

Sparky's Lab

Leader's Guide

Includes
Reproducible
Pages



Preschool
Pre-K to Kindergarten
Ages 3 to 6

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Make the theme come alive for your VBS children! As leaders at Sparky's Lab, take on a fun lab name: SonSpark Sarah, Eddie Einstein, Chemistry Christa, Microscope Mary, etc. Consider yourself a senior researcher in the lab and dress accordingly: lab coats you've decorated yourself, safety glasses, interesting graphic T-shirts, etc. Decorate your room (see p.6) and play the *Music & More CD*. You'll have as much fun as the kids—maybe more!



Gospel Light Vacation Bible School

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Course Overview

Purpose: Discovering **God's Plan 4 U = Jesus!**
Theme Verse: John 14:6–7

Session	 1 God's Plan: 2 MAKE Us!	 2 God's Plan: 2 BE WITH Us!	 3 God's Plan: 4 Us 2 KNOW Him!	 4 God's Plan: 2 SAVE Us!	 5 God's Plan: 2 LOVE Us 4-Ever!
Bible Story	God Makes the World Genesis 1:1—2:2	God Loves Adam and Eve Genesis 2:8– 9,15–17; 3:1–24	God Sends Jesus John 1:1–2,14; 6:16–21; 14:1–7	Jesus Saves Us Luke 22—24:35	God's Love Is Forever! Mark 16:15; Acts 1:1–11; 2:4,41– 47; 4:32–35
Q&A	Who made the world and who made me? God made the world. God made you and loves you. CCC* 295-297	What happens when I disobey God? Sin separates you from God. CCC 1849-1850	What is God like? Hearing Bible sto- ries about Jesus helps you know what God is like. CCC 131-133	Why did Jesus have to die? Jesus died and rose again so that you can live as part of God's family. CCC 166	So . . . now what do I do? You can live as God's child. He will help you show His love to others. CCC 2044-2046
Spark Principle	Gravity When He made the world, God created all the scientific laws that govern it— laws like gravity.	Cause & Effect Whatever we do (a cause) has a result (an effect). Whenever we sin, the effect is separa- tion from God.	Motion Objects at rest stay at rest until a force puts them in mo- tion. People were stuck in sin until Jesus came and put God's plan in motion.	Transformation Transformations occur when something new is introduced to an existing object and changes the object. Jesus changes us.	Chain Reaction A series of events caused by the one before. Shar- ing God's love with others can start a chain reac- tion and go on and on and on!
Bible Verse	God made the world. God made people. (See Genesis 1:1,27.)	Everyone has sinned. No one is as good as God is. (See Romans 3:23.)	Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life." (See John 14:6.)	Jesus died so that we can be with God. (See 1 Peter 3:18.)	Live as Jesus did. Show love to others. (See Ephesians 5:2.)

Course Description

Lasers! Gyroscopes! Telescopes! Fusion, fission and chemical reactions!

At SonSpark Labs, explorers of all ages will find their imaginations spark to life as they research answers to universal questions by delving into the shadows of the ancient past, exploring scientific wonders of the present and even searching beyond—to an infinite future! The fun begins as you step into this astonishing world of God's plan for the people of His planet!

Each session focuses on one aspect of God's Plan for You = Jesus!, or GP4U = J!, as revealed through God's Word. Young scientists will participate in experiments and hands-on activities that help them get to know Jesus and God's plan of salvation. Kids will explore the answers to universal questions such as the following:



Who made the world and who made me? Session 1 takes kids on a whirlwind trip through Genesis to observe God's incredible creation. Kids will discover **God's Plan: 2 MAKE Us!**



What happens when I disobey God? In Session 2, kids will find out how the sins committed by Adam and Eve affected all of history—including each of us today. Kids will be encouraged to know **God's Plan: 2 BE WITH Us!**



What is God like? In Session 3, kids will hear about the life of Jesus, the One God sent to bridge the separation created by our sin. Kids will learn that because of Jesus, they can experience **God's Plan: 4 Us 2 KNOW Him!**



Why did Jesus have to die? In Session 4, kids will learn that Jesus loves each one of them so much that He died and rose again so that they could be forgiven. They'll be excited to discover the next part of **God's Plan: 2 SAVE Us!**



So . . . now what do I do? In Session 5, kids will learn what it means to live as a member of God's family—the expansion phase in **God's Plan: 2 LOVE Us 4-Ever!**

This summer, children will excitedly explore the amazing SonSpark Labs. They will trace God's life-changing plan as it's revealed from Creation to the present and on into the future. They'll find answers to life's most important questions. They will discover that God loves them and that through Jesus, at

Baptism they can be members of God's family and personally experience God's plan for each of us—God's Plan for You is Jesus!

GP4U = J!

Storytelling Tips

Before You Tell the Bible Story

1. Begin your preparation by reading the story from the Bible itself, even though you may have read it many times.
2. Then read the story from this Leader's Guide. This version has been written in words a child can understand. Use a highlighter to mark phrases you find especially helpful. Practice saying them aloud!
3. Prepare the Bible story **Big Books** from *Sparky's Lab Posters & Props*. These visuals have been planned to reinforce and give meaning to your words. You may choose to use additional visuals such as puppets or a simple Bible-times costume.
4. Practice telling the story using the story **Big Books**. If you feel it is necessary to use notes, write them on a small card and place it in your Bible. Know the story well enough so that you can look directly at the children most of the time, glancing only occasionally at your notes.
5. Keep your story brief and focused on the **Session Goals**. Too much information will confuse many children and extend the story length beyond their attention spans.

When You Tell the Story

1. Place your Bible in front of you or nearby so children recognize it as the source of the story.
2. Before you begin, be sure children are seated comfortably and can see the visuals you are using. Remove distractions such as toys or papers. Immediately begin with the opening sentence of your story, which is often a question or comment to catch children's attention.
3. Tell the story in your normal voice.
 - * Speak with confidence and enjoyment; let your genuine interest in the story come through.
 - * Speak distinctly and slowly.
 - * Change the tone of your voice to identify different characters in the story.

* Create excitement by speaking slightly faster when appropriate.

* Whisper or pause briefly to create suspense.

* Use repetition to maintain children's interest. Invite children to say the repeating line with you.

4. Enhance your story with exaggerated physical expressions appropriate to the Bible story action. Look angry or frightened. Yawn and stretch. Smile a big smile. If there are actions suggested, invite children to act them out with you!
5. When the story ends, say your closing sentence and then stop! Conclude the story before the children lose interest.



After You've Concluded the Bible Story

1. Use the words and ideas found in the **Conclusion** to help review and reinforce the important Bible story concepts.
2. Evaluate your storytelling experience by asking yourself these questions:
 - * Did the story hold the children's attention?
 - * Did I know the story well enough to maintain eye contact with the children?
 - * Did I stop when the story ended?
 - * Did I use my story visuals so that they did not distract children from the story?
3. Keep the results of your evaluation in mind as you prepare your next Bible story.

Tip

A good rule of thumb for telling stories to young children is to aim for one minute of story for each year of a child's age.

Decorating Your Preschool Room

Use or adapt any of the following ideas to decorate your room. The *Lab Décor & More Theme Guide* contains all the patterns and instructions you'll need for decorating. These files are also available on Decorating & Crafts Resources in the Reproducible Power Pack. Remember when decorating for this age group to keep decorations at children's eye level so that they can enjoy them.

Place the **Welcome Poster** from *Sparky's Lab Posters & Props* near your entrance or outside the room. Each day children will visit one to four Bible Learning Activity Centers. With a few decorations, each center can become a special place to visit at Sparky's Lab, the part of SonSpark Labs that's set aside for your littlest lab assistants. If you don't wish to set up all the centers, use or adapt any of the ideas from the *Lab Décor & More Theme Guide* to decorate your room.

Use the **Bible Verse Posters** and **Decorating Posters** from *Sparky's Lab Posters & Props* to decorate

room walls or to designate various room learning centers. The images shown on each poster can be used to direct children to the center ("Go to the center where you see a sun on the poster."). You could also designate centers by creating your own signs. Enlarge the **Preschool Lab Patterns** (see *Lab Décor & More Theme Guide*) onto butcher paper or poster board, cut out, paint and place on walls where centers are located. In each center, place activity supplies needed. (See individual session pages.)

Sparky's Lab

Create a gathering place in your room for activities such as **Bible Story Time** and **Daily Wrap-Up**.

- ✳ Enlarge and trace **Sparky the Lab Pattern** (see *Lab Décor & More Theme Guide*) onto butcher paper, paint and attach to wall or mount on foam board to make a standing prop.

Decorating Tip

Ask people who cannot otherwise help at VBS to assist in decorating your room the weekend before VBS begins.





- * Set up a whiteboard next to Sparky the Lab. With fluorescent dry-erase markers, draw pictures to illustrate simple concepts such as weather, color or the senses.
- * Set a stool in front for leader to sit on. Place brightly colored circle “spots” on the floor for children to sit upon. Purchase poly circles from educational supply stores or cut colored craft foam or vinyl placemats into large circles.
- * Enlarge **Mystery Machine Pattern** (see *Lab Décor & More Theme Guide*) onto butcher paper, paint and attach to wall.

Additional Ideas

Use any of the following ideas throughout your room to give Sparky’s Lab a science-lab atmosphere:

- * SonSpark Labs Fiber Optic Lab Lamp, Lab Beaker Set, Test Tubes, Wall Murals or Jumbo Lab Backdrop—all from Liguori Publications.

- * Daily Plan Pennants (available from Liguori Publications).
- * Mylar items (ribbon, tinsel and rain curtains). Lab Entrance Cover is available from Liguori Publications.
- * Starbursts (see *Lab Décor & More Theme Guide*)
- * Preschool crafts (see *MasterMind Crafts*)
- * Play microscopes, test tubes, syringes, pipettes, measuring cups, etc.
- * Nature items to examine (rocks, feathers, leaves, flowers, bones, etc.)
- * Battery-operated LED lights
- * Non-working appliances and electronics (with cords cut off, no loose parts or small pieces) and play tools for tinkering
- * Building and mechanical toy sets

Daily Schedule

Sparky's Lab at SonSpark Labs offers five stories that take us through the Bible to reveal God's plan for the world. Each day children will explore the Q&A, questions about God that many children have and the answers that help them understand God's plan for each one of them. The interactive Bible stories, *Sparky's Lab Fun Pages*, lively songs and creative activities all help focus children on basic concepts about God's plan at an appropriate age level.

Before Class

Heart Preparation

Prayerfully read each session's **Heart Prep** to prepare your mind and heart for this important ministry to children. Take time to pray for each child by name; pray also for your fellow leaders and helpers! Then after the day's session, use the questions in the **Daily Recap** to help you focus your thoughts and prayers.

Class Time

Adjust the length of each time segment to best fit the needs of your VBS.

Bible Learning Activities (40–45 minutes)

Welcome Time At the door, station yourself or an adult helper to welcome and help each child put on a name tag and choose an activity center.



Activities Children are free to move from one center to another. Older children may rotate from activity to activity in groups. (Note: If all children arrive at once, briefly welcome them and give a short explanation of each activity before children move to activities of their choice.) Be familiar with the suggested conversation in the **Talk About** section. Use these words to link any child's activity to the session's Bible story and life application—even if children don't participate in the suggested activity but create their own playtime activities (e.g., use blocks as race cars instead of animals, etc.). Each child will better understand the concepts for the day through hearing these words several times!

Cleanup Time Leader and helpers lead children in putting away materials.

Bible Story Time (15–20 minutes)

Leader, helpers and children gather in one group for music, prayer, rhyming fun, puppet activity and conversation about the Scripture Verse. (Note: If your group is primarily younger children, provide fewer activities.)

Leader presents the Bible story to the entire group using any suggested props as well as the Bible story **Big Books** from *Posters & Props*.



Application (10 minutes)

After the Bible story, leader and helpers sit at tables with children and guide them in completing the Bible story review and life-application activities found in the *Sparky's Lab Fun Pages*.





Recreation Game/Snack (20–35 minutes)

Leader (or Game Leader) and helpers guide children in outdoor play activities and washing up before snack. Check registration cards for any food allergies children may have. Also, post a note each day alerting parents to the snack you will serve. Leader and helpers sit with children during snack to talk with children and to help as needed.

Skit (10–15 minutes)

Each day for elementary children, a humorous skit is presented during the Opening Assembly or at another time. If preschool children aren't included in the Opening Assembly, have skit characters visit your classroom to talk with children, or show the Bible story preview video from *ShowTime! Assemblies DVD* or Assemblies Resources in the Reproducible Power Pack.



Craft (15–20 minutes)

Children return to groups or go to Craft Center to complete a project from *MasterMind Crafts*.



Daily Wrap-Up (10–15 minutes)

The session is nearly over—it's important to distribute take-home materials, remove children's name tags and help them gather their things. But don't let the session dwindle away as children wait for their parents. Use this time as another grand opportunity to interact! Try some of the ideas found in **Transition Tips** on page 10 to help children remember—and have fun with—what they learned!



Transition Tips

During transition times—those moments when we wait for the next thing to begin—we may think children aren't learning anything. But time and learning never stop. Often, great learning takes place while no formal instruction is going on—it's amazing what can happen!

Here are tips for maximizing those short times you have with preschoolers that fall outside the lines of the session schedule.

- **Use the Posters from *Posters & Props* to play several different games.** (1) Cover a poster with Post-it Notes. Children take turns removing one Post-it Note and guessing what is on the poster. (2) Play What's Bigger? Give a choice of two items shown on a poster. Children guess which item is bigger. (3) Play I Spy. Slowly describe something in one of the posters. Give the children a signal to make when they think they know what is being described. Child making the signal points to what you described.

Posters and Props

Kids will connect with the Bible content through these colorful, fun and memorable visual resources.



- **Repeat the Scripture verse together in fun ways.** Say a phrase from the verse and invite children to repeat it. To get the wiggles out, create a motion for each word or phrase, repeating the verse several times. Lead children to stand in a line, and invite each one to say the next word of the Scripture verse. (Try this as children line up to leave, and then pray briefly with them before they exit.)
- **Sing the group's favorite VBS song.** Add motions or practice the motions you already know. While waiting for children to gather, march around to the music. And freeze dance is fun anytime! While music plays, children move; when it stops, they freeze. On the final round, tell them to sit, and then stop music so that they freeze and all are ready to begin the next activity. Invite children to pretend to play the musical instruments they hear in the song.

Puppet

While Liguori Publications does not have a Labrador puppet available for sale, there are any number of Labrador puppets available on the Internet. Alternatively, you can use any puppet you want. The puppet does not need to be a Labrador!



- **Enlist the help of a fun puppet.** Sparky the Lab would be happy to take charge anytime you need for kids to focus! Children will gladly gather around to help the puppet repeat the Scripture verse (he has a hard time remembering some words). Play one of the previously described Bible verse activities with him. Kids also enjoy singing to the puppet to cheer him up when he's sad because they're leaving. The puppet can also play guessing games—he loves to describe things God made for children to guess!
- **Play simple "no-materials" games together.** Pretend to go on a scientific expedition: ride on a train or fly in a plane, imitate animals you see, feel the breeze, run, climb, tiptoe, etc. Make rhythm patterns for children to imitate, using your hands or rhythm instruments. Then combine that pattern with the words of the Scripture verse!
- **Use the tremendous power of a simple prayer time!** Involve kids as participants. Children can repeat each phrase of a prayer after you. They may fill in the blank as you pause and point individually to children to name something for which they are thankful. Children give ideas before the prayer ("What animal are you glad God made?"), which you then repeat in your prayer. Or, as you pray, thank God for each child by name, touching each one's shoulder. This helps children know that they matter to God!

Conversation Tips

Why do we need to guide conversation with young children? Don't we simply talk to them? Certainly there are many times when simple conversation is spontaneous. But guided conversation is a way to intentionally help children remember and recognize ways to apply the Scripture truth that is the focus of the day's activities.

What is guided conversation? Does it mean we spend every minute spouting Scripture verses, repeating the session's Daily Plan or talking only when a problem arises? No! Guided conversation is simply informal but intentional conversation in which we look for opportunities to connect what children are doing to the Bible story or Scripture verse. This is why we've included the **Talk About** section for each session's activity time. Relating the children's activities to the Scripture truths helps children understand the relationship between what they are doing and what the Bible says.

Step One: Know the session's Scripture Verse, Q&A and Bible Story. Memorize them so that you can share these ideas whenever natural opportunities and teachable moments occur.

Step Two: Listen. The biggest part of being a skilled leader is being a good listener! Place yourself at the



children's eye level, available to hear. Listening and observing provide you with helpful insight into each child's thoughts and feelings. When kids are absorbed in an activity or are playing together, don't take a break! Stay close. Watch and listen! You'll gain valuable clues about their interests, how they see themselves and what things might bother them. Resist the temptation to check your phone, talk to another adult, tune out a child's words or race ahead mentally.

Step Three: Relate the child's thoughts and feelings to God's Word! You might begin by commenting on what you see. "Kari, you helped Anil! You are obeying our Scripture verse. God tells us to love each other. Thank you!"

When you identify acts of kindness or helpfulness, children learn what it means to help one another, share or take turns. Tell what actions you saw immediately, before a child forgets the circumstances. Use the child's name. Often, children assume you are talking to someone else unless they hear their names!

Keeping the session's Q&A, Bible Story and Scripture Verse in mind, you are ready to listen, observe and comment on what you see kids doing. As you do, you will help them better understand God's love and how God's Word relates to their world.



Age-Level Characteristics

Sparky's Lab materials have been planned for children who are between three and six years of age with a ratio of one leader for every four to six children. (To adapt the program to include two-year-olds, have one leader for every three to four children). Each activity provides enough flexibility that young children can work successfully. To instruct children of a broader age span effectively, it's important to recognize and accept the wide individual differences in skills, abilities and interests. Regardless of the level at which a child works, always use the **Talk About** conversation ideas to link the child's interest in the activity with the Q&A, Daily Plan, Bible Story and Scripture Verse.

Bible Learning Activities

PREKINDERGARTNERS need free play and careful supervision. They love to play together but may not have developed the ability to cooperate! In whatever activities you lead, engage children in conversation related to the session as they work.

KINDERGARTNERS enjoy experimenting with a variety of materials and tools. Their increased verbal skills make play more purposeful and interactive.



PREKINDERGARTNERS use blocks in an exploratory manner, building simple structures. Occasionally extend children's play by offering specific building instructions as suggested in the session.

KINDERGARTNERS often plan what they will build and then use their constructions to play out imaginary events. They incorporate accessories such as toy cars and animals in their building.

PREKINDERGARTNERS are just beginning to use art supplies and enjoy trying out new materials. Encourage them to try new things, but don't expect beauty or design.

KINDERGARTNERS enjoy exploring the use of art materials but may find the process tedious after a short while. To sustain interest, offer encouragement and new ways of using the materials.

Bible Story Time

PREKINDERGARTNERS need a variety of brief activities during a large-group experience. Puppets provide visual interest, but keep puppet dialogue to a minimum. Because children do not have a history of experiences to help them recall an idea or object, and because they are still learning how to process verbal information, show pictures and objects to illustrate conversation and activities.

KINDERGARTNERS enjoy talking about things they have seen and done and will enjoy interacting with puppets. When the conversation relates to a common experience, most children are interested in hearing other children recount events. Avoid letting any one child dominate the conversation.

Because repetition is essential to children's learning processes, they need to hear and sing the same songs again and again. During VBS, repeat one or two songs for PREKINDERGARTNERS. For KINDERGARTNERS, it is appropriate to use all three of the songs suggested in the curriculum.

To accommodate the attention spans of PREKINDERGARTNERS, keep the Bible story very brief. Illustrate story action with the **Big Books** from *Posters & Props*. Ask simple questions to help children recall Bible facts that are obvious from the story and visuals.

Although KINDERGARTNERS have slightly longer attention spans, tell the Bible stories without elaboration. Use the **Big Books** from *Posters & Props*. Challenge their thinking skills by asking open-ended questions.

Recreation Game/Snack

PREKINDERGARTNERS usually play alone or with one or two other children. They enjoy running and throwing. Competitive games are inappropriate for this age level. Each day, select and use favorite games from any session.

KINDERGARTNERS also enjoy participating in noncompetitive games with several children. The simple games suggested in each session are special favorites of this age level. Because children at this age learn by repetition, play each game several times to maximize success!

All young children enjoy preparing and eating snacks. Keep food preparation simple, with plenty of adult supervision to ensure safety. Information about children who have food allergies should be noted, and helpers who will be supervising those children should be alerted to provide alternate snacks.

