

LIGHT OF THE WORLD LESSONS

A guide for Children's Ministry



Session One

You are the light of the world. Matthew 5:14

Who and What is the River City Faith Network?

Jesus said: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others."

Our light shines better when we shine together!

Leader Prep

Gather:

- A computer and a tv (with connections) OR a computer, projector and screen (with connections) OR a computer
- Your location's wifi password
- Copies of RCFN church list – one per child
- Pencils – one per child
- Copies of "Let's work together!" – one small card per child

Before the lesson:

- Cue up the RCFN video for the day – Today's video is about the River City Faith Network as a whole; this video is available on the River City Faith Network website, richmondbaptist.org/weekofprayer
- Place copies of the church list with the pencils near where you'll leading the group.
- Cut apart the "Let's work together!" cards

As children arrive, invite them to join you in the teaching area. Ask them to sit comfortably so you can share a Bible verse and a video with them.

For you to say:

"The next 5 sessions together will help us learn a few things: First, we'll learn a new Bible verse together; Second, we'll learn about a network our churches might be a part of; Third, we'll learn about the Richmond area and where your church is in this area"

"Listen to these verses from the Bible. These verses are part of a story about Jesus which is found in the book of Matthew, chapter 5:

¹⁴ "You are the light that gives light to the world. A city that is built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ And people don't hide a light under a bowl. They put it on a lampstand so the light shines for all the people in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, you should be a light for other people."

Jesus was telling his disciples what it's like when people love God and follow Jesus. Things in this world aren't always the way we think they should be. But Jesus was saying that when things in the world are as God means them to be, the poor will have enough, the sad will be comforted, and those who work to be peaceful will bring peace where they are. All that work is what happens when we follow Jesus, and that's what it means to be a light in the world. There's a lot of sadness and a lot of people who don't have enough and a lot of people who don't act in peaceful ways, and all those things feel dark and heavy. But when people truly love God and follow Jesus in ways that help people know God loves them, THAT is when the light starts to shine.

As these lessons continue, we'll hear the main verse we're learning again and again, so that when these lessons are finished, you might even have the verse memorized! Here is the verse by itself, so you can start remembering and thinking about as we finish our work today:

You are the light of the world. Matthew 5:14

Ok - let's say it together. "You are the light of the world. Matthew 5:14"

Now, sit tight as we watch a video about the River City Faith Network. This is a group of people that you may never have heard of, but their work has been going on since a long time before you were even born! This group – or network – is a whole bunch of churches in the Richmond area that work together to help God's light shine in places that would be hard to do on our own. Let's hear about what River City Faith Network is and how they do their great work in Richmond.

****Play video****

FIND YOUR CHURCH - Since you now know a little about River City Faith Network and you know that different churches make up the Network, let's do some digging to find if THIS church is part of the Network! I'm going to give each of you a list of Network churches and a pencil. Keep your paper face down. When I say "GO," turn your paper over and read through the list to see if you can find THIS church on the list. If or when you find the name of THIS church on the list, circle it with your pencil and THEN put one finger over your lips and one hand in the air so I know you are finished. Ready? GO! {note: Some younger children will likely need help with this activity.}

Once children have found the church's name on the paper, ask children to put the papers and pencils on the floor and listen for their next instructions.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER – Now that you know if your church is part of the River City Faith Network (RCFN), it's time to think about working together like the churches in the RCFN.

*What are some ways people work together? (receive answers as they are offered, thanking the children for each one)

*What are some things that are hard to do by yourself that are EASIER to do together? (encourage and receive answers as they are offered, thanking the children for each one)

Give each child a "Let's work together" card. Say: "You just received a card that says, 'Let's work together!' I want you to think about how you might offer this card to someone today or this week. Think about someone who might need your help doing chores at home or someone in your neighborhood who might need your help in their yard. When you have thought about who you might share your card with, use your pencil to write the name or names on the card to help you remember. Then, when you see that person, you can give them the card and tell them you want to work together to make the work easier."

One way we can work together this week is to each bring some money to support the work of Camp Alkulana, one of the ministries of the River City Faith Network. If you don't have a lot to give, that's ok! We each can bring a little and all the little bits together can make a big difference for campers this summer. We'll learn some more about Camp Alkulana later this week so you'll know where your money is going and how it will help!

PRAY – Ask children to return pencils to the containers, pick up their church lists and cards, and hold them quietly while you pray.

"Thank you, God, for people who work together in Jesus' name. Amen."

Session Two

You are the light of the world. Matthew 5:14

What and who is Oregon Hill Baptist Center?

Jesus said: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others."

Our light shines better when we shine together!

Leader Prep

Gather:

- A computer and a tv (with connections) OR a computer, projector and screen (with connections) OR a computer
- Your location's wifi password
- Flashlights, one per group of 5 students
- One piece of paper per group
- One pencil or pen per group
- Copies of the theme verse, cut into pieces
- Copies of pictures of Maria Lynn and Jennifer Turner
- Colored pencils, markers, or crayons – enough for children to share
- Copies of "encouragement for the journey" cards

Before the lesson:

- Cue up the RCFN video for the day – Today's video is about the work of the Oregon Hill Baptist Center; this video is available on the River City Faith Network website, richmondbaptist.org/weekofprayer
- "Hide" the theme verse pieces around the teaching area to be found with flashlights
- Place pictures of missionaries near teaching area
- Place copies of the encouragement cards and coloring utensils where children will use them

As children arrive, invite them to join you in the teaching area. Ask them to sit comfortably so you can share a Bible verse and a video with them.

For you to say:

Yesterday we started learning two things: 1) a Bible verse and 2) about a network of churches that work together to help shine Jesus' light all over our city. Let's see if we can remember the Bible verse AND the name of the network.

Scavenger Hunt - To help us remember the verse, we're going on a silent flashlight scavenger hunt. I'm going to put you into groups of 5 to hunt for the words of the verse. If you see a word of the verse, "touch" the light of your flashlight onto the word, then one person in your group can write the word on your group's paper. You are looking for eight (8) words and one set of numbers. When you have all the pieces of the verse written on your paper, sit down with your group and see if you can unscramble the verse. When everyone is done working, we will say the verse together.

(after a brief time of working, gather groups back in the teaching area)

Let's see what you came up with. We can all try to say the verse together.

You are the light of the world. Matthew 5:14

Great job! We're continuing to learn the words AND the meaning. Remember? Jesus told his disciples (his followers and friends) that they are giving light to the world by loving and helping people in Jesus' name.

Yesterday we learned about a network of churches that works together to help shine Jesus' light all over our city. Does anyone remember the name of the network we're learning about this week? (receive all answers, but, if after a short time no one can remember River City Faith Network, you can offer the letters RCFN and ask if they remember what the letters stand for)

The River City Faith Network is led by Executive Director Mission Strategist Maria Lynn (show picture of Maria Lynn). Maria works with the churches of the network and the Baptist centers the network supports, making sure the churches have what they need to work together and that the center directors have the support they need to do their jobs in their communities. OUR part of the network is supporting the work of the Centers and Camp Alkulana through different projects and activities.

The first Baptist Center we'll learn about this week is Oregon Hill. The Oregon Hill Center is led by director Jennifer Turner (show Jennifer's picture). Let's watch and learn about the ministries of Oregon Hill Baptist Center.

Play video

Now that we know a little more about the work and ministry of the Oregon Hill Baptist Center, we will do a project that will help Jennifer as she works to meet the needs of the unhoused people in our community.

Encouragement for the Journey – Many of the people who visit the Oregon Hill Baptist Center are unhoused. A lot of them are treated badly by people they pass on the street. Many of them are treated like they are invisible. People may not mean to be unkind or treat our unhoused neighbors badly, but it might happen because people don't know what to say or how to help. One of the things Jennifer needs the most help with is to provide emergency support bags for the unhoused neighbors who come to Oregon Hill Center. One way we can help is to encourage the neighbors who receive the bags. A little encouragement and a pretty picture can help someone feel like there IS someone in the world who loves them and thinks they are valuable.

When we are making these cards, please remember that you are making this for someone special. That means you should be giving time and care to your work; coloring carefully and thoroughly makes a much nicer gift for someone who really needs it.

*Guide children to the coloring sheets and utensils. Talk with them while they work, encouraging them in their work.

When all are finished, invite children back to the teaching area for prayer.

Pray

*This is an echo prayer. I will pray a short phrase and then you can echo me. Let's pray.

Dear God, (dear God)
Please help this little gift (please help this little gift)
Brighten someone's day (brighten someone's day)
And help them know (and help them know)
That you love them very much (that you love them very much)
Amen. (Amen.)

Session Three

You are the light of the world. Matthew 5:14

Who and What is the Church Hill Baptist Center?

Jesus said: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others."

Our light shines better when we shine together!

Leader Prep

Gather:

- A computer and a tv (with connections) OR a computer, projector and screen (with connections) OR a computer
- Your location's wifi password
- Pencils – one per child
- Picture of Glinda Ford
- Copies of "Chain of light" - one per child
- Scissors – one pair per child
- Multiple shared staplers (one per group of 4 or 5 children) OR glue sticks (one per child)

Before the lesson:

- Cue up the RCFN video for the day – Today's video is about the work of the Church Hill Wellness Center; this video is available on the River City Faith Network website, richmondbaptist.org/weekofprayer
- Place maps and stars in work area
- Place "Chain of light" copies, scissors, fasteners in work area

As children arrive, invite them to join you in the teaching area. Ask them to sit comfortably so you can share a Bible verse and a video with them

For you to say:

We're continuing to learn about our partnership with the River City Faith Network. A "partnership" means people working together, each giving or bringing what they have to the relationship. In the River City Faith Network, sometimes a person or group has a lot of time to give and sometimes another person has a lot of money to give and sometimes another person has a lot of talents to give. They all work together to make sure the light of Jesus is shared with those around our city. Don't forget that we're working together this week to bring an offering to help support the work and ministry at Camp Alkulana!

Make a verse reminder:

Today we'll make a chain to help us continue to learn our mission verse for this week. The links or pieces of the chain connect to each other to make the full verse, just like the pieces of the Network connect to each other to help all over our city.

Make sure you write your name on one of the links of your chain so you can find your verse at the end of our time together.

Cut the words apart on the lines, put the verse in order, loop the strips to connect them with stapler or glue. Set aside during the video.

Now that we've completed our verse reminder, let's watch another video about the River City Faith Network. Today we'll learn about Church Hill Christian Wellness Center and its Director, Glinda Ford. (show Glinda's picture)

Play video

Community wellness is a big part of the work of the Church Hill Christian Wellness Center. Taking care of the bodies and minds God made is an important part of being people who love God and follow Jesus. Let's spend some time taking care of US.

Stretch your body, rest your mind

Slowing our bodies and our minds can be part of what the Bible calls "sabbath" or what we call "rest." It may feel funny at first to be still and think and move slowly, maybe because we don't have a lot of quiet slowness in our lives. But God made us to need that. Our bodies are healthier and more able to do the things that help others when we take time to rest and re-set.

We're going to practice some slow breathing and gentle stretching that will help our bodies and minds rest a bit. Even if it feels kind of funny, please be kind and respectful of your teachers and each other by being quiet during our sabbath time.

Leader: Find a comfortable place to sit or lay on the floor. Once you have your place, sit quietly and listen.

Now, take a deep breath in for 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 and HOLD IT for 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . and release it slowly and quietly for 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5.

From where you're sitting or laying, slowly reach your arms up to the ceiling, stretching gently, opening your fingers wide, and holding that stretch for 1 . . . 2 . . . 3. Now slowly lower your arms and let your hands rest on your belly.

Let's take another deep breath in for 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . and HOLD IT for 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . and release it slowly and quietly for 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5.

Now, from where you're sitting or laying, slowly cross your left arm across your body and reach as far as you can over your right arm. Hold that gentle stretch for 1 . . . 2 . . . 3. Now slowly return your left arm to your side.

Next, from where you're sitting or laying, slowly cross your right arm across your body and reach as far as you can over your left arm. Hold that gentle stretch for 1 . . . 2 . . . 3. Now slowly return your right arm to your side.

Last set of breathing. Let's take another deep breath in for 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 and HOLD IT for 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . and release it slowly and quietly for 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5.

It may not seem like much, but learning how to care for your body and your mind is an important part of taking care of what God has given you. Glinda Ford works hard to help her neighbors in Church Hill learn how important healthy bodies and minds are. That's one way she is shining Jesus' light in our city.

Pray

Before we go, let's pray for Glinda Ford and the Church Hill Wellness Center.

God, thank you for the wonderful way you have made our bodies. Thank you for Glinda and all the ways she helps her neighbors in Church Hill learn to lead healthy lives in body, mind, and spirit. Amen.

Session Four

You are the light of the world. Matthew 5:14

Who and What is the South Richmond Baptist Center?

Jesus said: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others."

Our light shines better when we shine together!

Leader Prep

Gather:

- A computer and a tv (with connections) OR a computer, projector and screen (with connections) OR a computer
- Your location's wifi password
- Picture of Wesley Garrett
- Copies of Richmond area map, one per child
- Star stickers – gold, green, red, blue, silver – one of each color per child OR markers in five different colors, access to one of each color per child
- A LARGE version of a map of the Richmond area – you'll be marking it with large stars in the same colors you're providing for the children
- Large stars in the same colors as those provided for the children
- Pencils – one per child
- Flashlight for a leader to use in Flashlight Tag

Before the lesson:

- Cue up the RCFN video for the day – Today's video is about the work of the South Richmond Baptist Center; this video is available on the River City Faith Network website, richmondbaptist.org/weekofprayer
- Prepare the learning area, providing maps and star stickers for each child.
- Investigate how to dim the lights without turning them all the way off.

As children arrive, invite them to join you in the teaching area. Ask them to sit comfortably so you can share a Bible verse and a video with them

Play Flashlight Tag

We're going to review our mission memory verse by playing Flashlight Tag. The leaders will dim the lights and you'll walk around the room. If you are "tagged" by the flashlight, you will need to say the first word of the verse. Each time someone is tagged, they will say the next word in the verse, and so on until all the verse is said.

Ready? (dim lights and proceed with play – play several rounds or until everyone has had a chance to say a word)

It's time to learn about our last Baptist Center. Let's watch and learn about the work and ministry of the South Richmond Baptist Center and its Director, Wesley Garrett.

Play video

Where is it?

Now that we've seen four videos about our River City Faith Network, let's see if we can use a map to locate and mark the parts we've learned about. We're looking for the River City Faith Network office, which is located in the Baptist General Association of Virginia office building in the city's Near West End. We're looking for the Oregon Hill Baptist Center, which is located at Pine Street Baptist Church in the city, near VCU. We're looking for Church Hill Christian Wellness Center, which is located the city's East End. And we're looking for the South Richmond Baptist Center, which is located in the very south of the city. We will mark our big map so you can look at it and mark your own map. (younger children will need help with this activity!)

Now that we've all marked our maps, what do you notice about where the centers are located? (welcome and affirm all answers) Do you know where your church is located? Which Center is closest to your church?

You should have one star left. What do you think that one is for? (receive and affirm all answers, but if they don't offer Camp Alkulana, guide them to that) Camp Alkulana is not IN the city. Not even close. We're going to put that last star on the top left corner of your paper . . . we can't even SEE where Camp Alkulana is on this map! When we come back tomorrow, we'll learn about where camp is and what happens there. But for now, when you're finished with your map, please write your name on it and give it to one of your leaders.

Pray

Before we go, let's pray for the leaders we've learned about so far this week. Let's pray.

God, thank you for Maria Lynn and Jennifer Turner and Glinda Ford. Thank you for the ways they help us shine the light of Jesus around our city. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Session Five

You are the light of the world. Matthew 5:14

Who and What is Camp Alkulana?

Jesus said: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others."

Our light shines better when we shine together!

Leader Prep

Gather:

- A computer and a tv (with connections) OR a computer, projector and screen (with connections) OR a computer
- Your location's wifi password
- Picture of Beth Wright
- Pencils – one per child
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils for shared group use
- Copies of "You are the light of the world!" – at least one per child, with more available
- Yarn, embroidery floss, or lacing cord or craft stems
- Beads
- Scissors

Before the lesson:

- Cue up the RCFN video for the day – Today's video is about the work of Camp Alkulana; this video is available on the River City Faith Network website, richmondbaptist.org/weekofprayer
- Cut apart "You are the light of the world!" and place copies along with coloring utensils in the work area.
- Cut bracelet cord/floss/yarn into 1-foot lengths.
- Practice making a bracelet!
 - Craft stems are easiest to use, followed by lacing cord.
 - Make sure to have enough beads – count on each child using at least a dozen beads. For 100 children, you'd need 1200 beads.

As children arrive, invite them to join you in the teaching area. Ask them to sit comfortably so you can share a Bible verse and a video with them

For you to say

I'm pretty sure you've memorized our mission theme verse. Let's see if we can say it together:

You are the light of the world. Matthew 5:14

GREAT! YOU, my friends, ARE the light of the world. You have worked hard this week to learn and share what you've learned about how Jesus' love and light shines through each of us, especially when we work together in His name.

We've been learning about the work of the River City Faith Network and we've seen and heard about all the Centers in the Richmond area. We've been working together to bring offerings to help support the work that happens at Camp Alkulana, and it's FINALLY time to learn about all that happens at Camp! We'll be learning about Camp Director, Beth Wright (show Beth's picture), and how we minister together to all the campers who attend camp each summer.

Play video

So, now you know that not ALL the work of the River City Faith Network is IN Richmond. Isn't it neat how working together can help us shine Jesus' light so FAR?! That's why yesterday you put that last star so far to the edge of your map!

Today we have two activities to help us support and remember the work of Camp Alkulana. You can choose which activity you'd like to do OR you can choose to do both activities.

You are the light of the world!

We are already working together to help the work that goes on at camp – our offerings will go a long way to supporting camp and campers and staff. Another way we can work together to support camp is to write a note of encouragement to the staff and campers. Our work area has some encouragement cards for you to color and sign. Please work carefully so that you are showing love and respect for the people who will receive the cards!

Friendship Bracelets

Campers at Camp Alkulana often make bracelets as an activity. Today we're going to make a bracelet to help us remember what we've learned about Camp Alkulana and to remind us to pray for the work there whenever we see or wear our bracelet. There are materials in our work area.

Pray

Thank you for your good work this week. Will you pray with me as we finish our week together?

Dear God, thank you for the ways we are learning to work together. We pray for Maria Lynn, Jennifer Turner, Glinda Ford, Wesley Garrett, and Beth Wright. Help them be safe and stay healthy. Help them be wise and kind as they help us do your work in Richmond. We pray for all the people who are helped by the work of the River City Faith Network, that they would really know how much You love them. Thank you for letting us shine Jesus' light all around our city! Amen.