A Stacked Deck

Bible Point: When life is unfair...God is good!

Bible Story: The Israelites are slaves for the Egyptians. (Exodus 1; 5; 6)

Key Verse: “The Lord is good, a strong refuge when trouble comes.” (Nahum 1:7)

Before staff members arrive, make a lunch sack of “building materials” for every three people. Make the following bags:

• bags of index cards
• bags of index cards plus tape
• bags of Legos or other small blocks

Make more bags that contain just index cards than the other bags. Fold the tops of the bags over so people can’t see inside them.

Say: Welcome to Roar VBS! Each day before things get wild, we’ll take a few minutes to focus on what kids will be exploring. This time will help us prepare our hearts to make every minute count as we help kids grow in their friendship with Jesus.

Let’s start today with a challenge! First, find two other people so you have a group of three. Then introduce yourself and tell what your role is at VBS this week.

Allow a minute for trios to form.

Say: In just a second, you’ll find out who traveled the farthest to get here today. That person will come up and choose a bag of building materials for your group.

When each trio has discussed and has a bag of building materials, tell trios they’ll have two minutes to build the tallest free-standing structure they can. Start time immediately by saying “Go!” Play the Sing & Play Roar Music CD for two minutes while staff members build their structures.

After two minutes, turn off the music and sound the Gazelle Bell to draw attention back to yourself. Look at all the different structures, and point out which one is the tallest. Then ask:
Look at all these structures. How did you feel about the materials you were given?

Say: Talk about this with your trio.

Tell about a time in real life you felt like things were unfair.

Share your own brief example, such as a time someone else lost weight on a diet—and you gained weight! Or maybe you lost a job, even though you’d contributed to a big project.

Allow a couple of minutes for trios to share, and then sound the Gazelle Bell to draw attention back to yourself.

Say: Life can be unfair. Sometimes we feel like the deck is stacked against us—like we got a bad deal. Kids feel like that, too. Ask:

When do you hear kids say “That’s not fair”?

Have people call out their answers.

Say: Today we’ll help kids explore that even when life is unfair, God is still good. In fact, that’s our Bible Point! Kids will hear again and again that when life is unfair...God is good!

Motion to the index-card-only structures. Ask:

Even if you had the simplest building materials, what are some good things that happened in your experience?

Say: The Bible reminds us in the book of Nahum, “The Lord is good, a strong refuge when trouble comes.” Today you can remind kids that God is good and strong for us—even when things seem unfair. God’s goodness doesn’t choose sides. God’s goodness doesn’t abandon us. God is always, always good!

Close in prayer, asking God to show his goodness in surprising ways today at VBS.
Day 2

Darkest Valley

Bible Point: When life is scary...God is good!

Bible Story: God sends plagues on Egypt. (Exodus 7:14–12:32)

Key Verse: “Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me.” (Psalm 23:4)

Supplies
- several flashlights (try to round up at least 10)
- dark bulletin board paper to cover windows (if you’re meeting in a room with windows)
- Gazelle Bell*
*available from Group Publishing or your Group VBS supplier

If possible, meet in a room that doesn’t have windows or that’s easily darkened. If you need to meet in a room with windows, cover them with dark bulletin board paper to make the room as dark as possible.

Turn on the flashlights, and set them at the front of your room, pointing at the ceiling.

Welcome everyone back to Roar.

Say: Today kids will explore God’s goodness in the midst of our fear. For kids and adults, scary times can feel like dark times.

Turn off the lights, leaving only the light of the flashlights.

Say: Call out some things that are frightening for kids. As staff members call things out, repeat a few of them and turn off a flashlight for each thing you say. When all the lights are out, continue. Ask:

What has changed in our room?

What’s stayed the same?

Say: You’re still sitting here in a safe place. You’re surrounded by people who care about you. You can’t see what’s in front of you—and that’s scary. But you still have kind, caring people close by.

Turn on one flashlight and read Psalm 23:4 aloud.

Say: Some kids who come today may be going through a dark valley. Pause. Their homes may be filled with words like divorce...cancer...lost job. They may be facing bullies or an unknown future. Ask:

In all that darkness, what things haven’t changed?

Say: When life is scary...God is good! God’s goodness is always there for us. God’s goodness is something we can hold on to in the darkest valley. As we sit in this darkness, whisper the name of a child who’s here at VBS. Pause.
Pray: God, hear these names of children you love so dearly. Today let them feel your presence through whatever dark valley they’re in. Help them know, see, touch, and experience your goodness today. In Jesus’ name, amen.
Twenty-One Twister

Bible Point: When life changes...God is good!

Bible Story: The Israelites enter the wilderness. (Exodus 14–17)

Key Verse: “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.” (Psalm 106:1)

Welcome everyone back to Roar.

Say: Let’s get your brains trained and ready for another wild day at VBS.

Form groups of no more than 10, and have each group sit in a circle. Demonstrate the following game with one group so others can see.

• Explain that the goal of this game is to not be the one who has to say the number 21.
• Have one person begin counting, saying the number 1.
• The person to the right will continue, saying 2 or 2, 3.
• If the person says one number (in this case 2), counting resumes to the right. However, if the person chooses to say two consecutive numbers (in this case 2, 3), counting resumes to the left.
• Players who say the wrong number, don’t switch directions, or have to say “21” are out but will stay in the circle. (This adds to the confusion!)

Play the Sing & Play Roar Music CD while groups play a few rounds. Challenge them to get through as many rounds as they can, playing as quickly as possible. After about five minutes, turn off the music and sound the Gazelle Bell.

Ask:

❓ Call out one word that describes this game.

❓ Why did you choose that word?

Say: This crazy game kept changing! The direction changed, the players involved changed, and it got confusing! Life can be like that sometimes. Ask:

❓ In real life, how do you feel when things change?
Say: Today we’ll help kids explore that **when life changes, God is good!** The Bible tells us, “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.” Have people talk about this with a partner:

❓ How can this verse help a child who’s facing a lot of changes in life?

Say: Today we can encourage kids that God’s love **never changes**! His goodness and love go on forever—even when things in life change so much that they make our brains hurt.

Have everyone form one large circle. Point out that a circle doesn’t have a beginning or an end—just like God’s goodness! Pray, asking God to give you his wisdom as you guide kids through today’s activities and experiences.
Life Lines

Bible Point: When life is sad... God is good!
Bible Story: Jesus dies and comes back to life. (John 16–21)
Key Verse: “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted.” (Psalm 34:18)

Before people arrive, cut off a length of yarn that symbolizes the length of your life to this day. If you’re fairly young, it might be a short length. If you’ve celebrated lots of birthdays, make it a longer length.

As staff members enter, have them each cut a length of yarn to represent their lives.

Welcome your staff back to Roar.

Say: I’m so thankful for a team that is so willing to share so much time with the kids in our community. You’re making a big impact on these kids’ lives—whether you’re a Crew Leader, serving on our snack team, or helping with registration. Many of these kids will look back on this week as a pivotal, influential week of their lives. That has me thinking about something.

Hold up your length of yarn, and explain that it is like a personal timeline.

Say: Your yarn represents your life. Think of a key or important event in that life. Share your own important event, and point to the approximate spot it would’ve happened on the yarn. For example, if as a child you moved to the town where you now live, you could point to a spot at the top of your “timeline” and tell that story. Or if you recently got married, you’d point to a place toward the end of the timeline and tell about that.

Have each team member find three friends, and have foursomes share their own stories, pointing to the places on their yarn timelines. After a few minutes, sound the Gazelle Bell.

Say: Some of our events were sad, and some were happy. But as I look at these timelines, I’m reminded that we all have something in common. Every timeline will eventually have an end. We don’t know when that end will be, but life on this earth ends for each of us.

Today we get to share the amazing news that Jesus came to make a way for us to have eternal life with him in heaven.
When Jesus died to take the penalty for our sins, he opened a doorway for a forever friendship with our loving, good, heavenly Father.

Tie a knot in your string, at approximately the point where you made a faith decision and began your friendship with Jesus. Briefly tell about that experience. Then have team members make knots and share their faith stories in their groups of four.

After a few minutes, sound the Gazelle Bell to draw attention back to yourself.

Distribute tape, and have each staff member tape the ends of his or her length of yarn together to make a loop. Explain that the loop can remind us of the eternal life Jesus offers, because a circle doesn’t have a beginning or an end.

Say: Today may be a pivotal moment for a child at our VBS. Some kids have heard this story and have begun their friendship with Jesus. But other kids are just hearing it for the first time—or grasping it for the first time ever. Today a child may tie a knot in his or her timeline, changing that child’s life for eternity.

Have foursomes circle up. Have each person hold his or her knot, and let small groups pray for the kids who come to VBS today. Direct them to ask God to speak clearly to kids’ hearts and to give staff members his words. Play quiet music from the Sing & Play Roar Music CD while groups pray. After a few minutes, turn off the music and close the prayer time.
Mmmmm-memorial!

Bible Point: When life is good...God is good!

Bible Story: The Israelites build a memorial to remember God’s goodness. (Joshua 3–4)

Key Verse: “Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious.” (Nehemiah 4:14)

Before everyone arrives, stack the food items in a bowl or on a plate. The higher you can “pile” the food so it looks like a “memorial,” the better. Be sure you have one food item per person.

Welcome everyone to the last day of Roar.

Say: It’s been a great week, full of amazing God Sightings! God has done some truly good, good things here at [name of your church]. Our Key Verse today celebrates that!

Read aloud Nehemiah 4:14.

Today we’re exploring how the Israelites made a memorial to celebrate all the good things God had done for them. So I made a memorial to celebrate all the good things God has done here at Roar! Point to your food memorial.

I’d love to hear about all the good things we’ve seen this week. But instead of building a memorial, we’ll “unbuild” this one and enjoy some snacks!

Share one good thing that’s happened this week. As you do, take one of the food items and eat it.

Have team members come forward, one at a time, and each share a good thing that’s happened this week—a way they’ve seen God’s goodness at VBS. As people share, let them take and enjoy a snack.

When everyone has shared, close in prayer, thanking God for his goodness and praising him for all the ways he’s been at work during VBS.