



MEETING 1 – LAUNCH PARTY!

Monday, April 13, 7-8:30p

MEETING 2 – BIBLE LESSONS

Monday, April 27

Watch these recorded videos at home.

MEETING 3 – PRAYER & PREP

Monday, May 4, 7-8:30p

SET-UP SUNDAY

Sunday, May 31, 12:00-5:00

Lunch provided. All hands on deck!

WHEN DO VOLUNTEERS ARRIVE?

Early Childhood Classrooms - 8am in Room 9b

Camp Wilderness - 8:15am on the South Lawn

Everyone else - 8:30am in the gym

NOTE: 0-4 year olds can be checked in at 8:15!

Lifeway

SHINING A LIGHT ON
WHO JESUS REALLY IS

ILLUMINATION STATION

JOHN 8:12

DON'T FORGET!

Register your own kids, too!

0-4s will be emailed a link.

Incoming K-6th
can register online now!

CONTACTS:

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Overview





MONDAY

Jesus is God's promised Son.
Jesus asked his disciples who people said that he is.
Matthew 16: 13-20
God rules.

TUESDAY

Jesus is God's perfect Son.
Jesus was baptized and God spoke.
Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:1-11, John 1:29-34
We sinned.

WEDNESDAY

Jesus is the powerful Son of God.
Jesus performed miracles.
Matthew 15:29-39
God provided.

THURSDAY

Jesus is the proven Son of God.
Jesus died and rose to life!
Mark 14:43-16:7
Jesus gives.

FRIDAY

Jesus is God's plan for forgiveness.
Peter preached about forgiveness.
Acts 2
We respond.

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

	9:00 - 9:10	9:15 - 9:35	9:40 - 10:00	10:05 - 10:25	10:30 - 10:50	10:55 - 11:15	11:20 - 11:40	11:45 - 11:55	12:00
A-e	Opening Assembly	Bible Lesson	Crew Time	MCM	Games	Crew Time (snack)	Wonder Workshop	Closing Assembly	Dismiss
f-k	Opening Assembly	Wonder Workshop	Bible Lesson	Crew Time (snack)	MCM	Games	Crew Time	Closing Assembly	Dismiss
L-P	Opening Assembly	Crew Time	Wonder Workshop	Bible Lesson	Crew Time (snack)	MCM	Games	Closing Assembly	Dismiss
Q-U	Opening Assembly	Games	Crew Time	Wonder Workshop	Bible Lesson	Crew Time (snack)	MCM	Closing Assembly	Dismiss
V-Z	Opening Assembly	MCM	Games	Crew Time (snack)	Wonder Workshop	Bible Lesson	Crew Time	Closing Assembly	Dismiss

MCM means **M**issions (Monday), **C**rafts (Tues/Thurs), **M**usic (Wed/Fri).

CAMP WILDERNESS

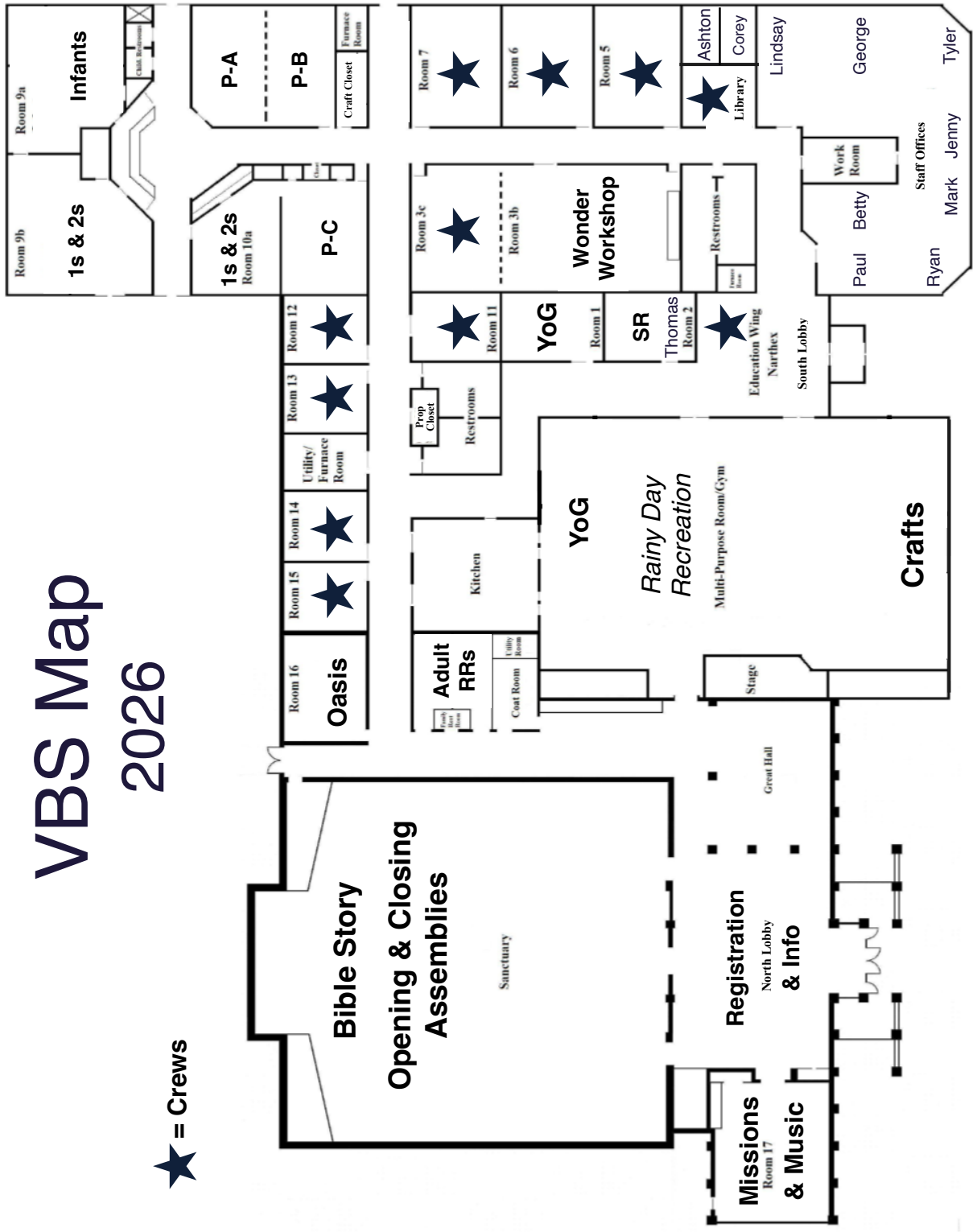
8:45a - 12:15p - meets in South Lawn for departure & arrival
(Thursday is an optional overnight at Bromelsick. Friday return is at 11:30.)

DAILY SCHEDULE

VBS Map

2026

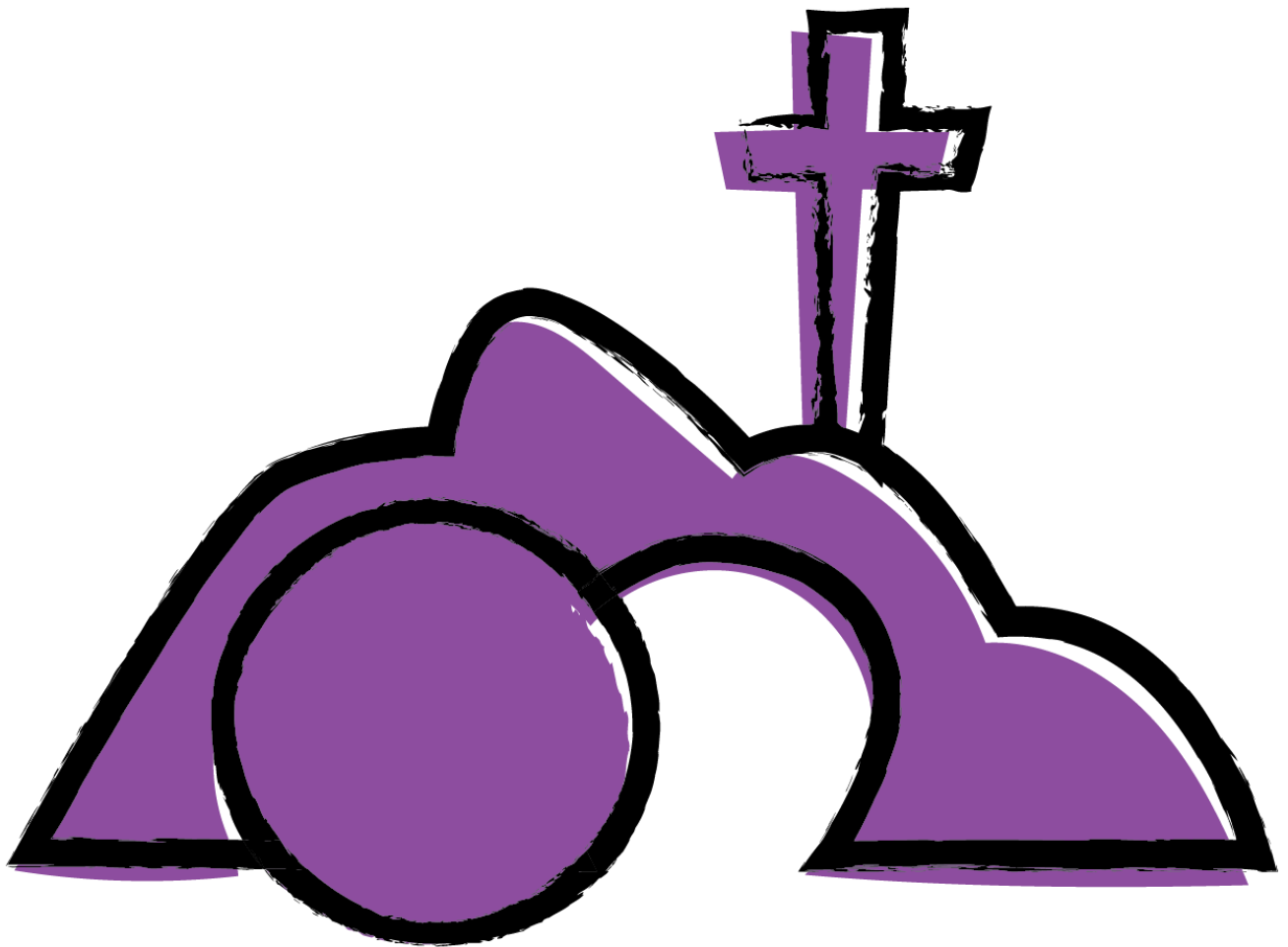
★ = Crews



Recreation

CW

BIBLE LESSONS



DAY 1: JESUS IS GOD'S PROMISED SON



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)

Bonus Verse

“Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” Matthew 16:16

Leader Devotion

Think of a teacher who significantly impacted and brightened your life. This teacher likely made you feel loved, valued, and understood. This week, you have an opportunity to be that kind of teacher—one who helps children feel loved and valued in significant and uncommon ways. Pause now and pray, asking God to use you to make an eternal impact on the lives of the children you teach. Repeat this prayer each day.

Beyond building relationships, one critical trait of exceptional teachers is their ability to ask great questions that capture attention, inspire deep thinking, and foster renewed curiosity and wonder. These questions can illuminate gaps in comprehension in order to build bridges and strengthen understanding.

Jesus is the Master Teacher. His use of engaging questions is a hallmark of His teaching. Consider these:

1. “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?” (Mark 4:40)
2. “Why do you break God’s commandment because of your tradition?” (Matthew 15:3)
3. “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and don’t do the things I say?” (Luke 6:46)
4. “Do you want to get well?” (John 5:6)

Let’s shine the spotlight on two of the most significant and revealing questions Jesus ever asked His disciples. After spending time with them in a boat, they traveled to Caesarea Philippi—a place known for its pagan gods. Against this backdrop, Jesus pressed His disciples for answers to these two questions: “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” and “But you, who do you say that I am?”

Scripture records the disciples answering the first question, but the second question is specifically answered by Peter. Peter declared, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Have you ever wondered why Peter was the first disciple to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah? Surely, there was a less impulsive and more faithful disciple who could have spoken up rather than the flawed and impulsive Peter.

Jesus knew Peter’s weaknesses. He knew Peter would deny Him three times, yet Jesus washed Peter’s feet anyway (John 13). He knew Peter would fall asleep in the garden of Gethsemane, yet He blessed Peter when God revealed to him that Jesus was the Messiah (Matt 16:26). Jesus knew all of Peter’s story—his failures, doubts, and triumphs—and He still chose to love and use Peter in powerful ways. Jesus did not write Peter off or deem him useless. Instead, He entrusted Peter with the opportunity to preach at Pentecost and lead His Church (Acts 2). Peter’s story reminds us that God sees potential where others see character flaws, and He calls us to love, lead, and serve in ways that often do not make sense to others.

Illuminate Your Heart

- Jesus asks each of us the same question. Take a moment to answer it. “But you, who do you say I am?”
- It may be easy to make a declaration of words, but much harder to live out our belief in Jesus as our Messiah. Peter struggled to walk out the words he declared. Thank God for His redemptive love for each of us and ask Him to use you this week to proclaim the good news of Jesus to each child in your care.

This Week’s Bible Verse

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12

DAY 2: JESUS IS GOD'S PERFECT SON



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)

Bonus Verse

“And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’” Mark 1:11

Leader Devotion

Children are often drawn to the tangible act of baptism before fully grasping its meaning and symbolism. As one of our two church sacraments that make theology visible and tangible, baptism is a powerful sign and seal of our adoption into God’s family. But sometimes children mistakenly think baptism itself saves.

When we teach children about baptism, it is good to shed light on why Jesus was baptized. Jesus did not need to repent or be saved from His sin because He was without sin (2 Cor 5:21). We know baptism is not what saves us, because Jesus was baptized and did not need to be saved from sin as we do. Instead, Jesus’ baptism affirmed Him as the Son of God and set an example for Christ’s covenant community.

Matthew 3:13-17 provides clear evidence to answer today’s Spotlight Question: Was Jesus just an ordinary man? Jesus is the perfect Son of God, who came to be the Savior of the world. When Jesus asked John the Baptist to baptize Him, John pushed back, recognizing Jesus’ greatness and even suggesting that John should be baptized by Jesus instead. Jesus’ response to John revealed His identity as the Son of God. However, it was not just the words of Jesus that affirmed Jesus as God. All three persons of the Trinity made themselves known at Jesus’ baptism. The Spirit of God descended like a dove and God’s voice from heaven declared, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased” (verses 16-17).

The baptism of Jesus also provides an example for all God’s people. Baptism is a sign of God’s covenant with His people, and a seal that what God has said is really true for those who repent and believe. It is a sign and seal that God in Christ washes away our sins, and that we are a part of the visible church. It is an outward demonstration that we have a relationship with Christ and His church, and a tangible reminder that God will keep all His promises to us - and already did - through Christ.

Think of it this way. Anyone driving along a main route might see a blue and white hospital sign. A seal would be like someone helping you to their car and saying, “I’ll take you there.” The sign is seen by everyone. It’s visible. But driving you there is particular and felt. Baptism fills both of these roles. It is a sign to anyone who should see or hear of it that the baptized person is a part of the church. And for that person, they feel the water and the care of their covenant community and know it’s particularly for them.

The baptism of Jesus powerfully declared His identity as the perfect Son of God and His obedience to the Father’s plan. Though sinless, Jesus humbly set an example for us. The voice from heaven and the presence of the Holy Spirit affirmed that He was no ordinary man—He is the Savior of the world.

Illuminate Your Heart

- Have you been baptized? If not, pray about setting up a meeting with an elder. If so, think about your own baptism if you remember it, and/or think about the way God is keeping His promises to you.
- Is your focus on the perfect Son of God? Read Eph. 2:1-10 and remember what God has promised. This is what the sign of your baptism points to, and what is sealed and guaranteed to you as a believer in Jesus.
- As children hear today’s Bible story and reflect on Jesus’ baptism, tell them of God’s covenant promises to save His people, and that He will always keep His promises, as He did in Jesus.

DAY 3: JESUS IS THE POWERFUL SON OF GOD

Was Jesus just a teacher?

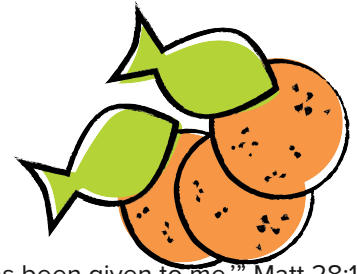
Everything Jesus said and did showed that He is the powerful Son of God.

Bible Story

Jesus performed miracles. (Matthew 15:29-39)

Bonus Verse

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.’” Matt 28:18



Leader Devotion

Matthew 15:29-39 provides compelling evidence that Jesus was more than just a teacher. He is the powerful Son of God. Let's shed some light on this passage. This account takes place on a mountain near the Sea of Galilee where large crowds gathered, bringing people who were in desperate need of healing.

Bringing those in need up a mountain to Jesus must have required physical effort and determination. Perhaps word had already spread about the paralyzed man whose friends lowered him through a roof to be healed by Jesus (Mark 2:1-5). Regardless, their actions reflected their faith in Jesus' ability to heal.

The details of how Jesus healed each person in this passage are left out. Scripture simply states, “They put them at his feet, and he healed them.” It was not unusual for Jesus to heal multiple people in one setting, as the Gospels record several similar occasions (Luke 4:40, Matthew 9:35, Mark 6:56).

Following this incredible display of healing, another miracle occurred—one that impacted everyone present. Jesus was moved by compassion because the people had been with Him for three days and had nothing to eat. The disciples pointed out the obvious challenge: they were in a remote place with little access to food. When Jesus asked how much food they had, the answer was just seven loaves of bread and a few fish, hardly enough to feed more than 4,000 hungry people. Yet, as they were about to witness, in the hands of Jesus, a little is more than enough.

After Jesus took the loaves and fish, He gave thanks and then began breaking the bread for the disciples to pass out to the people. The result? Matthew 15:37 says, “They all ate and were satisfied. They collected the leftover pieces—seven large baskets full.” Jesus was no ordinary teacher; He is the powerful Son of God. He could do things no one else could, and the disciples often had a front-row seat to His miracles.

What must it have been like to see these miracles unfold—to watch people be healed and to see over 4,000 people fed from just 7 loaves and a few fish? In both instances, Jesus responded to a need by involving people in His work. In this event, Jesus did not go looking for people to heal. People took the initiative to come to Him. For the hungry crowd, Jesus used what was given to Him by the disciples to meet the needs of the multitudes.

As you prepare to teach children about the powerful Son of God, also look for ways to share this amazing truth in everyday conversation with your good friend or your hair stylist or your kid's baseball coach. Be prepared to give personal examples of how Jesus has proven to be powerful in your life. Never underestimate what God may want to do through your efforts to share the gospel with the people around you both inside and outside of VBS.

Illuminate Your Heart

- What are you doing to bring people to Jesus? Are you willing to give any necessary effort (physical or otherwise) and whatever possessions you have to carry people to Jesus to be saved?
- Pray for the children and families who are being brought to the feet of Jesus this week. Ask God to show you the people in your sphere of influence who you may need to bring to VBS, to church, and to Jesus.

DAY 4: JESUS IS THE PROVEN SON OF GOD

Was Jesus just someone who lived a long time ago?

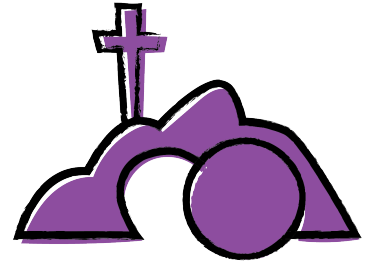
Jesus lived, died, and rose to life again to be our Savior, now and forever.

Bible Story

Jesus died and rose to life. (Mark 14:43-16:7)

Bonus Verse

“And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God!’” Mark 15:39



Leader Devotion

Do you remember the first time you heard the story of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection? If you grew up in a Christian home, it may be difficult to recall that moment, and you may have never questioned whether Jesus was more than just a man from long ago. For some children at your VBS, this week may be the first time they’ve heard the life-changing truth of Jesus’ resurrection and the salvation He offers each of us.

If it is hard to imagine children in your classroom not knowing about Jesus, consider this: Over the past 25 years, 40 million people have stopped attending church.¹ As a result, church membership in America has dropped below 50 percent.² This means we can no longer assume that every child in Vacation Bible School is attending church regularly or has even heard the true story of Jesus. What if you are the first person to tell them the truth of the gospel? How does that impact the way you prepare for this session?

It’s not just children who have never heard about Jesus and who need convictional teaching this week—it’s also people who have heard about Him but are surrounded by a world that questions and devalues the life of Jesus. To navigate an increasingly post-Christian world, children need a biblical worldview that upholds the Bible as absolute truth. A 2022 study found that only 18% of 13- and 14-year-olds listed the Bible as their primary source of truth³ and 61% “either believe Jesus Christ sinned or may have sinned while He was on earth.”⁴ It is important that we continually point children to the Bible as the source of all truth and show them the evidence found in the Scriptures to support Jesus as the proven Son of God.

Throughout this week, children will be having “light bulb moments” as they are learning who Jesus is and how His life provides proof that He was more than just a teacher who lived a long time ago. Jesus did things no one else could do, like heal people who were sick or who had physical disabilities, provide sight to people who were blind, and turn a small amount of food into more than enough to feed the multitudes. He spoke with an authority no one had heard before. The ultimate proof came through the resurrection—the undeniable evidence that He is who He claimed to be.

Illuminate Your Heart

- How have you experienced Jesus personally? Thank Him for being present in your life.
- There could be no greater privilege than to tell children about the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Pray for the children in your care who may be hearing this story for the first time. Ask God to speak through you as you tell the good news of Jesus.

FOOTNOTES

1. Jim Davis, Michael Graham, and Ryan P Burge. *The Great Dechurching: Who’s Leaving, Why Are They Going, and What Will It Take to Bring Them Back?* (Zondervan, 2023), 5.
2. Jefferey Jones, “U.S. Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time,” *Gallup*, March 29, 2021, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx>.
3. George Barna, *Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child’s Heart, Mind and Soul* (Arizona Christian University Press, 2023), 27. (hereafter cited as *Raising Champions*).
4. *Raising Champions*, 28.

DAY 5: JESUS IS GOD'S PLAN FOR FORGIVENESS

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)

Bonus Verse

"And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.'" Acts 2:38-39

Leader Devotion

This week, the focus has been on laying a foundation for children to hear and believe that Jesus is their Savior. These truths are boiled down into the "Spotlight Questions" they've heard each day.

Today, kids will hear the message Peter preached that immediately led over three thousand people to see their need for a Savior. So now the spotlight will turn to each child with a deeply personal question:

Why do I need to respond to Jesus?

Recognizing and believing Jesus is a great teacher, a powerful performer of miracles, and a compassionate servant leader is easy for most of us. The Bible is full of events that lead us to those conclusions. However, James 2:19 reminds us, "You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe—and they shudder." Unless we also acknowledge our desperate need for Him as our Savior—the One who willingly died for our sins and offers forgiveness—we miss the good news of who He truly is. Without Him, we deserve the punishment of death for our sins. In Him, we find grace, redemption, and forgiveness only He can bring.

Children need to understand why they need forgiveness to know why they need to respond to Jesus. Recognizing personal sin is one of the signs a child is beginning to follow Jesus on their own. Children must know what sin is and the problem it causes for their relationship with God. Children often define sin as a wrong choice like disobeying parents, cheating on a test, or fighting with a sibling. While those wrong choices are sin, the result of that sin makes them unable to have a relationship with a holy and perfect God. A simple definition of sin that children can easily understand is "anything we think (point to your head), anything we say (point to your mouth), or anything we do (hold out your hands) that does not please God." When children understand the impact of their sin - it separates them from God - they are often ready to answer today's spotlight question: Why do I need to respond to Jesus?

Take a moment to answer this question for yourself. Confess your own sin and receive the forgiveness of your loving Father. And then ask the next logical question of yourself: How do I respond to Jesus? In other words, how does my life give evidence that Jesus has saved me? How is my life lived for His glory? How do I daily respond to His call on my life, His direction and guidance, His Word, and His Spirit's leading?

VBS has always been an important part of our church's mission to share Jesus with our community. We know that this faith is not for us alone, but for all who will believe. Pray that Jesus will carry on the work that has started this week in the lives of these children, their families, and your co-laborers.

Illuminate Your Heart

- Have you experienced the Holy Spirit piercing your heart in conviction and leading you to repentance? (See Acts 2:37.) When was the last time you were grieved over your sin?



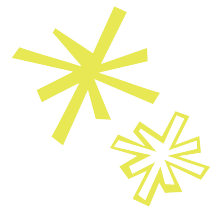
- Spend some time in prayer for each of the children in your care. Ask God to help them understand their need for Jesus and give them the courage to step out in faith to receive the forgiveness Jesus offers to each of them.

HELPFUL



iNfO

TIPS FOR GUIDING BEHAVIOR



PREVENTION IS THE PREFERRED STRATEGY

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Work to develop strategies and cultivate ideas to meet a child’s needs and/or reasonable wants before misbehaviors occur. This not only makes your time with the children more positive, but also creates a safe, predictable environment with a common language.

THE WHYS OF POOR BEHAVIOR

When a child misbehaves, first ask yourself why. What is causing this behavior? Understanding will help you to create systems that prevent classroom management problems. Over time, grow your list of strategies, having them at the ready to implement when needed.

- **Need for more attention**

For classroom management, *why* they need more attention doesn’t matter as much as *that* they need it. Give extra attention to these children before they use outbursts and inappropriate actions to get it. Compliment what they’re doing well, allow space for their voice,, ask for their help, etc..

- **Masking insecurity**

This child may be nervous because they’re new, don’t have a friend, or have never heard these stories. Take care not to create situations where his or her lack of knowledge will be laughed at by other children. Don’t assume the children’s knowledge or abilities, but allow them to show you. This gives you an opportunity to pile on the praises rather than unintentionally causing embarrassment.

- **Find it hard to manage their anger**

Kids who “blow up” and are quick to “fight” may not have the skills to avoid these outbursts. Watch for opportunities to head off the poor behavior and model a way to cool down and self-correct. Slow breathing, leaning back-to-wall, walking a lap, or sitting with a weighted lap blanket are examples.

- **Looking for ways to be in control**

Some kids feel more secure when they are in control, even if it means disrupting the leader’s plans. Look past your own irritation and find ways to foster their leadership abilities. Give them choices whenever possible - choose to sit here or there, to be first in line or last, to hold your hand or walk nearby, join the circle or sit at the table, etc.

- **Full of energy**

God created children with lots of energy as part of His plan to help them develop, but as adults we often want them to be still and calm. A good rule of thumb is to assume about a one-minute attention span for every year of life. Asking a four-year-old to sit still and listen for ten minutes goes against how she was created. Don’t fight it; join it! “Put your hands on your ears if you’re listening.” “Stand up if you know who our story is about.” “Let’s march around the room while we recite our memory verse.”

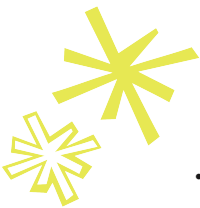
- **Boredom**

When a child gets bored (or thinks he’s bored) he starts looking for something to do. Plan sessions that consider the children, their preferences, and their abilities. Be ready with three more ideas than you plan to use, and then be ready to scrap all of that and go a different direction if they’re not tracking.

MAKE BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS UNDERSTOOD

Children can’t meet classroom expectations if they don’t know and understand them. Be succinct and clear. 3-5 rules, no more than 5 words per rule, and no unexplained abstract words. (How does a 6-yr-old explain “respect”? If they can’t, then it’s not a good word to use in the rule!). Recite them often, and use those phrases in corrections and compliments.

Classroom management is primarily about knowing and understanding the kids you teach. Pray for your students by name, and for your group as a whole. Learn about their age in general, ask family and friends about your particular student, put systems in place you think may help, and be ready to adapt.



SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH KIDS

The word *gospel* means “good news.” THE Gospel is THE Good News about what Jesus has done. It is the message about Christ, the Kingdom of God, and salvation. He has rescued us and made a way for us to be with God in Heaven forever!

THE GOSPEL TRUTH



GOD RULES

The Bible tells us that God created everything, including you and me. He is in charge of everything! (Genesis 1:1; Revelation 4:11; Colossians 1:16-17)



WE SINNED

Since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God’s punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



GOD PROVIDED

God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. God has comforted us and provided away to remove the separation between us and Him. It’s something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9)



JESUS GIVES

The penalty for our sin is death. Jesus lived a perfect life here on earth, so He owes nothing. Jesus *chose* to die on the cross to pay *our* debt. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we are welcomed into God’s family forever. His death pays for our sin, and his resurrection means it’s paid in full. This is the best gift ever! (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18)



WE RESPOND

When we know and believe all these amazing things, we want to do something! First, we feel sorry and apologize to God for our sins. Then we tell him thank you, and show our gratitude when we love, follow, and obey Jesus. And with good news like this, we’re eager to tell others about Him! (John 14:16; Romans 10:9-10, 13)

HELPFUL TIPS FOR GOSPEL DISCUSSION

START SMALL! Before jumping into the Gospel, begin with questions like, “How are you liking VBS so far?” or “What has been your favorite part about VBS today?”

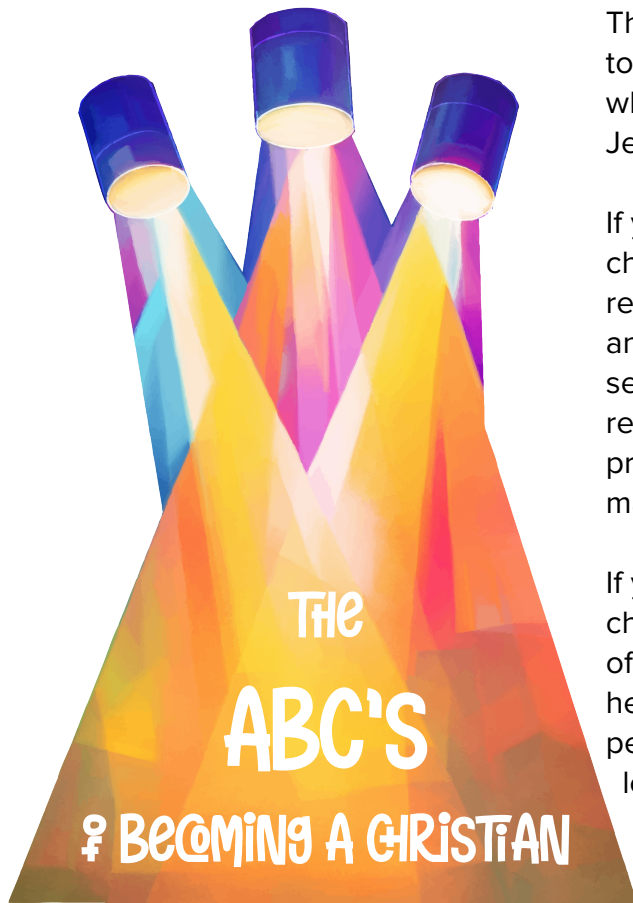
ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS Remind kids that this is a conversation, not a pass/fail test.

KEEP IT SIMPLE! Don’t complicate the Gospel. Avoid large, theological words and don’t assume a child has any prior knowledge or understanding of the gospel.

REPETITION Use and review *The Gospel Truth* and the *ABC’s of Becoming a Christian* with your kids throughout the week.

USE SCRIPTURE Scripture helps kids recognize that what you are saying is not your words ideas, but God’s words.

CLOSE IN PRAYER Ask God for wisdom and for His Holy Spirit to move and convict.



The *ABC's of Becoming a Christian* is a simple tool that helps us remember how to respond when prompted by the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus with our whole hearts.

If you sense that the Holy Spirit is working in a child's heart in such a way that the child is ready to follow Him, spend some time talking and praying with him or her individually. If you sense that a child is not ready to pray and respond in faith and repentance, continue to prayerfully teach him or her about Christ and maybe revisit their questions again later.

If you feel uncomfortable about talking with a child about his or her questions or profession of faith, pray with the child that God would help him or her to understand, and then personally connect the child with a pastor or leader who will talk with them more. Be sure to share the news of the child's spiritual development with his or her parent/s or caregiver/s.

A

ADMIT to God that you are a sinner. Ever since Adam and Eve chose to sin by disobeying God, all people have chosen to sin and disobey. (Romans 3:23) Tell God that you messed up and you are sorry for turning away from Him through your thoughts, words, and actions. Repent—turn away from your sin! (Acts 3:19; 1 John 1:9) Repent doesn't just mean turning from doing bad things to doing good things. It means turning from sin to Jesus, not trusting even in your own good works. We must trust only in Jesus to save us.

B

BELIEVE that Jesus is God's Son and receive God's gift of forgiveness from sin. You must believe that only Jesus can save you, and you cannot save yourself from your sin problem—not even by going to church or reading your Bible. Your faith or trust must be only in Jesus and what He did for you through His life, death, and resurrection (Acts 16:31; Acts 4:12; John 14:6; Ephesians 2:8-9)

C

CONFESS your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Tell God and tell others what you believe. If Jesus is your Savior, you are trusting only in Him to save you. If Jesus is your Lord, it means that you are trusting Him to be in charge. You can start following Him and doing what He says in the Bible. You are born again into a **NEW LIFE** and look forward to being with God forever in eternity! (Romans 10:9-10, 13)



HELPING KIDS LEARN TO USE THEIR BIBLES

Finding the Memory Verse with kindergartners & 1st graders

Guide children to open the Bibles to where you have bookmarked the memory verse. (You may want to add a post-it note with an arrow that points precisely to the verse you're reading. Point to the book title at the top of the page as you say it aloud. Then guide children to find the large number(s) on the pages. Explain that this is the chapter number. Finally, guide them to look for the little numbers at the start of sentences; this is the verse number. Tell them to leave their finger on the verse as you read the verse aloud. Then lead everyone to say the verse together. Show them how to put the bookmark back in place so they can find the verse again easily.

Finding the Memory Verse with 2nd and 3rd graders

Guide these kids to open their Bibles to the front and find the Table of Contents. (Hold up a Bible opened to the table of contents to show the kids what the page looks like.) When the kids find the table of contents, lead them to find the book you'll be using in the list under "Old Testament" or "New Testament." When the kids find the book, lead them to look at the page number beside the word and then help children find the page. Next explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers and help them find the correct chapter. Then explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Help them find the verse they'll be learning. Provide a bookmark and encourage them put it in place so they can find the verse again easily.

Finding the Memory Verse 4th graders

Ask kids to tell you whether they book you'll be reading in is the Old Testament or the New Testament. Direct kids toward the front, middle, or back of the Bible as needed. When they find it, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers and give them a minute to find the right chapter. Explain that the small numbers are verse numbers and allow time to find the verse. Provide a bookmark and encourage them put it in place so they can find the verse again easily.

Finding the Lesson Passage Each Day

On Day 1, for all ages, it will be helpful to have a bookmark in several Bibles before VBS begins. This will be helpful for the Younger Crews every day. For the Older Crews, use the above methods for 2nd, 3rd, and 4th graders.

AGE-GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

— INFANTS THRU KINDERGARTEN —

Babies and Toddlers

Active

- Learn and explore through senses

Curious

- Feel, pound, pat, manipulate objects
- Reason and think through physical manipulation
- Imitate the activities of the adults around them

Self-focused

- Say 'no' to express desires
- Want everything now and cannot wait
- Have little interest in cooperative play

Have short attention spans

- Can focus for simple Bible truths, songs, stories, and pictures
- Learn by doing and hearing something repeatedly

Need security

- Set simple but clear limits
- Like being held securely but not tightly
- Respond to loving care and sense love from the way they are treated
- Consistent rhythms, routines, faces, and even smells during their day provide felt safety

Sensitive

- Sense fairness and are developing attitudes about church
- Learning to trust. Treat them with respect.
- Often sense changes and may internalize and be upset by them



3s - K

Active

- Most always up and moving
- Can focus their energy into a learning experience
- Need varied methods of teaching, even during group time

Literal

- Use and understand simple, concrete language (Phrases such as "give your heart to Jesus," "open your ears," or "zip your lips" are confusing.)
- Pictures to boost understanding

Curious

- Learn from hands-on experiences and discovering answers on their own
- Ask lots of questions, but accept "I don't know"

Self-focused

- Need help to focus on strengths and overcome failures or limits
- Develop social skills through play and interaction with peers

Short Attention Spans

- Learn best with multiple short activities encompassing different learning styles
- Teachers should be flexible and keep instructions short and simple.

Creative

- Have vivid imagination and enjoy free-play activities
- Discover through self-expression and making choices

Need Limits

- Simple, clear limits provide security
- Respond best to positive instructions (Instead of saying, "Don't run," say, "Walk.")
- Redirection of negative behavior is more effective than consequences (when possible)

Sensitive

- Heightened awareness of "fairness" - don't compare one child to another.
- Feel respect or disrespect, notice attitudes and interpret facial expressions

HOW TO SUPPORT ELEMENTARY STUDENTS



1st-4th

Physical

- Change activities and offer balanced times of play and rest.
- Plan activities that utilize children's senses.
- Remember children develop at different rates. They do not all have the same skills and abilities.
- Plan activities that use gross motor skills, such as games, and fine motor skills, such as crafts.

Intellectual

- Keep activities challenging and relevant to their lives. Children are concrete thinkers.
- Implement multiple learning styles in your session. Children are naturally curious and becoming independent thinkers. They enjoy a variety of learning activities.
- Form groups and let children discuss ideas presented in the Bible study. Children enjoy group decision-making.

Social

- Model appropriate ways to apply the concepts of right and wrong through your actions. Children are sensitive to fairness and honesty.
- Be specific in your praise and encouragement. Children are becoming more aware of their peers and what others think. They crave genuine affirmation.
- Be firm and loving as you address behaviors. Children understand rules and consequences. They desire appropriate guidelines for behavior.

Emotional

- Children seek love and affirmation. They need you to love them for who they are.
- Keep in mind children are anxious in large groups of unknown people. They express feelings openly and are embarrassed easily.
- Allow children to make choices and do tasks independently as they are growing aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

Spiritual

- Model Christian attitudes and actions. Children model the worship, prayers, and attitudes of others.
- Allow children to respond and participate actively in Bible study. They are acquiring biblical knowledge, skills, and principles and are relating this knowledge to their daily lives.
- Listen to their questions and encourage them to read the Bible for answers.
- Be a Christian mentor. Children are increasingly capable of making commitments. They are learning to trust Christ and talk to God about their feelings.

Age—GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

— MIDDLE SCHOOL —

7th-8th

Physical

- Bodies are changing with muscle development, overall growth, voice changes, and appearance of adult physical features, hormones are increasing
- Boys begin these developments later than girls and may be smaller
- May still look like kids or may look much older
- Awkward and clumsy

Social/Emotional

- Self-image is BIG—insecure, self-conscious
- Can be moody and unpredictable
- Relationships with the opposite gender take on a different nature
- Need attention but don't want to stick out
- Can have child-like emotions
- Spend more time with other teens and less time with family
- Push to find firm limits with adults and test for resolve
- Mixed feelings about independence from parents

Mental

- Concrete thinkers—no hypotheticals
- Think in terms of the present moment
- See themselves as the center of their world
- Risk-takers—believe bad things will not happen to them, primarily with regard to physical harm or illness
- Impressionable
- Not a child, but not yet a teen
- Short attention span

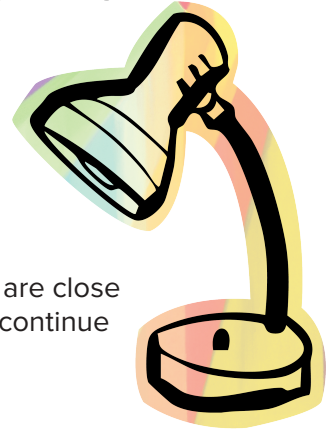
Spiritual

- Beginning to question things personally
- Still have child-like faith
- Excited in youth group—everything is new!



Age-Group Characteristics

— HIGH SCHOOL —



9th-10th

Physical

- Growing rapidly—spurts of 3–4 inches
- Girls have usually reached full physical development while boys are close
- Boys' voices lower, facial hair appears, weight and muscle gain continue

Social/Emotional

- More self-assured and able to solve problems
- Girls are more divisive and judgmental and often see small things as more important than they actually are
- Can be apathetic toward opinions and life, and socially are either 'on' or 'off'
- May have urges to use substances, become sexually active, or develop problems like eating disorders

Mental

- Can think about the future, and understand long-term effects of their decisions
- Often self-centered and/or can appreciate opinions of others
- Organizational skills—better able to juggle school, church, family, work
- Frequently challenge parental and school rules

Spiritual

- Many know the "church" answer but do not apply it to life
- May not have grasped concept of personal relationship with Christ
- May have difficulty prioritizing relationship with Jesus when life is going smoothly

11th-12th

Physical

- Physically developed for the most part (still growing but past major changes)

Social/Emotional

- Romantic relationships become very important (either developing, maintaining, or overcoming hurt)
- Starting to see the world outside hometown
- Guys internalize; girls externalize
- Not totally confident but more aware of who they are
- More guarded—don't show emotions easily

Mental

- Abstract thinkers
- Plan for graduation
- Seeing the "bigger picture"
- Reaching independence

Spiritual

- Maturity in this area can vary dramatically
- Still questions to be answered
- Putting pieces together of their faith
- Starting to understand what they believe and why

WORKING WITH ALL ABILITIES

VBS is filled with all kinds of kids—kids with different abilities, kids who've never been to church, kids who come maybe 3–4 times a year, and of course, kids you see every Sunday! With such a wide array of children, the challenge is how to make sure that each child feels welcomed and engaged.

In your crew times, help these children by giving instructions one at a time, ignoring harmless annoying behaviors, and praising children sincerely and often. Use the positive-language suggestions in the “What’s a Crew Leader?” page in the Crew Leader Guide. Use this document as a resource for other helpful tips.

Adaptations for Those New to Your Church ... or Church at all

- **Play name games** every day. Hearing that someone knows his/her name can even better help a new child feel at ease. Helping him/her make friends who also know his/her name? Even better.
- **Explain expectations.** Take time to talk about what the day will look like, what rotations kids will go to, or how they will be moving around campus. Cover rules briefly as mentioned in assembly and with any specifics for your crew or space.
- **Be patient** with kids who don't know “church” rules, such as staying quiet while someone is praying, focusing during Bible story time, following safety guidelines, and so forth. In fact, give instruction before doing those things so that expectations are clear.
- **Don't embarrass any child.** Speak quietly, at eye level, and one-on-one when guidance is necessary.
- **Stay away from “church-ese.”** Speak their language. Define church words often. Some won't know who Jesus is, what sin is, what it means to be born again, what it means to be baptized, or what “resurrection” or “rose again” mean.
- **Teach Bible skills** as if no one has ever heard them so a child doesn't feel like the odd one out. This is especially true for older kids. Many will not know how to find a specific Bible book or verse. Some may not even truly know what a Bible is. Refer to your “*Helping Kids Learn to Use Their Bibles*” page.
- **Remind kids of details.** Take time daily to remind kids of what was learned during previous sessions. This will help new kids as well as those who might struggle with remembering from day to day.



If More Support is Needed

When you learn that one of your crew members is disabled in some way, tell the VBS Director. She will find out from parents or caretakers about specific needs, such as whether kids have special equipment such as wheelchairs, what kids can and cannot eat, what kids need help doing, and what kids like to do for themselves; then she will pass this information on to you and other volunteers your crew will interact with.

We may be able to provide an aide for a child who requires assistance because of a disability. The aide can assist one-on-one, monitor safety at all times, can reteach or redirect during a Bible story or activity, and/or can alter the environment as needed (such as moving chairs out of the way for a wheelchair to have table access).

Adaptions for those with Learning Disabilities

Educators estimate that up to 20% of today's children have some type of learning disability. This means that in a program with 200 kids, up to 40 kids could be living with dyslexia, ADHD, or other learning disabilities. Children with neurological differences aren't lazy or unintelligent, they just learn differently from other children. Here are some tips for working with kiddos who have learning differences:

- **Level the playing field.** Do things most kids will handle equally well. For example, don't rely heavily on reading skills or an already acquired knowledge of Biblical things, even with older kids. Ask for volunteers to read, and don't push.
- **Use visual cues as well as audio** to help kids who think more visually.
- **Use actions or body movements** for Scripture memory, story review, etc. This will help kids who need to keep their bodies moving to engage with the information.
- **Ask your YoGger to work directly as an aide** for a student who needs extra attention. Work with your YoGger to help him/her know how to encourage their friend to pay attention, wait their turn, or obey simple instructions.
- **Reach out for help when you need it.** We want every child and grown-up (including you!) to feel successful at the end of each day. We hope every kid will want to come back tomorrow. If you have a challenging situation in your group or area, reach out to staff on your break or in the afternoon for some ideas.
- **Be gracious.** Our goal is always that our kids would feel loved more than anything, both by us and ultimately, by Christ. Slow down when you need to, breathe deeply, and love BIG. Every kid needs your grace and kindness more than your information.
- **Be patient.** A huge advantage of the small crews and plentiful help is that kids can process in their own time. Allow kids to do all they can on their own, with one-on-one support or extra time as needed.

Adaptations for those with Physical Disabilities

Make environmental changes so that those with special needs are able to participate.

- Move floor activities to a tabletop so kids with mobility issues or in wheelchairs can more easily participate.
- Increase the font size of handouts or posters to improve visibility for those with vision limitations.
- Use a clear color contrast for print such as a black background with white print or a white background with black print.

Adapt activities to allow kids the opportunity to participate with a level of achievement.

- Provide pool noodles to extend reach for kids with limited mobility to reach things like posters on the wall (“Point to the ____.”) or to use in simple tag games like “Duck, Duck, Goose.”
- Offer options that would include the child such as being the timekeeper or scorekeeper and be sure these are offered to others as well so that no one feels singled out unnecessarily.

Modify content for the kids.

- Provide a visual schedule (icons or pictures to represent the day’s sequence of events). Hang this on the focal wall or another easily visible location.
- Use picture cues whenever possible for learning and review.



WHAT'S A CREW LEADER?

If you're a Crew Leader, you've met two important qualifications: you love the Lord, and you love children. During the week, you'll visit different activities with a group of 5-10 children. You'll have two Crew Times you'll use to discuss the lesson, memory verse, and Gospel Truth. Other than that, you're a shepherd for the week, guiding kids and helping them enjoy the activities. Because you have a small group, you'll get to know and affirm each member by asking questions, listening, and encouraging.



PRAYING FOR YOUR MULTI-AGE KIDS

- Praise God for this opportunity to teach kids the good news about Jesus.
- Pray that God will give you insights about what the kids in your group need.
- Ask God to help your kids pay attention despite the possible distractions of having different age groups in the same space.
- Pray that God will help you explain difficult concepts to young kids and kids who are new to church.
- Ask for specific connection points with each child in your class.
- If you have received a list of kids who pre-registered, pray for them each by name. Pray also for the kids whose names you don't know yet but God knows.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will stir kids' hearts as they hear the gospel. Pray that ill draw kids to Himself.

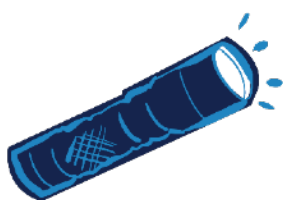
THE CREW FAMILY

Every member of your mixed-age crew adds something to every activity.

Kindergarteners are full of imagination and can really help others find their spirit of wonder and adventure.

First graders may be competitive and certainly notice competition. They can encourage the crew to be the best it can be.

Second graders are especially keen on fairness. They can encourage everyone to be patient and take turns.



Third graders like to be challenged and can come alongside younger members to support them with challenging projects.

Fourth graders like to ask questions to make sure they understand what they're learning and enjoy making choices.

MULTI-AGE GROUPS OF KIDS

Multi-age crews bring together a wider range of ages and developmental stages for Bible study. How do you make the most of that time so that the more advanced kids don't get bored and lose interest and the younger kids don't feel left out and lost? Here are a few tips that come from experienced leaders.

- * Ask older kids to be your "assistants" and help the younger kids with games or activities. The older kids will be focused and learning right along with their younger peers.
- * After discussions/instructions, break into smaller groups or pairs for activities. Group older kids together and younger kids together. Add a challenge to the older group's activity, and simplify the younger kids' activity.
- * Be sure your helpers understand their roles prior to VBS. As you direct the crew, the helpers can assist with things like locating a Bible verse, finding supplies, or guiding kids to answer review or application questions. Remember to make sure no teacher or assistant is alone with kids.
- * Crew Time Plans include tips to help you age activities up or down during your crew times. Your notebook also includes a section on adapting for physical and/or learning disabilities. Use these modifications to help you adapt as you get to know your kids and their interests and abilities.
- * In a multi-age group of kids, older kids may not be the most knowledgeable when it comes to Bible skills or facts. Kids new to church may not know as much as the younger kids who are regular attenders. Older kids can be embarrassed by having a younger child help them, so some skills are best to teach as if the whole group is learning for the first time.
- * Using a variety of teaching methods as we do through our rotations is very helpful when teaching a multi-age group. Kids will tend to gravitate toward others with similar interests, and when kids are interested in an activity, behavior is better and learning happens more effectively.
- * Be flexible. This tip helps no matter what combination of ages you're teaching, but it is especially true with multi-age groups. If something isn't working, be prepared to move to the next thing. Always have a couple of things planned you might not use. And having a couple of "back pocket" ideas that would work anytime is a good idea.

CREW JOBS

Though you don't have to assign jobs, if you do, you may never go back. Every day immediately after Morning Assembly, give each child a job. You may find that your crew works well together and everyone can choose their own jobs. But if children can't agree on who should perform which, assign jobs for Day 1 and then rotate after that so that each child has an opportunity to do several jobs. Encourage them to fulfill their roles, and provide lots of opportunities to do so. Feel free to add or change the ideas below, or ask the Director for suggestions.

- * *Crew Guide* – chooses action ideas for traveling through the halls
- * *Supplies Manager* – distributes and carries supplies throughout the day
- * *Prayer Leader* – opens prayer times or prays for the missionaries of the week
- * *Schedule Supervisor* – helps monitor the daily schedule to let the Crew Leader know what's next
- * *Gratitude Guard* – leads the crew in thanking Station Leaders and other special helpers during the day



TOP FOR CREW LEADER TIPS

1. Participate!

- * Sing the songs...with the motions!
- * Play the games at Recreation!
- * Be curious at Wonder Workshop.
- * Take mental notes at the Bible Lesson to refer to in your Crew Time.
- * Notice kids' crafty details or solid dance moves.
- * Sit or stand with your kids - not in the back or along the side.

2. Support the Station Leaders.

- * Help your crew sit quickly and lock in to be ready for the station.
- * Listen to each Station Leader, and encourage kids to listen, too.
- * Put distracting items out of the way during activities.
- * Be an enthusiastic participant and encourager!

3. Lavish your attention on the kids.

- * Put your cell phone away for the morning. You won't miss much in just a few hours.
- * Use kids' names in positive ways more often than you use it to correct.
- * Use eye contact, on their level rather than looking down at them.
- * Be a tuned-in, affirming listener during discussions. Paraphrase children's answers in a response back to them to show that you've heard and understand what they've said.
- * Give hugs, high-fives, or your own signature tap throughout the day.
- * Be there and ready for the kids when they arrive. Get there early!

4. Be positive.

- * Model the behavior you want the kids to have.
- * Positively acknowledge the children's answers to questions. Though saying something in direct contrast to Scripture must be gently but clearly corrected with a no, at other times a "no" isn't necessary. Rather than telling them, "No, that's not right" consider saying "Thank you for sharing. Does anyone else have thoughts?"
- * Smile! Have fun! Focus more on your kids than anything else, and make it clear that you enjoy being with them.
- *



Positive phrases to help you redirect:

- * Let's keep moving so we can do as many fun activities as possible!
- * Listen carefully so you'll know what to do next.
- * Stay with the crew – we need your help in this activity!
- * That's a unique way of doing things! How did you think of that? Let's try this.
- * It's important that we all follow the instructions and work together as a team.
- * Please move over here so you can pay attention better.
- * Let's all sit in a circle so we can see and hear one another better.
- * Those things are sure cool! Let's keep them over here so they won't distract you or your friends while we're doing this activity.



WHAT DO I DO AT EACH STATION?

Opening Assembly is where kids sing and get an introduction to the day through music, a skit, review, and the day's announcements. Your job there is to:

- greet your crew members in a designated seating area (and take attendance).
- follow the motions and sing out loud.
- help kids quiet down and hear the skit and Director.

Wonder Workshop is where kids experiment and discover with tangible ways to understand the Bible lesson and learn about God's world. You'll need to:

- listen carefully to instructions you may need to repeat for crew members.
- use your imagination and share your curiosity as kids explore.
- help kids complete activities when needed.
- help clean up your area before leaving.

Recreation is where kids play team-building games to review or build on their understanding of the day's lesson and/or God's creation. Your role at Rec is to:

- listen carefully to the instructions so you can help your crew members follow them.
- participate in the activities and cheer on the crew members as they participate.

MCM (Missions, Crafts, or Music)

- On **Monday**, your crew will learn about our supported missionaries for the week, and how our collected offering can help them share Jesus with the World.
- On **Tuesday and Thursday**, kids will create special crafts to take home on Friday.
- On **Wednesday and Friday**, kids will sing, dance, and learn the moves to this year's VBS songs. They'll be thirsty when they're done!

**During these times, you and your helpers should take turns getting a break in the Oasis Room. Coordinate with your group so the Station Leaders have enough support.*

Crew Times is your turn to invest in your crew.

During the first crew time:

- review names and group procedures.
- discuss the Bible lesson with provided questions.
- talk about the Gospel Truth and pray.

During the second crew time:

- talk about the memory verse (of the day or the week's verse depending on your crew).
- practice looking up verses in the Bible.
- use motions to work on Scripture memory.



- play suggested Memory Verse review games.

The Bible Lesson is where kids will hear the Bible lesson from Scripture, presented in a unique way. You will:

- gather with your crew in the front of the sanctuary.
- listen carefully to be ready for review and discussion during your crew time.
- encourage your crew members to listen and participate.
- share your own discoveries during discussion times, and your excitement during the lesson.

Closing Assembly is when the children will experience an exciting review of the day's lesson. Your role at Closing Assembly is to:

- glad kids to their assigned seating area.
- participate in singing and other activities.
- encourage kids to participate without being disruptive.
- check children out according to policy and collect name tags as they're released.

Take Note:

Many stations will prompt thoughts and discussions with your crews about real life and some of the challenges we face. If a child brings up a serious issue, such as indicators of neglect, abuse, or violence he or she has experienced, say, "Thank you for telling me about that. It's very important, and we need to talk about it with our Director to give you a chance to say everything you need to say and help you with your feelings and anything else you need." Involve the appropriate staff person who can follow through with the necessary steps after the conversation, as there is not only a moral but a legal obligation to report circumstances where a child might be in danger.



WHAT TO DO if...

Most of the time, things will go smoothly, but every once in a while, you may run into a dilemma. Here's some advice on how to handle different challenges.

If my crew gets too big...

Our system is designed to work best with mixed age crews of around 5-8 children, but maybe your crew has welcomed a few more friends than that. If it feels too big, talk to the Director as soon as possible. Possibly we can give you an extra helper, maybe a new crew can be formed, or perhaps another crew has space for more children.

If not all my kids have Bibles...

We have Bibles ready for you to give any kids who need them. Grab a Hallway Helper and they'll bring one right away.

If kids don't know how to find things in their Bibles...

As is appropriate for the kids in your crew, mark verses ahead of time or assign older kids to help the younger ones. Help make reading Scripture a fun, rewarding experience and not a frustrating or embarrassing one to those who are new or need support.

If I have things to send home...

Provide a container for each child at the start of the week, and then send that home on Friday. The container doesn't need to be fancy - paper grocery sacks can be perfect! On Friday, remind kids what you're sending and why you're sending it. Encourage kids to use these things, and share your joy in giving gifts to each child.

If my crew won't stay together...

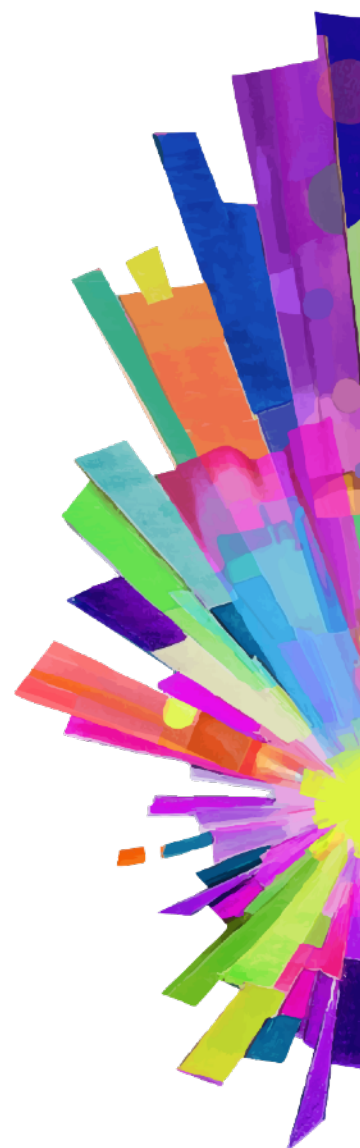
Encourage your Crew Guide to come up with creative ways to travel. Or work with your Thank You-er to come up with cheers to say as you travel.

If I have a clique in my crew...

Encourage friendships among all Crew members by pairing kids with partners they don't know very well during games and other activities. Offer reminders when needed that they're all superstars and that means caring for each other and that no one is left out.

If older kids are unhappy being grouped with mixed ages...

Highlight their helping role. Encourage them to help younger kids find bible passages and other activities. Acknowledge them by telling younger kids, "[Name of older child] is really good at that. Why don't you ask him [or her] to help?"



If a crew member won't participate...

Help shy children feel welcome by calling them by name and asking them questions directly. Respond to their questions with a smile and a statement such as "That's really interesting!" Also try giving children special jobs, such as finding a place for our crew to sit at each station.

If someone *really* doesn't want to participate in Recreation, that's okay. VBS can be tiring! Let kids rest until they're ready to participate.

If people in my crew don't get along...

Quietly take the children aside. Tell them you've noticed that they're not getting along. Let them know that although they don't have to be best friends, they do have to be together all week, so things will be a lot more fun if they can at least be kind to one another.

If I have an overly active child...

Pair this child with yourself for partner activities, and suggest that he or she sit with you during quiet times. Or give him or her a focused role of helping you keep the crew on task and setting an example for everyone else.

Ask your Director if you need further assistance.

If my crew is out of control and unruly...

You can be direct in calling out behavior, but maintain the fun in your voice and language. It'll help you avoid setting a pace for a battle of wills. Use fun phrases that coordinate with the VBS theme to get kids' attention or to point out behaviors that need to be corrected in a non-confrontational way.

If kids are not paying attention to Station Leaders...

Compliment a child nearby who is listening well. Put a hand on the non-listener's shoulder. "Tune in. We need to listen."

If kids are complaining about activities at stations...

"Let's show all our leaders they're our friends by showing respect. You may not love everything we do, but if you don't participate, you might miss out on something you didn't expect to be amazing."

If by midweek there are two or more kids in your crew who just won't listen no matter what you try, call for backup. Talk to the Director and make a new plan so each child gets the most out of their time at VBS.



SAfETY



ALWAYS VISIBLE, NEVER ALONE.

I. Always Visible, Never Alone.

- A. All doors should be propped open unless the door has a full window pane in the top (as do the office doors). These windows should remain uncovered at all times. Always remain within open sight of other adults.¹
- B. Two adults (minimum) or an adult and two youth should be present with children at all times, even if only one child remains in the group.
- C. A Service Coordinator (SC) will be available in the hallway during both church services, classes, and events should you need assistance getting supplies, finding parents, sending children to the restroom (see “Restroom Policies”), or with other needs. The SC will be based at the Children’s Check-In area.

II. Youth Assistants

- A. Eligible teens have completed 6th grade, are under 16 years old and serve with expressed parent/guardian permission.
- B. Youth assistants should remain in the room (with adults) or with the class from the start of service until the end of service. *(This will require any restroom or other breaks to be taken before the service begins or after it ends, and will preclude these assistants from running any errands during the service time.)*
- C. Youth assistants will not change diapers or escort children to the restroom.
- D. Youth assistants will not carry children or hold them in their laps unless directly asked to do so by an adult on duty.

III. Restroom Policies

- A. Volunteers must avoid going into the bathroom with a child if at all possible. If an adult must go in, prop the door open and notify another adult as to where you are, who is with you, and why (e.g. a child is ill).
- B. Diaper changing
 - 1. Should be done according to the policies posted on the wall above each changing table.
 - 2. Should occur only on the three changing tables located in Rooms 9a, 9b, and 10a.
 - 3. Should be done by an adult volunteer (female whenever possible) or staff member.
- C. Using restrooms found in classrooms (Rooms 9b, 10a, and 10b)
 - 1. Children should go to the bathroom alone as much as possible, with verbal assistance from the adult volunteer and with door open.
 - 2. Because toddlers are curious the door may need to be closed, so windows are built into these doors. If door must be closed, a female adult should assist the child in the restroom, and another adult must be present and aware of the situation.

¹ In this policy, “adults” are defined as anyone age 16 or older.

- D. Restroom use for children younger than Kindergarten
 - 1. 3-5 year olds (in classrooms 7, 8, or 10) should use the Children's Restrooms located to the east of Room 8, near the Infant Room.
 - 2. Restroom doors should be propped slightly open with a doorstop when in use, with teachers remaining outside the restrooms unless help is required inside. If additional help is needed, the teacher should prop the door fully open.
 - 3. Teachers should either:
 - a) take the entire class to the restrooms at once, with children lined up in the hallway, or
 - b) notify the Service Coordinator, who will either assist the child or take your place in class until you have returned from doing so.
- E. Restroom use for K-4th graders
 - 1. Teachers should take the entire class to the restroom whenever possible, with the restroom door should propped open and adults in plain sight.
 - a) Children should take turns a few at a time so that no one is in a classroom alone and so the restroom doesn't become overly crowded.
 - b) If it becomes necessary for an adult to enter the restroom, leave the door open and notify another adult as to where you are.
 - 2. If a child needs to use the restroom during class, notify the Service Coordinator.
 - a) The SC will monitor the child from one point in the hallway while one of the classroom teachers stands in their doorway, able to watch both the hall and the classroom.
 - b) The SC can provide further help as needed. At all times, both adults are visible and the child's location is clear.
- F. Children in 5th grade may go to the restroom alone if necessary.
 - 1. Children are encouraged to use the restrooms before or after service.
 - 2. During services, they are to use the restroom in the children's hallway.

IV. Appropriate Touch

- A. Appropriate physical contact varies according to the age of the child. Holding, rocking, sitting in laps, diapering, assisting with the potty, hugging for extended periods of time, rubbing backs and heads are all appropriate in many situations with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, but are typically not appropriate for school-aged children.
- B. Sitting on laps is most often only appropriate for ages birth through 4; it is not often appropriate for older children. It should not be necessary to pick up or hold older children unless injured or in distress.
- C. In some situations, a man will need to limit physical contact more than a woman in the same situation, especially when working with older children. Men should typically not assist with restroom issues for children at any age, though they may walk a child to the restroom and wait outside the door.
- D. Only touch children in "safe" areas and for brief times, with no rubbing or massaging. "Safe" areas generally include hands, feet, arms, shoulders, or upper back. Never touch a child on or near any region that is considered private or personal (on any part of the body that swimsuit covers), unless changing diapers or assisting nursery children with restroom needs.

- E. Ask children's permission before hugging them, and take care to note any discomfort they may express with appropriate physical contact, allowing children personal space as needed, and never indicating frustration in their not wanting to participate in a high five or other innocent physical touch.
- F. Never touch a child out of frustration or anger. Physical discipline is never an appropriate way for Grace staff or volunteers to correct a child.

V. Additional Child Protection Policies

A. Family members and friends

- 1. Anyone who accompanies volunteers during their turn to serve must be approved by Children's Ministry Staff. This includes children over the age of 10, friends, relatives, spouses, or any others who are not currently regular Children's Ministry Volunteers or caregiver staff.
- 2. If someone is interested in serving regularly, he or she should meet with staff to be trained and screened before serving.

B. Taking Pictures

- 1. Do not take pictures of Grace children with personal cameras, cell phones, or any other personal property without explicit permission from Grace Staff.
- 2. Do not post photos including faces of children at Grace on social media or other publicly accessible places.
- 3. If photos are needed for a project, speak with Children's Ministry Staff ahead of time to request approval. Staff will collect parental approval and will take, approve, and share the photos as the situation dictates.

VI. Reporting

- A. If you observe an adult talking or acting in a manner that seems to be innocent but might appear to others to be inappropriate, bring the behavior to the adult's attention and assist in correcting it. Also, notify Children's Ministry Staff.
- B. If you observe Church Staff, a children's ministry volunteer, or anyone talking or acting in a manner that creates suspicion of improper involvement, or the potential for improper involvement, promptly report your concern to Children's Ministry Staff who will take appropriate corrective measures. Behaviors may include but are not limited to:
 - 1. Inappropriate comments about sexual matters, especially about or in the presence of minors.
 - 2. Deliberate engagement with sexually explicit material.
 - 3. Excessive and inappropriate attention to a particular child or youth, especially if it involves an effort to be alone with the child.
 - 4. Harsh treatment or severe neglect of a child.
- C. If you suspect that a child has been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused:
 - 1. report it immediately. If you are a mandatory reporter due to your occupation or other commitments, of course do so. If you need assistance in doing this, Children's Ministry Staff can assist you with the process.
 - 2. Whether or not you are a mandatory reporter, please also report the incident to a Grace Staff member.

3. *Do not* talk to the suspect to attempt to substantiate allegations or suspicions. Let the authorities do this.
 4. *Do not* be afraid to report. We are responsible as a church community to comply with the law and cooperate with efforts to protect our children.
 5. *Do not* discuss the situation with anyone other than the proper authorities and Grace Staff. This could compromise investigation and/or further harm the victim.
- D. If a child discloses abuse to you, listen well and then report immediately to the appropriate legal authorities and/or a Grace Staff member. *A child who discloses abuse is almost never lying.*
1. Assure the child that he/she is safe and that you will help him/her.
 2. Do not interrupt the child to come find a staff member or to contact authorities. Listen attentively until he/she is done talking.
 3. Do not ask clarifying questions as this can create confusion for the child.
 4. After reporting the conversation, document all that was said and give this report to a staff member and the appropriate authorities.
 5. This information will remain confidential, once reported.

VII.Resources

- A. Tchividjian, Basyle. "Protecting Children from Abuse in the Church: Steps to Prevent and Respond." Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2013. Print.
- B. Reju, Deepak. On Guard: Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse at Church. Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2014. Print.
- C. www.netgrace.org
- D. Holcomb, Justin and Lindsey. God Made All of Me. Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2015. Print.

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