaking about Jesus with ease and confidence. Provide opportunities for kids to daringly step out of their comfort zones. Bolster their bravery and cultivate a courageous faith, encouraging kids to rely on Jesus’ power to help them be bold.

# DAY 3

## BIBLE POINT: Jesus' power helps us be bold.

**BIBLE STORY:** Peter and John teach about Jesus. (Acts 3:1-4:31)

**BIBLE VERSE:** "He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless." (Isaiah 40:29)

### SING & PLAY EXPRESS

- ▶ Learn the Day 3 Bible Point and verse, and meet Bible Memory Buddy Sierra.
- ▶ Sing Rocky Railway songs.
- ▶ Share God Sightings, and add a Track Sticker to the poster.
- ▶ Encourage Cam to boldly take his train down a steep track.



### BIBLE ADVENTURES

Celebrate with a healed man, then discover how Peter and John boldly shared Jesus...even if it meant a stay in jail!



### CHEW CHEW SNACKS

Coal Crunch



### KIDVID™ CINEMA

Lauren helps in a community food program, trusting Jesus' power to help her boldly step out, serve, and share Jesus' love.



### IMAGINATION STATION

Watch as their Bold Blasters fly higher than expected, and know that Jesus' power helps them be bolder than they thought possible.

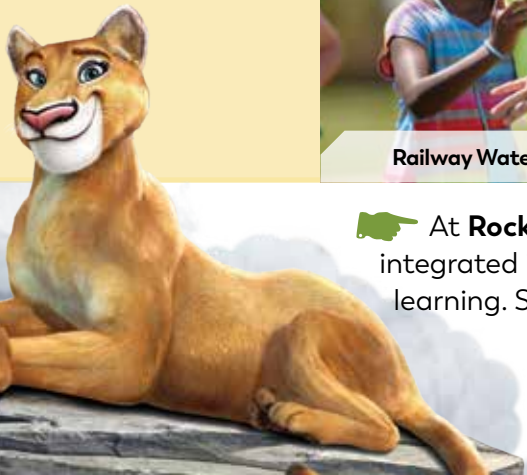


### ROCKY WRAP-UP

- ▶ Who's in the spotlight today in Spotlight VBS?
- ▶ Take on a bold bridge-building challenge!
- ▶ Receive a purr-fect Bible Memory Buddy.



### LOCO MOTION GAMES



Railway Waterway



Bold Bops



Alpaca My Bags

At **Rocky Railway VBS**, the daily Bible Point is carefully integrated into each station's activities for unforgettable Bible learning. See how your station reinforces today's Bible Point.

# DAY 3

## Before Kids Steam Your Way

- ▶ Today's setup is simple; just create the semblance of a Bible-times Temple gate. Make blocks by wrapping large packing boxes in Stone Wall Plastic Backdrop. Stack and tape blocks to form two uprights and a crosspiece, placing the gate near a wall at one end of your room. Place plastic greenery near the gate.
- ▶ Tape Stone Wall Plastic Backdrop on the walls to surround your room with stone walls.
- ▶ Lay a small mat near the Temple gate.

## All Aboard

Greet kids outside your room.

**Say:** **I'm so glad you're here! This week we're discovering amazing things about Jesus' power. Today we're exploring how JESUS' POWER HELPS US BE BOLD. (Trust Jesus!)**

Open your Bible to Acts 3. **Today's power-packed, totally true story comes from the book of Acts. To experience what happened, we'll travel to the city of Jerusalem.**

**And because this whole story kicks off with someone who can't walk, let's see how that might look by having your Crew carry your Crew's smallest member into the room. Today most people who can't walk are able to move with wheelchairs, but back in Bible times there were no wheelchairs. Everyone in your Crew needs to help, and you have to be gentle! When you get into the room, carefully place the person you're carrying on the floor where you'll sit together as a Crew.**

## Set the Stage

Ask kids to sit on the floor with their Crews, away from the Temple gate.

**Say:** **Whew! That's not too easy! Imagine what it would be like to carry your friends to their jobs or to school every day. Pause. Or if you were the ones who were carried, think about what it might be like to not be able to walk. Pause.**

### DAY 3 SUPPLIES

- ▶ large packing boxes
- ▶ Stone Wall Plastic Backdrop\*
- ▶ plastic greenery
- ▶ small mat
- ▶ tape
- ▶ handful of coins
- ▶ Sing & Play Express Music CD\*
- ▶ CD player

\*available from Group Publishing or your Group VBS supplier



**Say:** Well, on that day in Jerusalem, something incredibly bold happened over by the Temple gate. Walk over to the mat. Every day, a man sat there. He'd never been able to walk. Not once in the past 40 years had he stood up or taken a step.

Today someone who can't walk can live a full, productive life, but here in Jerusalem, in this time, if you can't walk, it's hard to have a job. You couldn't be a fisherman, a carpenter, a potter, or even a priest. All this man could do was hold out his hands and ask people for money.

Have kids hold out their hands, cupped.

Sometimes people would toss a coin to him, but plenty of times, people just walked on past without even glancing at him. Walk around the room, passing kids by as you jingle your handful of change. It must have been a hard, hard life. Set the coins aside.

Well, one day two Christians named Peter and John were on their way to the Temple. They stopped—right in front of the man. They had something for him! (Stage whisper) And it was way better than what he expected!

Look a child in the eyes. Peter said something really bold: "I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus, get up and walk!" Ask:

**?** How would you compare Peter's gift to silver or gold? Why? Let a few kids share, then continue.

**So what happened when Peter boldly said that Jesus would heal the man? I'll show you what happened!**

Take a Crew Leader's hand, and help him or her stand. Have a helper start the song "We Can Trust Him" (Psalm 33:4) (track 8) on the Sing & Play Express Music CD and crank up the volume.

Shout: **That man jumped up and praised God—and we can join him! Everyone get into praise position! Up on your feet and let's move!**

Urge kids who can to stand and join you in jumping around, praising God, and giving one another high-fives. If a child or adult can't stand, encourage that person to praise God in another way.

Play about a minute of the song, and lead kids in jumping and dancing to the music. Have fun! Lead kids in raising the roof, moving like a choo-choo, doing simple dance moves, and freestyling.

Stop the music, and have kids give themselves and Jesus a hand. Ask Crews to sit down.





## Make a Jail

**Say:** *So that* miracle sparked quite a commotion. A huge crowd gathered. And that's when the second incredibly bold thing happened: Peter and John stood up and started teaching about Jesus!

They told the crowd who Jesus was and that Jesus had died for their sins. They told the crowd that they needed Jesus. And *that* made some people in the crowd angry. See, not everyone in town was a fan of Jesus. Some people—including a lot of Jerusalem's leaders—thought Jesus was a liar. They thought Christians who *talked* about Jesus were liars, too! That makes me wonder something. Ask:



**?** When is it hard, or unpopular, for you to talk about Jesus?

Share your own example, such as talking about Jesus in your workplace with people who don't believe in him or with a family member who follows a different religion. Then have kids circle up with their Crews and share their own stories. After a minute or two, draw attention back to yourself.

**It sounds like you have an idea of what things were like for Christians in Jerusalem! The leaders there got so mad at Peter and John that they had guards seize them and keep them in jail for the night!** Have all the kids join hands to make a circle “jail” around all the Crew Leaders. **The leaders told Peter and John to quit talking about Jesus—or else!** Ask Crew Leaders:

**?** How are you feeling about being bold now?

**Peter and John had to make a decision: Stay quiet and be safe, or keep talking about Jesus and get in a lot of trouble. Let's release our captive Crew Leaders so we can talk about something.** Have kids circle up with their Crews.

**?** What's one thing you've heard about Jesus this week that you think people should know? Allow Crews time to talk, and then continue.

Well, Peter and John thought there were things about Jesus that people should know, too. They boldly told the leaders, “We can't obey you instead of Jesus. We're not going to stop telling people what we've seen and heard.”

Wow! That's *bold*! They stood up and took a stand!

## Share Faith Stories

**Say:** Crew Leaders, when I point at you, be bold and stand up. Strike a bold superhero pose!

Point to Crew Leaders individually to have them stand up. If any Crew Leaders can't stand, when you point at those Crew Leaders, flex your arms like you're showing off your muscles and indicate they should do the same.

**Now, Crew Leaders, one at a time, point to each member of your Crew. Say the Crew member's name and the words "Be bold!"** Model this by turning to a Crew Leader or helper and saying "[Name], be bold!" **When your Crew Leader points at you, stand up and strike a superhero pose.**

Pause until everyone is standing, and then continue.

**Peter and John were so bold that it's like their bold had superpowers!** Have kids sit down. **Their boldness was so big and their message about Jesus was so powerful that the Bible says 5,000 men believed in Jesus that day! Wow! That doesn't even count women or children who might've heard! That got me thinking: I know Jesus because someone boldly told me about Jesus. It was...**

Very briefly tell who told you about Jesus and when.

**I'm wondering who boldly told you about Jesus and who you might tell. Circle up with your Crew and talk about this:**

**?** Who boldly told you about Jesus—and who could you tell?

Allow Crews time to talk, and then continue. **Jesus' power made someone bold so I could hear about Jesus, and **JESUS' POWER CAN HELP YOU BE BOLD**, too! (Trust Jesus!)**

## Pray for Boldness

**Say:** Back to Peter and John! The angry leaders threatened them and commanded them not to talk about Jesus anymore! Then they let Peter and John go. The men went back to their Christian friends and told them what had happened. Do you know what their friends did? They prayed together, asking God for courage.

I know we *all* need courage when it comes to being bold in what we believe. But you're surrounded by friends here who want to remind you that you *never* face anything alone. I'd like to pray for you. God knows what you need boldness in.



**Pray:** Jesus, thank you for always being with us. It's comforting to know we're never alone. When we feel like we're the only ones who believe in you. When we feel like we're the only ones facing tough stuff. You're right beside us, giving us your strength, love, and boldness. We love you and thank you. In your name, amen.

When you hear the Director's signal, dismiss kids to their next rotation.



## BIBLE POINT

Day 4

Jesus' power lets us live forever.

**Bible Story:** Jesus' death and resurrection. (Matthew 26:17–28:10)

**Bible Verse:** “The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you.”  
(Romans 8:11)

### Consider This...

- ▶ The Passover meal shared between Jesus and his disciples commemorated God's miraculous provision for his people centuries earlier. In this traditional celebration, Jews remembered the sacrificial lamb, whose blood (marked on their doorposts in Egypt) saved them. How appropriate that Jesus—*our* sacrificial lamb—completes his work on earth with such a symbolic event.
- ▶ In Jesus' culture—and in some Middle Eastern cultures today—eating together equaled friendship. Scholars equate sharing a meal with trust and intimacy, adding weight to Jesus' comment to Judas: “One of you who has just eaten from this bowl with me will betray me” (Matthew 26:23).
- ▶ The Roman government had deprived the Sanhedrin of the right to carry out most capital punishments. Therefore, even though the chief priests and elders found Jesus guilty, they had to turn him over to Pilate for execution.
- ▶ At Jesus' death, Matthew 27:51 records that “the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.” There were actually two curtains in the Temple. One divided the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place; the other separated the Holy Place from the court. Matthew doesn't specify *which* curtain tore, but a rending of either one would symbolize changes between God, ritual law, and humanity.
- ▶ Even Jesus' followers found his resurrection hard to believe! Matthew 28:17 tells us, “but some of them doubted!” Yet Jesus eased their doubts by appearing to them repeatedly over 40 days (Acts 1:3; 10:40-41).



### Why It Matters...

Death is an uncomfortable—and even scary—topic for children *and* adults. Even though we don't like to talk or think about it, it's likely that most kids will experience the death of a pet, friend, or relative. That's why it's critical that we help children understand the hope we have through Jesus. Even though death may mean the end of *this* life, kids can celebrate the astonishing promise of eternal life with Jesus. Use today's lesson to help children understand their need for Jesus. Guide them as they discover that through Jesus' miraculous power, we can live forever in heaven.

# DAY 4

## BIBLE POINT: Jesus' power lets us live forever.

**BIBLE STORY:** Jesus' death and resurrection.

(Matthew 26:17-28:10)

**BIBLE VERSE:** "The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you."  
(Romans 8:11)

### SING & PLAY EXPRESS

- ▶ Learn the Day 4 Bible Point and verse, and meet Bible Memory Buddy Finn.
- ▶ Sing Rocky Railway songs.
- ▶ Tell about God Sightings, and add another Track Sticker to the poster.
- ▶ Learn how Cam's train ran out of fuel, and discover that our lives can be "powered up" forever because of Jesus.



### BIBLE ADVENTURES

Use Velcro and hearts to explore God's plan for a forever friendship with us, then experience Jesus' sacrificial, loving forgiveness.



### CHEW CHEW SNACKS

Crunchy Crossbuck



### KIDVID™ CINEMA

Isaac was sad when his brother, Joel, died. Today Isaac finds Jesus' strength through dance, and he dances to celebrate Joel's life forever in heaven!



### IMAGINATION STATION

Decorate and play with Perpetual Papers, and be reassured that Jesus' love for them will never end.



### ROCKY WRAP-UP

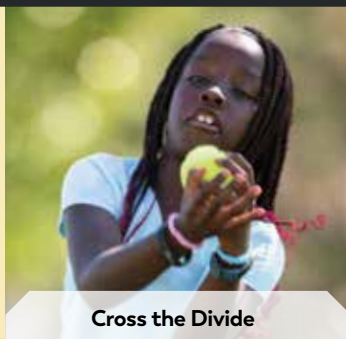
- ▶ Enjoy today's Spotlight VBS.
- ▶ Participate in a moving drama, as Jesus makes a way for us to live with him forever.
- ▶ Receive a finn-tastic Bible Memory Buddy.



### LOCO MOTION GAMES



Mumble Hum Message



Cross the Divide



Celebrate the Victory

▶ At Rocky Railway VBS, the daily Bible Point is carefully integrated into each station's activities for unforgettable Bible learning. See how your station reinforces today's Bible Point.



# DAY 4

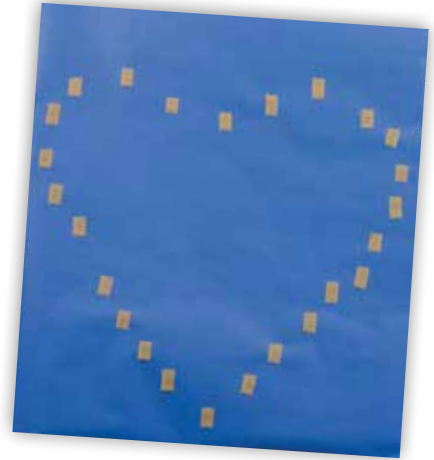
## DAY 4 SUPPLIES

- ▶ wooden cross
- ▶ adhesive Velcro strips (enough for each child to have about a 1-inch piece)
- ▶ baskets to hold supplies (1 per Crew per rotation)
- ▶ construction paper (enough for each child to make a 3x3-inch heart)
- ▶ scissors (1 per person per rotation)
- ▶ markers (1 per person per rotation)
- ▶ small plastic gems (1 per person)
- ▶ basket to hold the gems
- ▶ solid-colored bedsheet
- ▶ trophies, awards, ribbons, or prizes (bring in your own, or borrow a few)
- ▶ flashlight
- ▶ CD player
- ▶ Sing & Play Express Leader Version Music CD\*

\*available from Group Publishing or your Group VBS supplier

## Before Kids Steam Your Way

- ▶ Remove the Temple gate you created yesterday.
- ▶ If your Velcro strips came attached to each other, pull them apart, separating the bristly “hook” side from the soft “loop” side. Attach the hook strips to the cross, making several rows down and across the cross.
- ▶ Use additional hook strips to make a large heart shape on a bedsheet. Hang the heart on the wall opposite the cross.
- ▶ Cut the soft loop pieces into approximately 1-inch strips. (You’ll need more loop pieces than hook pieces. Each child at VBS will take a loop piece, but you’ll reuse the hook side.)
- ▶ Make a supply basket for each Crew in a rotation. Include construction paper, markers, scissors, and the 1-inch adhesive loop pieces.
- ▶ Set the trophies and awards in a corner.



## Celebrate God's Creations

Gather kids inside the room.

Hold your Bible and say: **Today's totally true Bible story is one that I love—because it completely changed my life. I can't wait to share it with you! That's because you're my friends! But you're not just my friends—you're God's friends. God carefully and wonderfully crafted and created** (point around the room at kids, looking them in the eyes) **each...one...of...you.**

**The Bible says that God gave you bodies, bones, brains, and blood! God made you in his very own image! Wow! Let's celebrate you awesome creations!**

Hand each Crew a supply basket, and give kids two minutes to each cut out a paper heart, attach the soft loop Velcro piece, and then write his or her name on the heart. Gather the supply baskets.

Have kids hold up their paper hearts where you can see them.



Say: **God made you—kids like** [read several kids' names from the hearts]**—with love, to be with him forever! Feel that little sticker you put on the back of your heart.** Let kids call out how the sticker feels. **It can remind you of the gentle, soft, sweet love God has for you. He wants to be with you!** Have kids attach their hearts to the large heart shape by pressing the soft “sticker” onto the bristly hook pieces. Then have Crews gather again.

## Separate From God

Point to the large heart.

Say: **This is God’s best, perfect plan: a close friendship, connected with his creations. Unfortunately, it didn’t stay that way. Humans—just like you and me—believed a big lie. God’s enemy, Satan, told people that they didn’t need God. He said, “You can be like God!” We still sometimes believe that lie today.**

**“You can be good enough...”**

**“You can do enough good things...”**

**“You’re good enough on your own...”**

Point to the trophies and awards.

**We sometimes believe that we can win and earn and achieve and do enough to make God love us and to be his friend. That lie separates us from God. Silently take your heart from the big heart and drop it on the floor near that wall. Then sit back with your Crew. I’ll call up your Crews one at a time.**

Allow time for kids to hear the tearing noise as they remove their paper hearts. Ask:

**❓ What did you hear?**

**Sin—wrong choices we make—tears us apart from God. It rips our friendship with him. It makes a mess. This isn’t what God wants. So God gave up something precious to fix this big problem.**

## Tell About Jesus

Say: **God sent his very own Son, Jesus, to live on earth. Let me tell you a little about Jesus, because he’s someone I love very much. Maybe you’ve heard about Jesus, too.** Ask:

**❓ In your Crew, tell one thing you know about Jesus.**

Allow a minute for Crews to talk. This will give Crew Leaders good insight into kids’ understanding of Jesus.

Hold your Bible.

### STAY ON TRACK

If kids accidentally tear their hearts—or even pull the Velcro from the sheet—that’s okay! You can connect these incidents to the “mess” that sin makes in our lives. (Just replace the adhesive Velcro and move on.)

Say: **The Bible—God’s Word—tells us that Jesus lived on earth a long time ago.** Motion to your trophies. **If Jesus had a trophy, it could be for showing God’s love to people no one else seemed to notice. He’d get first place in healing people.**

**Or a blue ribbon for miraculously feeding crowds of hungry people! Jesus did things only God could do—walked on water, calmed storms, and raised people from the dead! The Bible is filled with true stories of all the powerful things Jesus did! He could do those things because he is God’s very own Son, with God’s power.**

**This week you’ve learned a song about the best, most wonderful, and most powerful thing Jesus ever did—in fact, the most powerful thing in the history of the world! And Jesus did it!** Play about 20 seconds of “The Old Rugged Cross” (track 9). Pause, then point to kids. **And he did it for every one of you.**

## Gather at the Old Rugged Cross

Softly play the instrumental version of “The Old Rugged Cross” (track 19) throughout this lesson. Keep the music quiet, reflective, and in the background. You’ll need to put the track on “repeat” or have a helper repeat it when it ends.

Say: **The first two lines of the song tell us this:**

***On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross.***

***The emblem of suffering and shame.***

Dim the lights, then shine a light on the cross.

**You see, not everyone believed that Jesus was God’s Son. Some people thought he was a liar. They got so angry that they arrested Jesus. They hurt him and forced him to carry a rough, wooden cross to a hill called Golgotha. There, they nailed his hands and feet to that cross and left him to die. In that time, only criminals were put to death on a cross. But Jesus had never sinned—he was God’s pure and perfect Son!**

Lead kids to gather around the cross. Let kids feel the rough, rugged, bristly Velcro strips.

**The song tells us the cross is an emblem—a picture—of suffering and shame. Jesus suffered for our shame. We may feel ashamed of the wrong things we do, the bad choices we all make.** Point to the trophies. **Even though we do a lot of great things, we *all* have sin.**



## Experience Separation

Say: **The next part of the song tells us this:**

***And I love that old cross where the dearest and best  
For a world of lost sinners was slain.***

**Slain means that someone was killed. Jesus was the dearest and best.** Read 1 Peter 2:22 from your Bible: **“He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone.”**

**When we do something wrong, there’s usually a punishment, a consequence. When we sin, the ultimate consequence is separation from God. Forever.** Have kids retrieve their paper hearts from the floor, then move away from each other and sit down. Guide kids to tuck their heads down and close their eyes so they seem small and alone. **Imagine being separated from God’s love, forgiveness, goodness, power, and joy forever.** Ask:

**?** **Whisper one word that describes what that would be like.**

Pause, then continue: **Even though Jesus never sinned, he willingly died for you. He loves you so much that he took the punishment for your wrongs. It was the only way to heal our friendship with God. Crew Leaders, walk to each of your Crew members. Touch each person on the back and say his or her name and “Jesus took your punishment.” Kids, when your Crew Leader says your name, you can stand up and join him or her.**

When each child has been affirmed, have Crews gather and sit down.

## Lay Down Our Trophies

Say: **The next lines of the song go like this:**

***So I’ll cherish the old rugged cross  
Till my trophies at last I lay down.***

Explain that *cherish* means to value or treasure something.

Hold up a trophy.

**Sometimes we value or treasure or cherish our accomplishments. You know, all those awards and things—it’s okay to be proud of them. But a thousand ribbons or awards or good deeds can’t wash away our wrongs. We can never do enough good things to earn heaven. The Bible says it this way. Read Ephesians 2:8: “God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God.”**



**We're powerless to save ourselves. Only Jesus can save us. Let's lay down these treasures and awards at the foot of the cross as a way to show that he is most important.** Have one person from each Crew help you move the trophies and awards to the foot of the cross.

## Celebrate the Hope of Heaven

Say: **Finally, we sing these words in the song:**

***And I will cling to the old rugged cross,  
And exchange it some day for a crown.***

Motion to the cross.

**Jesus' story didn't end at the cross. Remember, Jesus is God's Son, with God's power! And that power is stronger than death! Three days after Jesus died, something *incredible* happened!** Read aloud Matthew 28:2-4. **Listen to what the angel at the tomb said: "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying."**

Turn the lights back up.

**Jesus' power beat death—on that day, for Jesus. And today, for you and me. The Bible promises this: "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).**

### **JESUS' POWER LETS US LIVE FOREVER! (*Trust Jesus!*)**

**Because of Jesus, we can cling to the cross—the promise, hope, love, and power it represents! The last line says we'll exchange our trophies for a crown. Hold up the basket of gems. The Bible describes heaven as streets of gold and walls made of gems. This place Jesus is making for us is more beautiful than we can imagine! There are no more tears or sadness, and God's peace and glory are everywhere! Wow! That's something to cling to!**

**Leaders, bring your paper hearts to the cross and let them cling to the cross by pressing them to the rugged cross. As Leaders bring their hearts to the cross, give each one a gem and say: [Name], **you can live forever with Jesus.****

Then have Leaders welcome their Crew members to the cross in the same way, where kids can attach their hearts to the cross and receive gems.

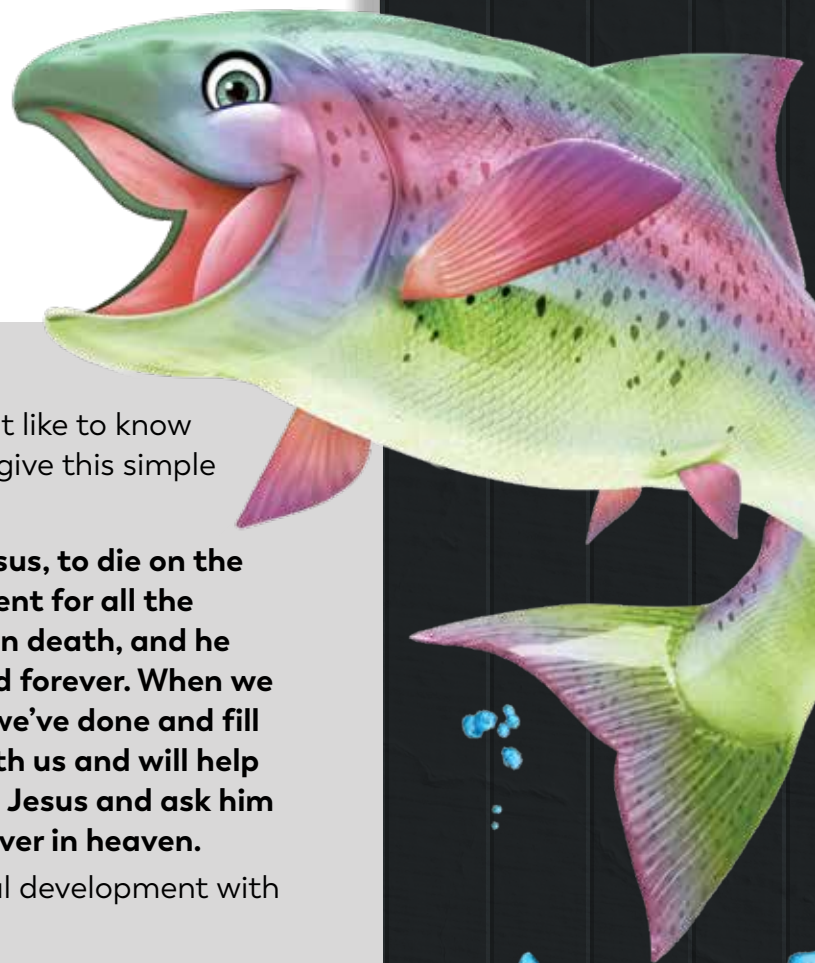
When everyone has a gem, form a circle and have kids stand and hold their gems.

Say: **Let's sing "The Old Rugged Cross" as a prayer of thanks to Jesus. If you know the motions, go ahead and do them.**

Lead kids in singing "The Old Rugged Cross" (track 9).

When you hear your Director's signal, dismiss kids to their next station.

Between rotations, remove the hearts that have kids' names on them, and set them aside. You'll need these for Day 5. Move the trophies and awards back to their original corner.



### Helping Children Follow Jesus

During the week, if you sense that a child might like to know more about what it means to believe in Jesus, give this simple explanation:

**God loves us so much that he sent his Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for us. Jesus died and took the punishment for all the wrong things we do. But Jesus is stronger than death, and he came back to life! Jesus wants to be our friend forever. When we ask him to, he'll take away the wrong things we've done and fill our lives with his love. Jesus will always be with us and will help us make the right choices. When we believe in Jesus and ask him to forgive us, someday we'll live with him forever in heaven.**

Be sure to share the news of the child's spiritual development with his or her parent(s).

**Bible Story:** The church is united. (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35)

**Bible Verse:** “Love each other in the same way I have loved you.”  
(John 15:12)

### Consider This...

- ▶ The book of Psalms mentions prayer more than 60 times—more than any other section of Scripture. The book of Acts comes in second, recording the importance and occurrence of prayer about 34 times. Clearly, the early church relied on prayer for hope, communion, healing, provision, and unity. Communication with God became a critical part of their community.
- ▶ Scholars believe that the early church probably met in Solomon’s Colonnade, a porch along the inner side of the Temple wall.
- ▶ Many of the first Christians came from Jewish backgrounds, meaning they probably already followed God’s command to give to the poor (Deuteronomy 15:4-8). Uniting and caring for others may have been a natural connection with their faith family.
- ▶ Acts 4:33 records the great power with which the apostles testified about Jesus’ resurrection. It’s likely this refers to a boldness given by the Holy Spirit but might also indicate that their life of unity and joy became a powerful witness to those around them.
- ▶ While Acts shines a light on the rapid growth of the early church (Acts 2:47; 4:4; 6:7; 9:31; 21:20), in a city of around 200,000 people, they still represented a minority of the population. This small band of believers needed to stick together and support each other!



### Why It Matters...

Are the kids at your VBS like or unlike the early Christians? Why? Do they have a heart to serve, share, and bear one another’s heartaches? What would happen if kids today had the same spirit of that first faith family? What would the church of tomorrow look like? You have the opportunity to send kids off with a passion for sharing Jesus’ love in powerful and practical ways! With Jesus’ power, we can transform tomorrow’s faith community into an environment of belonging, sharing, caring, and community. Today, help kids discover how Jesus’ power can help them be faithful friends who truly care for each other.

# DAY 5

## BIBLE POINT: Jesus' power helps us be good friends.

**BIBLE STORY:** The church is united.  
(Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35)

**BIBLE VERSE:** "Love each other in the same way I have loved you." (John 15:12)

### SING & PLAY EXPRESS

- ▶ Learn the Day 5 Bible Point and verse, and meet Bible Memory Buddy Lawrence Elk.
- ▶ Sing Rocky Railway songs.
- ▶ Discuss God Sightings, and add a Track Sticker to the poster.
- ▶ Hear Cam's troubles with a new crew member.



### BIBLE ADVENTURES

Search for "review clues," have a party to celebrate our good friends, and act out ways the first Christians showed friendship and unity.



### CHEW CHEW SNACKS

Good Friend Fruit Pizza



### KIDVID™ CINEMA

Renee and Alina became friends when they helped in a cool church ministry. They love spending time together and growing in friendship with Jesus and each other!



### IMAGINATION STATION

Make Power Bands with three types of beads, and wear them to remember that Jesus' power helps them be good friends.



### ROCKY WRAP-UP

- ▶ Watch the adorable preschoolers in today's Spotlight VBS.
- ▶ See a jaw-dropping sciency celebration of Jesus' power.
- ▶ Add the final Bible Memory Buddy to their herd.



### LOCO MOTION GAMES



Train of Thought



Noodle Track



Boxcar Bolt

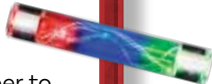
▶ At Rocky Railway VBS, the daily Bible Point is carefully integrated into each station's activities for unforgettable Bible learning. See how your station reinforces today's Bible Point.

# DAY 5

## DAY 5 SUPPLIES

- ▶ Bible
- ▶ balloons
- ▶ colorful crepe paper streamers
- ▶ 4 gift-wrapped boxes with easily removable lids
- ▶ several rice cakes (the same kind served in your Day 2 Bible Adventure)
- ▶ 2 pennies
- ▶ paper hearts with Velcro from Day 4 (1 per Crew, plus 1 extra)
- ▶ paper mustache used by Ananias on Day 1
- ▶ Rocky Railway Signal Stick\*
- ▶ folded sheet of paper to be a “note”
- ▶ Sing & Play Express Music CD\*
- ▶ CD player

\*available from Group Publishing or your Group VBS supplier



## Before Kids Steam Your Way

- ▶ Decorate your room the same way you did for Day 1, as a first-century house.
- ▶ Create a party atmosphere by hanging crepe paper streamers in your doorway and inflating balloons and hanging them out of reach. (At our field test, we ran steamers across the ceiling, too.) Decorate outside your room, too, to show kids that a party is waiting inside!
- ▶ Create four party boxes by gift-wrapping boxes, wrapping the lid and box separately. This way kids can remove the lids and then put them back on without compromising the wrapping paper. In the first box, place a paper mustache; in the second box, place several “sea biscuits” (or rice cakes); in the third box, place two pennies; and in the fourth box, place a paper heart with Velcro on it (from Day 4).

## Play a Party Game

Greet kids outside your Bible Adventures room. Kids will want to know what the party’s all about, but feign ignorance.

**Say:** **When I came by my house, I found out someone decorated it for a party, but I don’t know why. I don’t even know if I’m invited to the party—or if you’re invited, either. But as long as we’re all here, we might as well go inside.**

Lead kids into the room and gather them, standing, in a large circle.

**Today we’re discovering how JESUS’ POWER HELPS US BE GOOD FRIENDS. (Trust Jesus!) Since we’re all good friends, let’s play a quick game. I’ll call out a description. If it describes you, quickly move to the center of the circle and link elbows with others to make a small inner circle. Let’s practice: Everyone wearing blue, circle up nice and close!**

Wait for kids and Crew Leaders wearing blue to gather in the center and link elbows.

Continue: **Everyone else, when I say “go,” you’ll try to get inside that center circle. You can try squeezing your way in or crawling through their legs—whatever works to get you in. You people in the circle, scooch together so there’s no room for anyone to get past you. After a minute, I’ll call time and we’ll make our big circle and play again. Got it?**



Once everyone understands the game, give it a try. Play several rounds. Following are some suggestions for forming a center circle:

- ▶ everyone who has a cat
- ▶ everyone wearing shoes with shoelaces
- ▶ everyone born on an even-numbered day of the month
- ▶ everyone wearing orange

Avoid calling out categories that reflect kids looks, body size, or other issues kids might be sensitive to. After several rounds, have kids sit with their Crews. Ask the whole group:

**?** How did it feel to be part of the inner circle?

**?** How did it feel when you were left out of the inner circle?

Have kids discuss this question in their Crews:

**?** Tell about a time you felt left out in real life. What happened? How did you feel?

Allow Crews time to talk briefly. Let Crews know when there's one minute left for discussion.

## Hear About the First Christians

**Say:** Today we're learning that **JESUS' POWER HELPS US BE GOOD FRIENDS.** (*Trust Jesus!*) In our game, everyone was trying to get into the inner circle. Jesus' first followers—the first Christians—had sort of an inner circle. But they didn't try to keep anyone out.

**They invited everyone in!**

**After Jesus died and came back to life, he went back to heaven. His followers and friends told as many people as they could about Jesus. You heard a little about that with Peter and John's adventure. And then those people told people, and those people told people... Well, you get the picture.**

**Pretty soon, lots of people believed in Jesus.**

**Here's what it says in the Bible about those believers.** Open your Bible to Acts 2 and read aloud verse 42.

**So they're eating together, praising Jesus together, hanging out together, and sharing with each other. Jesus' power made those believers good friends! And they wanted everyone else to join them and become friends of Jesus, too.**

**Let's celebrate what we've learned about Jesus and his power this week so we can tell other people about it.**

## Figure Out Clues

**Say:** You'll see some gift boxes around the room. When I say to, travel with your Crew and quickly look in one of the boxes. Inside is a clue to remind you of one of this week's totally true Bible stories. See if you can figure out which story it's pointing to and what that story told us about Jesus' power.

You'll have to think quickly—you'll have only about 30 seconds to look at each clue. When I say "Next!" your Crew will close the party box and travel to the party box to your right.

Play upbeat music from the Sing & Play Express Music CD, and call time every 30 seconds so Crews can switch. After Crews have explored all the boxes, turn off the music and have kids sit with their Crews.

**While you were looking at clues, I found this.** Hold up the folded sheet of paper. **It's an invitation—to us! It says, "Jesus wants to be friends with everyone, and JESUS' POWER HELPS US BE GOOD FRIENDS!" (Trust Jesus!)**

**Oh, I get it! This is a friendship party! We're here...and Jesus is here, too!**

**Most good parties have decorations.** Motion to the streamers, balloons, and any other decorations you've used. **Check—we have those. And most parties have music. We have music.** Begin playing "Everywhere I Go" (track 2) on the CD, and let it play quietly.

**And all good parties have great conversation—we have that, too.**

Distribute a paper heart to each Crew.

**A heart is a symbol of a good friendship, and you've become good friends this week. Let's take turns sharing how you've been good friends to each other in your Crews.**

**Starting with your Schedule Supervisor, you'll pass the heart around your circle. When a person is holding the heart, the rest of the Crew will take turns talking about the person who is holding the heart. You'll share at least one reason you think the person makes a good friend.**

**For instance, I might say...**

Pick a child seated near you and affirm that child for a specific reason. For example, maybe the child has helped you at some point, and good friends help one another. Or you've noticed that the child is a good listener, and friends listen to one another.

Start by saying the child's name and then saying "You're a good friend because..." Ask that when giving feedback, kids and leaders use the name of the person they're affirming.



### FIELD TEST FINDING

This was such a powerful, positive time. Don't rush these affirmations. Kids were hungry to hear peers and an adult say kind things about them! The relationships kids build at VBS will last longer than all the decorations, prizes, and games you've planned.



**Say:** Your turn now. Take turns telling your Schedule Supervisor how he or she is a good friend. When you've all shared, the Schedule Supervisor will pass the heart to the next person in your Crew. Everyone gets a turn!

If you get all the way around your Crew, send the heart around a second time. There are lots of reasons you're good friends!

And please say only things that are positive and kind. Which won't be hard—because **JESUS' POWER HELPS US BE GOOD FRIENDS!** (*Trust Jesus!*)

Play music softly while the hearts make their way around the circles. Allow as much time as Crews need to affirm each Crew member.

## All Together Now

Turn off the music, and ask kids and leaders to form one large circle.

**Say:** When we give our hearts to our friend Jesus, we get a lot of other friends, too. We get each other! Jesus said that when we treat each other as friends, that shows other people who don't know him yet that he's real.

Ask everyone to hold the hands of the people next to them. Explain that it's important they not let go of anyone else's hands until you tell them to do so.

**When we're friends together, it sends a signal that Jesus is with us—and that we know him. It's a signal that others can see. Let me show you what I mean.**

Have two children standing next to each other let go of hands so they can each hold one end of the Rocky Railway Signal Stick in between them. This will make an electrical connection that makes the stick light up. Demonstrate what happens when two kids on the far side of the circle break contact.

**Our friendships matter! They help us show Jesus' love to others, and we can show Jesus' love to one another, too.**

**But when we don't let Jesus help us be friends...**

Ask kids to keep holding hands, and point around the circle so more kids can experience being the ones to break contact. Expect that there will be some children who, in an effort to be amusing, intentionally sabotage the connection. Deal with that in a good-natured way—it's still making the point that when we're not united, we lose "power."



### STAY ON TRACK

This is always a crowd pleaser: Let go of the hand of the person next to you and touch that person's nose. It'll still complete the circuit!

**Say:** It's important that we stay connected with other friends of Jesus. If this is your church, I hope you'll stay connected with friends here. If you go to another church, that's a good place to find friends of Jesus. And if you don't go to a church, you're welcome to join us here. However you do it, stay close to other friends of Jesus!

And remember what we've discovered about the power of Jesus:



**JESUS' POWER HELPS US DO HARD THINGS!** *(Trust Jesus!)*



**JESUS' POWER GIVES US HOPE!** *(Trust Jesus!)*



**JESUS' POWER HELPS US BE BOLD!** *(Trust Jesus!)*



**JESUS' POWER LETS US LIVE FOREVER!** *(Trust Jesus!)*



**JESUS' POWER HELPS US BE GOOD FRIENDS!** *(Trust Jesus!)*

Ask kids to stay standing, and lead them in singing the theme song, "Your Power Will Pull Us Through" (track 1). Have fun—crank up the music and move!

As Crews leave, be at the door and thank kids for coming.



# BIBLE ADVENTURES

## DAY 1



Encourage Ananias to do the hard thing God has asked of him, and experience a trust fall to feel what it means to trust Jesus.

## DAY 2



Join a ship's crew, and find hope amid a windy, wavy, wild storm with prisoner Paul.

## DAY 3



Celebrate with a healed man, then discover how Peter and John boldly shared Jesus...even if it meant a stay in jail!

## DAY 4



Use Velcro and hearts to explore God's plan for a forever friendship with us, then experience Jesus' sacrificial, loving forgiveness.

## DAY 5



Search for "review clues," have a party to celebrate our good friends, and act out ways the first Christians showed friendship and unity.

Questions:



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