

VBS 2026 GRADES 3–4 BASE CONFERENCE PLAN (1½ HOURS)

Purpose Statement

This 90-minute plan is designed to train and equip 3rd – 4th grade VBS leaders to teach Lifeway's *Illumination Station*.

Needed Resources

- (6) *VBS 2026 Grades 3–4 Bible Study Leader Guide* (005853154)
- *VBS 2026 Grades 3–4 Bible Study Leader Pack* (005853473)
 - Pack Items 1–5: “Days 1–5 Bible Story Pictures” — Display on focal wall.
 - Pack Item 6: “Illumination Station Banner” — Display on the focal wall. Follow the instructions on the footer of the item to prepare ahead of time. Add the prepared plastic bag (see pack item 21 below) to the lower right-hand corner.
 - Pack Item 7: “Illumination Station Banner Add-ons” — Prepare ahead of time following the instructions on the pack item footer.
 - Pack Item 8: “Theme Verse Poster” — Display on focal wall.
 - Pack Items 9–13: “Days 1–5 Bonus Verse Posters” — Add to the focal wall as the conference progresses.
 - Pack Item 14 — Cut out the “light” portion of each light bulb and use tape to attach vellum or parchment paper to the back side of the bulbs on the top half of the page. Cut out the marked and discard. Fold the piece in half along the dotted line and secure with tape.
 - Pack Item 15 — Print two copies on white cardstock and cut out.
 - Pack Item 21 — Copy the page on yellow cardstock. Cut out the light bulb and set aside. Place the rest of the pictures inside a gallon-size ziplock bag. Use a permanent marker to trace each picture onto the outside of the bag. Move the page around to spread out the pictures as desired. Remove the page with the pictures and place black paper inside the bag. Attach the light bulb to a large black craft stick or black strip of cardstock.
- (5) *VBS 2026 Kids Activity Books* (005853151)
- (5) *VBS 2026 Memory Makers* (005853571)
- *VBS 2026 Bible Study Location Sign* (005853617)
- *VBS 2026 Wall Art* (005853616)
- (2 packages) *VBS 2026 Writing Paper* (005853611)
- *VBS 2026 Floor Prints* (005853578)
- *VBS 2026 Visual Pack* (005853615)
- *VBS 2026 String Flags* (005853579)
- *VBS 2026 Inflatable Neon Sign* (005853775)
- *VBS 2026 Cups* (005853562)
- *VBS 2026 Bookmarks* (005853583) — Place in chairs ahead of time (1 individual bookmark per conferee)
- *VBS 2026 Theme Stickers* (005853572)
- *VBS 2026 Supersized Backdrop* (005853613)
- *VBS 2026 Glitter Beach Balls* (005853774)
- (2) *VBS 2026 Tablecloths* (005853575)
- (2 packages) *VBS 2026 Pencils Pkg* (005853585)
- *VBS 2026 Gospel Wristbands* (005853582)
- *VBS 2026 Gospel Guides* (005853630)
- *VBS 2026 Parent Guides* (005853631)

- *VBS 2026 Music for Kids* (005853747 or 005853488)
- *The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (CSB)* (005816332)
- *Illumination Station Devotional: Shining a Light on Jesus* (005854728)
- *CSB Outreach Bible for Kids* (005841718)
- "Spotlight's on You" Response Cards — Download from https://vbs.lifeway.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/vbs26_g3-4_lg_response.pdf. Print on white cardstock. Place in Day 4 Spotlight Bag (see below).
- Item 1: "Assignment Cards" — Print each assignment card provided at the end of this conference plan on neon cardstock. Cut apart and place each card in the corresponding Spotlight Bag (see below).
- (5) Solid white gift bags — Label each bag *Days 1–5* (one for each day) and the words *Spotlight Bag*. Fill each bag with one leader guide; 1-2 sheets of paper from the *VBS 2026 Notepad* (for taking notes); 1-2 *VBS 2026 Pencils*; a Kids Activity Book; a complete set of Memory Makers (bag and set of tags); the corresponding day's Assignment Card (item 1), "Bible Story Picture" (pack items 1–5), "Banner Add-on" (pack item 7), and "Bible Verse Poster" (pack items 9–13). Then, add the following items that are unique to each day's bag:
 - **Day 1 Spotlight Bag:** Pack item 16, 10 inflated yellow balloons (see below for preparation instructions), highlighter
 - **Day 2 Spotlight Bag:** Pack items 17–18, prepared glow sticks (see below for instructions; activate just before the conference begins)
 - **Day 3 Spotlight Bag:** Pack items 19–24
 - **Day 4 Spotlight Bag:** Pack item 14 (see above for preparation instructions), red crepe paper streamers, "Spotlight's on You" Response Cards (see above), flashlight
 - **Day 5 Spotlight Bag:** Pack items 25–28, red cellophane
- (2) Gallon-size ziplock bags
- Permanent marker
- Yellow cardstock
- Black paper/cardstock
- White cardstock
- Neon cardstock
- Neon index cards — Write each team name on a separate card (1 name per card): *Sunshine, Glow Stick, Flashlight, Campfire, and Night-light*. Create one per conferee.
- Neon acrylic paint or markers
- Black banner paper — Tear off five lengths of banner paper. Write one of the following headers on each banner using neon acrylic paint or neon markers: *Lifeway Curriculum, Room Setup/Decorations, The Schedule, Know your Kids, and Prepare your Heart & Mind*. Hang each in a different spot around the room.
- Black light flashlight and/or black light bar
- (10) Yellow balloons — Assemble "Bulb Bases" (item 15) as directed on the pack item and attach each one to the bottom of each balloon. Cut squares of cardstock and write one of the "Review Questions" or "Discussion Questions" from the "Day 1 Bible Story Picture" (item 1) on each square. Punch a hole in each card and use ribbon to tie one question to each balloon. Use a marker to write one word of the spotlight answer on each balloon. (*Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Son of God.*) You will have one extra balloon with no question or word on it.
- Garbage bag — Store yellow balloons inside.
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- White ribbon

- Glow sticks in 2 colors (8 of each color) — Write the letters *P-E-R-F-E-C-T!* on separate glow sticks of the same color (1 letter per stick). On the other colored sticks, write the letters of the word *O-R-D-I-N-A-R-Y* (1 letter per stick).
- Black craft stick or black strip of cardstock
- (1 roll) Red crepe paper streamers
- Vellum or parchment paper
- Flashlight
- Red cellophane
- Tap light
- Highlighter
- CD player or Bluetooth speaker for music

Room Setup

Arrange chairs facing the focal wall. If you are expecting a large crowd, you can arrange chairs into five teams ahead of time. Decorate the focal wall with a *VBS 2026 Supersized Backdrop*. On one side of the focal wall, display the daily “Bible Story Pictures” (pack items 1-5) and the “Illumination Station Banner” (item 6). Cover a table with a *VBS 2026 Tablecloth* and display the curriculum and other tabletop decorations. Arrange all five Spotlight Bags on the table and the extra inflatables in front of the backdrop. Drape *VBS 2026 String Flags* across the doorway, place the floor prints on the ground leading to the room, and hang up the *Bible Study Location Sign* at the entrance.

Teaching Steps

1. Welcome (5 minutes)

- Play Illumination Station music as conferees arrive.
- Greet every guest, welcoming them to “Spotlight Bible Study.”
- Instruct conferees to take a neon “team card” as they enter the room. This paper will group them into teams later in the conference.
- As conferees find their seats, guide them to write their name, church, and the date of their VBS on the bookmark in their chair. (They will use these later.)

2. Theme Overview (5 minutes)

- Introduce yourself and thank conferees for investing their time in such an important week—VBS!
- Tell them this year’s VBS theme is Illumination Station! Say: “Now that we know the theme, let’s review this year’s motto and Bible verse.”
- Say: “Some people are in the dark about who Jesus is. But at VBS we are going to shed light on the truth! We’re learning that Jesus is the Light of the world!”
- Play an adaptation of the “Know it” activity on page 13 in the leader guide. Place a tap light at the front of your teaching area and call one person from each team (sunshine, flashlight, campfire, glow stick, and night-light) to come forward on your signal. The team member who can tap her light and turn it on first will lead everyone in saying the Bible verse.
- Remind conferees that these tap lights will come in handy throughout VBS.
- Guide conferees to say the verse together on more time.
- Say: “It can’t be VBS without a VBS motto.” Lead the group to say the motto a few times: “Jesus is the Light of the world!”
- Open in prayer, asking God to guide this time together.

3. Make a Plan (20 minutes)

- Say: “In order to have a successful classroom, there are FIVE things we need or need to know to lead the classroom well.”
 - Play an adaptation of the “Start It” activity on page 12 in the leader guide. Turn on the black light flashlight and ask a helper to dim the lights. Ask a conferee to shine the black light around the room and lead the group to look for the FIVE black signs.
 - Give conferees a few seconds to point out all five signs glowing in the dark. Bring the lights back up to full light and review all FIVE things needed to lead a classroom well:
1. Lifeway Curriculum: Show and talk about the following materials, sharing general information about them and the specific needs they will meet. Let conferees know you will focus in detail on the leader guide and leader pack in a few minutes when you take a look at each day:
 - *VBS 2026 Grades 3–4 Bible Study Leader Guide*
 - *VBS 2026 Grades 3–4 Bible Study Leader Pack*
 - *VBS 2026 Kids Activity Books*
 - *VBS 2026 Memory Makers*
 2. Room Setup/Decorations: Talk about the importance of setting up your classroom for success.
 - Guide conferees to think about the following questions:
 - How big is the classroom? How many kids will you have?
 - What will the seating be like?
 - Which wall will be the focal wall?
 - How will you decorate the classroom?
 - Remind conferees that sometimes we do not set up our class for success. Ask: “Is it possible to set up the classroom like a racetrack? Absolutely! So be strategic about where things go.”
 - Think about how you set up your table and chairs. Placing tables and chairs in the middle could create a racetrack in the classroom for the kids, especially the boys.
 - Think through: Do you need tables and chairs? Only chairs? Or nothing at all?
 - Decorations will set the mood for the kids, but they can also be distracting if there are too many items.
 - Remind leaders that it’s not about the decorations but about the Bible truths and gospel presented each day.
 - Remind leaders to take a good look through the Lifeway VBS catalog for decorations.
 - Suggest that if the budget is tight, conferees look around their houses and yard. Mention that they may also partner with another church to share/borrow decorations.
 3. The Schedule: Remind conferees that to get started planning, they need to know their VBS schedule. Explain that the VBS Director will plan which format their VBS will use.
 - Describe potential rotation styles, such as moving their Bible study group to different rotations or staying in a self-contained classroom where all rotations occur in one spot for one group of kids.
 - Express the importance of knowing the length of time available to teach the Bible story lesson.

- Say: “‘Teach the Bible Study’ takes 30 minutes of core Bible-teaching time. Additional activity options exist if your Bible study time is longer than 30 minutes. If your teaching time is shorter than 30 minutes, you can customize the lesson to fit your needs.”
4. Know Your Kids: Say: “3rd and 4th graders have unique characteristics. Knowing how they learn best will set you up for success.”
 - Show leaders page 4 in the leader guide and review some characteristics.
 - Point out to conferees sections in the margins of the leader guide with “Leader Tips,” “Helpful Info,” and “Special Needs Adaptations.” Remind conferees that this will help them teach as they understand their kids better.
 5. Prepare Your Heart and Mind: Talk about the importance of Bible preparation and prayer leading up to VBS.
 - Say: “Pray for the kids in your class. There is a guide on page 4 in the leader guide.”
 - Say: “Leader Devotions are found before each lesson in the leader guide. Reading these will help prepare your heart and mind for the day.”
 - Stress the importance of being prepared for the daily Bible study. Say: “This leads us to the next part of our training as we look at the Bible Content.”
- 4. Teach: Bible Content (45 minutes)**
- Say: “We will now form five groups as we shine a *spotlight* on each day’s Bible content. The Bible teaching time is divided into five smaller portions with additional activity options listed at the end of each session. Each conferee received a card as they walked in. Use this card to find your team now.”
 - Lead conferees to form five teams according to the team name card they received when they came in.
 - Explain that each group will look at the Spotlight Question, Bible Story, Today’s Point and one activity from one of the portions of the lesson: Start It, Learn It, Know It, Live It, End It, or an Additional Activity. (Review p. 6 of leader guide to explain the purpose of each portion.)
 - Give each group a prepared Spotlight Bag with an assignment card.
 - After all teams have finished discussing in their small groups, call on each group to report to the large group. Start with Day 1 and work through to Day 5.
 - Remember to foster an environment that allows conferees to brainstorm and discuss the activities. Ask questions after each group report. For example, “Do you think this activity would work in your class?” or “Would you do anything differently?” Remember to discuss the importance of presenting the gospel throughout the week. Point out the “Sharing the Gospel” icon throughout the leader guide that mark opportunities every single day to engage with kids in gospel conversations.
 - Day 1: Jesus Is God’s Promised Son
 - Spotlight Question: Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Son of God.
 - Bible Story: Jesus Asked Who People Thought He Was (*Matthew 16:13-20*)
 - Today’s Point: Jesus is God’s promised Son.
 - Additional Activity Options: “God’s Big Idea” and “Prophets Shined a Light on Jesus” (pgs. 15–16)

- Day 2: Jesus Is God's Perfect Son
 - Spotlight Question: Was Jesus just an ordinary man? Jesus is the perfect Son of God who came to be the Savior of the world.
 - Bible Story: The Baptism of Jesus (*Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:1-11; John 1:29-34*)
 - Today's Point: Jesus is God's perfect Son.
 - "Start It" activity (pg. 19)
 - Day 3: Jesus Is the Powerful Son of God
 - Spotlight Question: Was Jesus just a teacher? Everything Jesus said and did showed that He is the powerful Son of God.
 - Bible Story: Jesus Performed Miracles (*Matthew 15:29-39*)
 - Today's Point: Jesus is the powerful Son of God.
 - "Learn It" Activity (pg. 26)
 - Day 4: Jesus Is the Proven Son of God
 - Spotlight Question: Was Jesus just someone who lived a long time ago? Jesus lived, died, and rose to life again to be our Savior, now and forever.
 - Bible Story: Jesus Died and Rose to Life (*Mark 14:43–16:7*)
 - Today's Point: Jesus is the proven Son of God.
 - "Know It" Activity (pg. 34)
 - Add an Additional Activity Option (p.36): "Shine a Light on the Gospel"
 - Discuss the importance of knowing how to lead a child to Christ.
 - Show gospel resources: *VBS 2026 Gospel Wristbands*, *VBS 2026 Gospel Guide*, *The Gospel: God's Plan for Me*, and Lifeway's Gospel Presentation Video (available on the Media Set included in the Worship Rally Pack and at <https://www.lifeway.com/en/shop/ministries/kids/gospel-presentation>.)
 - Day 5: Jesus Is God's Plan for Forgiveness
 - Spotlight Question: Why do I need to respond to Jesus? Jesus is the only way to receive God's forgiveness.
 - Bible Story: Peter Preached About Jesus (*Acts 2*)
 - Jesus is God's plan for forgiveness.
 - "Live It" and "End It" Activity (pg. 42)
5. **Continue the Connection** (5 mins)
- Say: "Research shows the important opportunities VBS gives adults to connect with and invest in kids and families."
 - Show conferees page 9 in the leader guide. Share with them that they may consider writing a note to each kid in their classes (using the *VBS 2026 Notecard* or *VBS 2026 Postcard*) at the end of VBS.
 - Show VBS resources that work well for follow up: *Illumination Station Devotional: Shining a Light on Jesus* and *Outreach Bible for Kids CSB*. Talk about how these are great resources to have on hand in case a child does not have a Bible at home, or you feel they are hungry to learn more about Jesus.
 - Ask conferees: "What have you done for follow-up that has worked well?" Allow them to share. Mention ideas that have worked for you as a leader and share any success stories.

- Ask: “As a VBS teacher, do you send anything home each day with the kids? How could you continue the connection of the Bible story in homes after every session?”

6. **Question & Answer** (5 mins)

- Allow time at the end to answer any questions.
- If there are no questions, invite conferees to share one tip that has worked well for those who have taught VBS Bible Study.

7. **Closing & Prayer** (5 mins)

- Talk about the importance of prayer. Remind conferees that it is not just about praying for the kids, but also for each other.
- Lead each conferee to find a new friend in the group, introduce themselves, and exchange bookmarks. Challenge them to commit to pray for each other in the months ahead.
- Close in prayer.

Day 1 Assignment Card

Jesus Is God's Promised Son

Spotlight Question:

What is The Spotlight Question of the day?

The Bible Story:

Look over the Bible story as a group.

Additional Activity Options: "God's Big Idea" and "Prophets Shined a Light on Jesus" (pgs. 15–16)

Using the materials in the Spotlight Bag, talk through these activities as a group.

Day 2 Assignment Card

Jesus Is God's Perfect Son

Spotlight Question:

What is The Spotlight Question of the day?

The Bible Story:

Look over the Bible story as a group.

"Start It" Activity (pg. 19)

Using the materials in the Spotlight Bag, talk through the activity as a group.

Day 3 Assignment Card

Jesus Is Powerful Son of God

Spotlight Question:

What is The Spotlight Question of the day?

The Bible Story:

Look over the Bible story as a group.

“Learn It” Activity (pg. 26)

Using the materials in the Spotlight Bag, talk through the activity as a group.

Day 4 Assignment Card

Jesus Is the Proven Son of God

Spotlight Question:

What is The Spotlight Question of the day?

The Bible Story:

Look over the Bible story as a group.

“Know It” Activity (pg. 34)

Using the materials in the Spotlight Bag, talk through the activity as a group.

Day 5 Assignment Card

Jesus Is God's Plan for Forgiveness

Spotlight Question:

What is The Spotlight Question of the day?

The Bible Story:

Look over the Bible story as a group.

“Live It” and “End It” Activities (pg. 42)

Using the materials in the Spotlight Bag, talk through the activities as a group.