

WEEK 1 LESSON GUIDE

HOW TO...

BIG IDEA

Jesus taught us how to make a difference.

BIBLE

Salt and Light: Matthew 5:13-16;
Isaiah 58:1-12

LARGE GROUP TIME

Welcome, everyone to *How To . . .*! This month, we are going to learn *how* to do a bunch of different things, but mostly *how* to live the way Jesus teaches us. Let's kick things off with a fun how-to video!

[Before beginning the program each week, share a fun "How-To" video with the kids. [Here's a video](#) we like, but feel free to show something fun you've come across recently! It can be anything from a crafting or building project to a cool "life hack" using ordinary things.]

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

MUSIC | Worship

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** You can lead kids in worship with any songs of your choice, but here are some suggestions that go along with this month's theme. Make sure you have purchased any licenses required to play or perform these songs. For more information, [read this!](#)
 - "Light of the World" (Hillsong Kids)
 - "Blueprint" (Lifeway Kids Worship)
 - "Love Everybody" (North Point Kids)
 - "Freedom is Here" (Covenant Kids)
- ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** You can choose to lean in to the "How To" theme by introducing a TikTok style dance move that preteens can learn together. Check out a compilation (like [this one](#)) for ideas, or choose something more current or familiar for your group.

ACTIVITY | How to Make Dinner

- There are many things that we have to learn how to do as we grow older. From basic skills like writing or tying your shoelaces to advanced ones like learning an instrument or coding, there are endless things we can learn how to do.
- So today we will be partnering with a friend and learning how to make dinner . . . but with a fun twist!

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask four kid volunteers to come to the front. Explain that they will partner up to make a spaghetti dinner out of the yellow, red, and brown modeling dough provided. The catch is, for each pair, person A will stand in the front with their hands on their hips, while person B will stand behind person A and slide their arms through the gaps so that they are now person A's hands. Give each team yellow, red, and brown modeling dough, and a plate. Have person A read each step of the instructions aloud and guide person B. Let the group judge which dinner they like best!
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Since preteens might be more self-conscious and protective of personal space, they might not like having to be in such close contact with others. One alternative is to blindfold the person who is modeling dough with their hands and have the other student direct them verbally. Or consider giving older kids less direct instruction to allow for more creativity. So instead of giving them the step-by-step instructions, just tell them to prepare a dinner for two and see what they come up with!
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** For kids who have sensory concerns, have everyone get the amount of playdough needed and have them follow along with the leader's instructions.
- Okay maybe this is not the best way to prepare a meal . . . which goes to show that there are so many more "how-to"s we can learn!

ACTIVITY | How to Spot the Difference

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask a volunteer to come to the front. Have them strike any pose they like and freeze in that position. Give the audience 10 seconds to study how the volunteer is posed, then have the audience close their eyes. You will slightly change the volunteer's pose by moving a part of their body (turning the head, or bending an elbow). Have the audience open their eyes and challenge them to spot the difference!
- Sometimes we might feel like what we do doesn't make that big of a difference. But when it comes to following Jesus' teachings, even a small thing we do differently can end up making a big difference.
- Let's learn more about what Jesus wanted everyone to do differently back in the day, and what that means for us today!

QUESTION | What can't you live without?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give kids time to think of one thing they can't live without. Then have them stand up from where they are sitting. Ask a volunteer to be the first to share and have them jump one time as they give their answer. As they say their answer, they will then place their hand on the shoulder of the person next to them to indicate that it is now their turn. That person will also jump one time as they say their answer, but the first person also has to jump with them! Repeat this until everyone is connected with a hand on the shoulder and is jumping together!
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Preteens might be at a point where they start thinking of material things more and might give answers such as "my phone." Don't judge — in fact, the average person touches their phone 2,617 times a day! So give them grace and a safe space to share and maybe discuss why they believe those items are essential to them.
- **What is something in your life that you absolutely need?**
- **If you didn't have it, then how would your life be different?**
- All the things you listed make a big difference in your life! I wonder how we can make a big difference in other people's lives. We'll have to stay tuned for our Bible story to find out!

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

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 5:13-16 (Salt and Light)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Each week for the Bible story, set up your space with a table, tablecloth, and stools. Revamp a used rectangular box to look like a [subscribe button](#), and place it in your teaching area. For this week's story from Matthew 5:13-16, place a salt shaker, a plate of French fries, a flashlight, and a bowl in the prop box. Put the prop box under the table. Ask a volunteer to play Matthew. Wear the "Howie" and "Matthew" name tags if using them.*
- **Howie:** Hello and welcome to my video channel, *How To*, where we get to . . . you guessed it . . . learn How To do stuff. I'm Howie Doothings. I love learning how to do all sorts of things, but I'm most interested in how to live the way God wants us to. So to help us with today's "How To," please welcome my friend Matthew, who was a disciple of Jesus!
- **Matthew:** Thanks for having me Howie! Excited to be here!
- **Howie:** Thanks for coming! Now let's get down to it! You followed Jesus for a very long time. What are some things that he taught you that stayed with you?
- **Matthew:** Well, there was this one time Jesus gave this really deep message — I think you guys call it the Sermon on the Mount — and I wrote down what I could remember in my book. If you look at chapter 5, I jotted down something Jesus said about salt and light.
- **Howie:** Salt and light? Was Jesus opening a lamp and seasoning store or something?
- **Matthew:** Not quite. But Jesus wanted us to make a difference in the world, just like salt and light do. Well, let me start by showing you how they don't make a difference. Let's start with salt. *[Indicate salt shaker and French fries.]* Here I have a salt shaker and some French fries. Go ahead, sprinkle as much salt onto these fries as you like, and dig in!
- **Howie:** Don't mind if I do! *[Shake salt over fries. Take a few bites and pretend that you can't taste the salt.]* That's weird. I sprinkled quite a bit of salt, but the fries don't taste salty at all!
- **Matthew:** It's like the salt . . . didn't make a difference . . . am I right? That's because I gave you some salt that lost its flavor!
- **Howie:** Why would you do that? That kind of defeats the purpose — salt is supposed to make a difference in flavor!
- **Matthew:** Exactly. Now, check out what Jesus said in Matthew 5:13 *[Read Matthew 5:13]*. Like Jesus said, there's no use for flavorless salt . . . buh bye! *[Toss salt into a trash bin.]*
- **Howie:** Okay so salt is only useful as long as it has its flavor. What did Jesus say about light?
- **Matthew:** For that, we're going to have to turn off some lights. But don't worry, I have my trusty flashlight here with me. *[Turn on the flashlight, then turn off some lights. Be mindful of kids who may be afraid of the dark.]* I also have this bowl that I'm going to put right on top of my flashlight.
- **Howie:** Hey, why did you cover it? Now it's harder to see!
- **Matthew:** Uh huh! The light is no good in the dark if we hide it away. That's why Jesus says this in Matthew 5:16 *[Read Matthew 5:16]*.
- **Howie:** Oh, I get it! So we are like salt and light! We need to go out and give people a taste or a glimpse of what it's like to live for God. That way, through us, they'll want to know God, right?
- **Matthew:** You got it, Howie. Jesus taught us that we should let everyone know that we are followers of Jesus and to let it show through the things we say and do.
- **Howie:** Well, thank you so much for being with us today, Matthew. We all learned so much about how to make a difference the way God wants us to! Join us next time for more How-Tos with Howie Doothings!

BIG IDEA | Jesus taught us how to make a difference!

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Purchase a pull-string [question mark piñata](#) (or [make one](#) out of a regular box and draw a question mark on it) and hang it up in your ministry space. Write the Big Idea on a piece of paper, fold it up, and attach it to a piece of string. Then tape the paper to the back of the piñata so kids can't see it, but let the string hang down. When it's time for the reveal, yank on the string attached to the paper, so that the paper drops. Allow a volunteer to retrieve it and read it aloud. (You'll use the piñata the intended way in Week 4.)
- Today's Big Idea will tell us the How-To of the day! I wonder what it could be?
- **Jesus taught us how to make a difference!**

VIDEO | How To . . . , Episode 1

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

ACTIVITY | In A Different Light

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask for three kid volunteers to come to the front. Show the volunteers a picture of a [salt shaker](#) or show a picture of a [light bulb](#). Next, have them draw replicas of the pictures using varying levels of light – complete darkness, a really bad light source, and with all of the lights on. For complete darkness, we suggest finding a refrigerator box where darkness is achievable and have kids go in one at a time. Give each kid one minute to try the activity with the varying levels of light. Once they are done, have them look at their drawing and assess which one was the optimal one to complete the activity.
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** Have everyone do this activity together. Show each of the images either on a projector, tablet, or printed. If on a projector or tablet, show the image in its dimmest light setting, and have kids try to draw the picture. Then turn the brightness up and have them try again. If printed out, turn off the lights and make the room as dark as possible for the first attempt, then turn all the lights on and make the room as bright as possible for the second attempt.
- Based on how your drawings look, it must have been really hard to draw while being completely in the dark! But, wow! When you were able to see while drawing, it proved to be way easier!
- Having the light makes all the difference to do what we need to do! We all have jobs to do that are given to us by God, like loving everyone and telling them about Jesus. That's what it means to "shine our light." When we do the things God wants us to do, we can shine brightly and help others see what following Jesus looks like.

ACTIVITY | How To Taste the Difference

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Prepare one pitcher of plain water and a second pitcher of lightly salted water. Have two sets of cups of different colors or designs available to use. Pour a small amount of plain water into cups of one color and a small amount of salted water into cups of the other color. Give each kid one of each cup. Let them sip the water and see if they can taste the difference.
- **Have you ever wondered how salt works and how it makes a difference in how food tastes?** Here's a quick rundown of how to use salt:
 - Use it to up the natural saltiness of a food.
 - Add a sprinkle to bitter things to tone down the bitterness.
 - Add a pinch to sweet things to balance out sweet flavors.
- **So, what do salt and people have in common?** Well, they both have the power to make a difference!
- That's kind of weird, but if you think about it, it's kind of cool! Just like how salt can affect other tastes, people can affect other people. Through Jesus, we have the power to influence the people around us with God's love. After all, **Jesus taught us how to make a difference!**

SCRIPTURE | Isaiah 58:6-12

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Create two columns on the dry-erase board, one titled “How people don’t make a difference,” and the other side titled, “How people can make a difference.” Read Isaiah 58:1-5 aloud for the kids while they listen for ways God, through Isaiah, says people don’t make a positive difference (e.g., taking advantage of others, arguing, and fighting). Write their answers in the respective columns on the dry-erase board. Then, read Isaiah 58:6-12 aloud while kids listen for ways people can make a difference (e.g., sharing, giving, and not saying harmful things about others). Write their answers on the dry-erase board.
- Isaiah was one of God’s prophets, or someone who shared God’s message with others. He spoke about Jesus . . . before anyone ever knew who Jesus was! It must have been amazing to have God talk to you about the things Jesus would do before Jesus even lived!
- God also wanted Isaiah to share about what would happen when people continue to choose not to listen to God.
- In Isaiah 58:1-12, we heard how people acted in a way that doesn’t make a difference in the world, but we also heard how God guides us in ways that we can make a difference. We didn’t get to hear it in these verses, but Isaiah also told people how Jesus would make a difference in the world.
- **How do you think what we do can influence others more if we learn from Jesus?**
- *[Read verses 8, 10b-11 aloud again.]*
- As you learn from Jesus and make a difference around you, God promises you a few things . . . that your light will shine brighter, just like how Jesus said we are the light of the world during our Bible story! Also, that God’s glory will protect you, and God will always guide and provide for you.
- **Jesus taught us how to make a difference,** and God will take care of the rest!

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

REFLECTION | A Big Difference

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Invite kids to demonstrate the difference someone has made in their life by forward jumping as far as the difference they feel that person made in their life. They’ll simply be telling a story and afterward, jump forward while saying “So and so made a BIG difference!”
 - ✘ **PRETEEN HACK:** Omit the jumping part for preteens and have them simply share how someone has made a difference in their lives.
 - ✘ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** If you have students with mobility concerns, you can use an arm stretch or point from one place on the wall to another to describe the “big” difference someone has made in their life.
- **Who is someone who made a big difference in your life?**
- We all have people in our lives that make a huge difference! Whether that be our teachers, friends, or family, we all need support and people in our corner cheering us on. That makes the biggest difference! Jesus is also there to support us and is there for the people we love.

RESPONSE | Draw the Difference

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Distribute one printable to each kid. Invite them to draw a story about how they can make a difference in the world!
 - ✘ **PRETEEN HACK:** Instead of having preteens draw stories comic-book style, give them more creative freedom to doodle, write, or both, [sketch-note style](#).
- **With God’s help, what kind of difference do you think you can make?** Imagine the difference you might be able to make, then draw out your story in a fun way using the comic strip!

MEMORY VERSE | John 13:15 (NIV)

- “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Recruit an adult volunteer or two to lead kids in learning how to memorize this month’s memory verse. You can let them choose from a list such as [this](#), have them make up their own, or assign them a memorization method. Provide them time to prepare and the materials needed to carry it out. (**Don’t forget to also check out the memory verse signs – a combination of SEE and ASL – available in your Programming folder or at growcurriculum.org/John13-15.**)

PRAYER

- Dear God, thank you for sending us your son Jesus to show us how to live in a way that makes a difference in our lives and in the lives of others. Help us to be the salt and the light wherever we go so that everyone will see us and want to live for you, too! Amen.

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

- What did Jesus mean when he said that we are the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world”?
- What happens if salt loses its flavor or a light is hidden?
- What is the purpose of letting our light shine?
- What are some ways, mentioned in Isaiah 58:9-10, that we can let our light shine?
- What kind of difference do you think Jesus wants you to make?
- Is there anything in your life that’s causing your “salt” to lose flavor or your “light” to shine less brightly? How can you change that?
- Who is someone that’s made a difference in your life? How?

ACTIVITY | Salt & Light Bulb Craft

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Check out [this site](#) for how to make colored salt. Prepare 4 gallon-sized zip bags with a few cups of salt. Invite your group to make a few different colored salts by squeezing food coloring into each of the bags then mixing them together. Give each kid a light bulb jar and have them stick a Big Idea label to their jar. Have kids fill their jar with salt layers using the funnels and spoons. (See a worked example [here](#) and see your Shop & Prep List for an alternative activity).
- Now that you have finished creating your salt and light bulb, where do you think would be a good place for you to put it in your house?
- You can place it somewhere you look at often, like a nightstand or window, to remind you that you make a difference because you are the salt and light of the world!