

## WEEK 1 LESSON GUIDE



### BIG IDEA

We can shine  
God's light.

### BIBLE

**Jesus Clears the Temple Courts:**  
John 2:13–22; Matthew 5:14–16

## LARGE GROUP TIME

**How many of you like glow-in-the-dark stuff?** Me too! I love looking at how all those bright, neon colors shine through in the darkness. As we celebrate Easter together through the story of Jesus this month, we're going to be learning about how God's love lights up the darkness and how we can glow with God's love, too!

*(For this series, you may want to try adding blackout curtains or something similar to cover up some windows to get the room as dark as possible. Use blacklights and pass out glow bracelets and necklaces to kids so it's not uncomfortably dark.)*

**WHAT?** *What are we talking about today?*

### ACTIVITY | Light Up Balloons

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Divide kids into groups of five to eight. Give each group a glow-in-the-dark balloon that must be in the air at all times. To make it more challenging, have leaders go around and add one or two more balloons to each group.*
  - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *For kids who might be squeamish around balloons or have sensitivities to latex, try using inflatable LED glow-in-the-dark [beach balls](#) for this activity.*
- Great job at keeping your light shining high up in the air for everyone to see! Today, we'll talk about how we can shine and what that means.

### ACTIVITY | Glow Bottle Flip

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Prepare water bottles of different sizes about a third full with glow-in-the-dark water. You can use any one of the instructions [found here](#) to prep the water. Set up a few blacklight stations around the room with about five or more bottles at each where kids can engage in some bottle flip battles. You can do this activity by also placing an activated [glow stick into a water bottle](#). Set up regular bottles in the middle of the room for kids to practice their [bottle flips](#).*
  - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *If kids get frustrated with the bottle flip, set out large buckets that they can try to aim bottles into, roll bottles sideways to race against a friend, or knock over plastic bowling pins.*
- In today's Bible story, Jesus doesn't do any bottle flips, but he does do some table flips! We'll see what message Jesus was trying to send about a whole bunch of people who kind of lost their way in the dark.

## POLL | Light Facts

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Create a large “T” and an “F” on the ground using neon tape on opposite ends of the room. After reading each statement, have kids go stand on the “F” if they think it’s false and on the “T” if they think it’s true.
- **True or False: People need light to see.** *True!* We need even the smallest amount of light to see because we can’t see in complete darkness.
- **True or False: Light is a beam of energy that travels in a straight line.** *False!* Light travels in a wave.
- **True or False: Plants turn light energy from the sun into food.** *True!* Sun is food for plants.
- **True or False: It takes 45 seconds for light from the sun to reach Earth.** *False!* It actually takes about 8 minutes and 20 seconds!
- **True or False: There are real living things that glow in the dark.** *True!* Organisms like jellyfish, fireflies, and even some kinds of bugs have this thing called bioluminescence that allows them to glow.
- **True or False: Humans can naturally glow in the dark.** Ah, trick question! It’s mostly true, though. The human body does actually glow and emits low levels of light throughout the day, although we can’t really see it. There’s a different kind of light we can shine altogether . . . and we’ll talk about that now!

**SO WHAT?** *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

## SCRIPTURE | John 2:13–22 (Jesus Clears the Temple Courts)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Stand under a single spotlight (or have it pointed at you) as you read from the passage and tell the Bible story. Consider passing out glow sticks that they can light up to interact with you when prompted. Turn down the lights before you begin teaching.
  - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** If you are planning on doing some of the activities in semi-darkness, use glow tape or cones to warn about uneven floors or obstacles to prevent bumps or trips during your programming. For kids with low vision, you may want to provide flashlights they can use to navigate their way around the room.
- Now it’s time to turn the spotlight on the Bible story. Each time I say, “Scripture Spotlight!” wave your light in the air until I’m finished reading the Bible verses. **Are you ready? Let’s glow!**
- **Scripture Spotlight: John 2:13.**
  - Thousands of years ago, when Jesus, God’s son, was here on Earth, Jewish people would travel once a year to a city called Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.
  - Passover was a very special day when the Jewish people remembered their history and what God had done for them. A very important part of the celebration was to go to the temple and give an offering to honor God and to ask for forgiveness for things they had done wrong.
- **Scripture Spotlight: John 2:14.**
  - Let’s just say there was some pretty shady stuff happening at the temple, which was supposed to be where people could go to be close to God. Instead, some people had made it all about money. It seemed people were more concerned about selling things and exchanging money than they were about worshiping God.
- **Scripture Spotlight: John 2:15–17.**
  - Jesus was not so happy with what had become of the temple. He wanted to show the people how much they were missing the point of being at the temple in the first place.
  - **Who is the “father” Jesus is talking about?** It’s God! Jesus was reminding everyone that the temple was a place to meet with God and not a place for making money.

- **Scripture Spotlight: John 2:18–21.**

- When the people questioned who Jesus was and why he could drive people out of the temple courts like that, he explained exactly who he was by basically saying that he was far greater than even the temple. The temple was the place where they went to meet with God at the time, but soon they would learn that they could know God through Jesus. Jesus already knew that one day soon, he would die and come back to life in three days. By turning the focus back to God, he was showing that he really was the son of God.

- **Scripture Spotlight: John 2:22.**

- Of course, everyone missed the point completely. But later on, Jesus' closest disciples would remember all the things Jesus had said to them, and it would make them even more devoted to telling people about Jesus.
- What happened at the temple wasn't just about Jesus getting upset with all the money stuff that was going on at the church. It was about Jesus helping people realize that they were so fixated on going through the ceremonies and rituals that they forgot about God entirely. It's like they were stumbling in the dark. But if they followed Jesus, they would see that Jesus was directing them to God's light. When we step back from doing our own thing and let people see what Jesus is doing, the light shines even brighter.

### BIG IDEA | We can shine God's light.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Have large poster boards with one word of the Big Idea painted on each using [invisible blacklight paint](#). You will need a [blacklight](#) to reveal the message. Use [neon tape](#) to create a frame around the poster board. Have kids read each word together as you show them one poster at a time.
- What Big Idea will glow in the dark? **We can shine God's light!**

### ACTIVITY | Light Up The Room

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Have kids stand in a circle. Have one person stand in the middle. Have that person go stand in front of anyone in the circle and try to get the person to smile in ten seconds. If that kid smiles, have the kid go to the middle. If not, the person in the middle tries again with someone else. If you have a smaller group or kids are reluctant to go face-to-face with someone, have kids stay in their seats and take turns doing or saying something goofy. They get a point for everyone in the circle that smiles or giggles.
  - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Debrief with preteens after this activity and have them share some times when a smile lit them up somehow. Maybe it was a reassuring smile from someone when they were nervous, scared, or feeling alone. What can they do to be that light for someone else?
- Smiles have special powers. A smile can help someone feel at ease when they're feeling nervous. A smile can communicate that you understand how someone else is feeling. A smile can let someone know they're doing a good job. And best of all, smiles are highly contagious in a good way!
- We may feel like we don't have much to offer, just being kids and all, but a smile is a small thing that God can use. When we follow Jesus, we absorb the light he gives us and use it to light up a room. It's a simple but happy way that **we can shine God's light!**

### OBJECT LESSON | Covering The Light

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Bring in a lamp or a lantern and cover it up with sticky notes as you talk about ways people in the Bible story "covered" up the light of God. Remove one sticky note at a time as you talk about what Jesus did to remedy that.
- When we follow Jesus, we shine his light wherever we go. We see from the Bible story that when people did not follow Jesus, they covered up God's light. Because the light was not in them, they stayed lost and confused about what God wanted them to do.

- For example, when the money changers concentrated more on money than Jesus, they covered up some of the light.
- When the temple turned into a marketplace instead of a place to worship God, they covered up some more of the light.
- When they questioned Jesus and asked who he thought he was to be angry with them instead of recognizing him as the son of God, they covered up some of the light.
- Jesus wanted to make sure that God remained the center of everyone's focus. So when he overturned the tables and told everyone that he was even greater than the temple building, he was letting God's light shine through.
- When our focus is on Jesus, we can learn and grow and **we can shine God's light.**

### SCRIPTURE | Matthew 5:14–16

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read the passage aloud. Prepare a flashlight and small handheld mirrors for everyone to demonstrate light being reflected off each other.*
- God has given each one of us a light inside. It helps us stay close to God no matter where we are. We are asked to shine that light and not hide it.
- If this flashlight represents Jesus and the light he gives to us, what good would it be in the darkness if we just turned it off and put it in a drawer somewhere?
- Once I turn it on, it's definitely more useful. But it would shine even brighter if I shared this light with someone else (*Point the flashlight at someone's mirror.*) and that someone shared it with someone else (*Have that person angle their mirror to get the light into another mirror.*).
- **Let's see how many people we can share this light with.**
- All of our little lights shine so brightly that if we were on a hill, people would definitely see us! When they see us, they can follow that light straight to God. Following Jesus makes it possible for us to be a reflection of God's love. That's how **we can shine God's light.**

### VIDEO | Glow in the Dark, Episode 1

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play this week's episode of [Press Play](#).*

**NOW WHAT?** *What does God want us to do about it?*

### REFLECTION | How Can I Shine God's Light?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As kids reflect, you might want to switch off the lights or have them cover their eyes with their hands.*
  - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Spend extra time with preteens this week talking about the practical ways they can shine God's light in their context. Help them understand why this is something they should set out to do, and brainstorm together some things they can try right away.*
- Shining God's light sounds like a pretty tough job and it can be sometimes. But all it means is that wherever we go, we live in a way that lets others see how awesome God is. One way to do that is by being kind to others and letting them know we care about them.
- **Think about some ways that we might obscure – or cover up – God's light.** Maybe it's something you've done or you've seen someone else do.
- Any time God's light is not shining through, darkness is in charge. When it's dark, it's even harder to find our way. Light makes all the difference. It helps us see, it helps us live, and it lights up good paths for us to walk on.
- Jesus had to tell everyone to leave the temple courts who were not honoring God. Sometimes shining God's light means speaking up when things are not right.

- Jesus' light is meant to shine for everyone, and that makes all the difference. When our friend needs someone to listen to them, when our families need our help, or when we aren't sure which way to go, **we can shine God's light.**

## RESPONSE | Embrace The Light

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give each kid two glow bracelets. Have kids write the Big Idea on a piece of clear tape or label with a permanent marker. On another piece, have them write the name of someone they can shine God's light on by serving them this week. Have them wrap both labels around each of the two glow bracelets. You could also give each kid an unopened glow bracelet to take with them and give to the person they named.
  - ✦ **PRETEEN HACK:** Listen to [this song](#), "Lights Shine Bright" (Toby Mac feat. Hollyn), and have preteens point out the different ways the song talks about shining God's light. What do they think the songwriter means with some of these lyrics? What do they feel challenged to do?
- God's light does more than shine on the things in the darkness. It's also powerful. It has the power to save, the power to give us knowledge, and the power to help. So when we say, **"We can shine God's light,"** it means God gives us the power to be a helper and show others what love looks like.
- **Who are some people you can shine God's light and love on this week? How will you shine?**
- I'm going to give you two glow-in-the-dark bracelets. One is to remind you that you have a light inside given to you by God. The other is to remind you to share your light with that person you just thought of!

## MEMORY VERSE | Psalm 27:1a (NIV)

- **"The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear?"**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Project or print out the [memory verse graphic](#) provided in your resource folder, and have kids copy down the memory verse on a blank piece of paper using highlighters. Pass around a blacklight or use blacklight stations for them to see the words illuminated on their paper. For younger kids, consider providing a printout of the verse with only the word "light" missing that they need to fill in.

## PRAYER

- God, thank you for shining your light in our world. Help us to shine your light by reflecting your love and kindness wherever we go. Make us bold so that we may shine that light bright and not hide it. Amen.

## SMALL GROUP TIME

### DISCUSSION

- **SCRIPTURE QUESTIONS**
  - **What did Jesus find in the temple courts?** People were selling cattle, sheep, and doves and exchanging money.
  - **What did Jesus do about it?** He made a whip out of cords and drove the people and animals away. He overturned the tables.
  - **Why did these things upset Jesus?** They were turning God's house into a market, and they were focused on the wrong things.
  - **Read Matthew 5:16. Why should we let our light shine?** So that others may see and know God.
- **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**
  - **What is one way you've seen someone shine God's light?**
  - **What are some things that might get in the way of shining God's light?**
  - **What is one way you can shine God's light this week?**

**ACTIVITY | Salt Art Painting**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Have kids create their own light-themed salt art by drawing a design (light bulb, sun, lamp, cross, or the word "light") on dark paper using school glue. Have them sprinkle salt on the glue and shake off the excess into a bowl that others can use. Saturate a paintbrush with bright watercolor paint and lightly touch the salt. The color will spread! (See a worked example [here](#).)
- Jesus calls us both the salt and the light of the world. Just like how salt seasons and preserves and how light clears the way in the darkness, we can make a positive difference in the world. Remember **we can shine God's light** and help others know God!