

VBS 2021
DESTINATION DIG
STUDENT
LEADER GUIDE

SESSION 1

Truth: Jesus Came as God Promised

Bible Story: Jesus Was Born (Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:18-2:6)

Today's Point: Jesus is the Savior God promised.

LEADER DEVOTION

When my husband and I attended Bible college, we were blessed to travel to Israel with a few of our professors and classmates. I'll never forget the daily experience of "THIS IS REAL" that saturated that trip. Seeing the water lap at my toes along the Sea of Galilee, standing on the Mount of Olives, walking along the pavement in Jerusalem,—the Bible came alive for me. Decades later, those experiences are just as profound. Sadly, we cannot whisk everyone to Israel for the day. However, this year's biblical content is deliberately and carefully crafted to help people of all ages experience the "THIS IS REAL" truth from God's Word.

You will notice that each day's Scripture passages include both Old and New Testament sections. We want students to discover that there is a solid connection between what God promised in the Old Testament, what Jesus fulfilled in the New Testament, and what we can see today as evidence that it is all true. It really happened!

I want to challenge you to stop right now, open your Bible, and read the passages listed for today (if you haven't already). Did you notice that the Matthew passage quotes the exact Isaiah and Micah verses that are part of the passages for today? In the very first chapter of the New Testament, God shows us the connection of the words written by the prophets hundreds of years before to events as they were happening. When Jesus was born it was on God's timetable. Everything happened just as He promised.

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, who was betrothed to Mary, in a dream. Jewish betrothals (or engagements) were as binding as marriage vows, though the couple did not engage in marital relations. They used that time to prepare their household. Joseph was committed to Mary and planned to marry her. It still boggles my mind to think that Joseph accepted the miraculous announcement by the angel. I can only think that when God delivers the unbelievable, He also provides the ability to believe it. Joseph did what the angel told him. He married Mary and took care of her. A government mandated census prompted Joseph to

Today's Purpose: Leaders will use Old Testament prophecy and New Testament fulfillment to point students to the truth that Jesus is the Messiah.

Bonus Verse: For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us. *Isaiah 9:6a*

travel with Mary to Bethlehem, which put them in the exact place prophesied by Micah. In Bethlehem, Jesus was born.

Later, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. They had seen the star that heralded His birth and came looking for this promised King. King Herod was enraged to hear of a potential threat to his throne. He asked the Jewish chief priests and scribes where the baby would be born. "In Bethlehem," they replied, because they knew what the prophet Micah had said.

This week, may we approach the Bible study with excited and expectant hearts like the wise men. As we connect the dots from the Old Testament to the New Testament that reveal God's amazing truth, may we share that excitement with the students we teach. This is not just "the Christmas story." This is the moment when Jesus came down from heaven, entered the world as a human baby, and began His mission of being God with Us, our Savior.

FACTS AND ARTIFACTS

In addition to connecting Old Testament prophecies with New Testament fulfillments, this week of VBS links each day to real archaeological finds that further emphasize the reality of what we read in the Bible.

TODAY'S ARTIFACT: QUMRAN JAR

In the late 1940s a shepherd made an exciting discovery, a cave containing what appeared to be ancient scrolls. Others soon began to explore the caves located amid the limestone cliffs along the northwestern rim of the Dead Sea. This amazing collection, known as the "Dead Sea Scrolls," not only includes a few near-complete scrolls, but also tens of thousands of scroll fragments from every book of the Old Testament except for the Book of Esther. The collection includes more than 900 different texts in various languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek).

THINK ABOUT IT:

What are some "THIS IS REAL" moments you have had as you've studied God's Word?

WORSHIP PREP

- Leader kit items 2 and 3
- Printables
 - “Playlist”
- “The Boulder Chase,” *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Lucas Films, 1981—search online for a clip of this scene
- Kiddie pool
- Tarp—Place the tarp in the center of room and set the pool on top.
- Bags of sand—Pour sand into the pool.
- Small shovels and spades (2 each)
- 2 different Nativity scene sets with the same number of pieces—Bury the pieces in the sand.
- Tear sheet—Print these questions on the sheet:
How can we seek the Lord? What difference can searching for the Lord with all your heart make? What are some results when we seek the Lord this way?
Display on the focal wall.

LEADER TIP

Hide the nativity pieces around the room if you do not have a pool and sand.

MULTIMEDIA KEY

 Printables
See page 1 for more information.

NOTE: From time to time, LifeWay will suggest the use of clips from popular shows or movies to help reinforce the day’s point with a cultural reference. However it is always up to the church using the materials to thoroughly preview and determine which clips are appropriate for use with their students.

WORSHIP (30 MINUTES)

- Welcome students to worship and the first night of Student Vacation Bible School. Open the session by playing the movie clip from *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*.
- Say: “You just saw a clip of one of the most popular movie archaeologists, Indiana Jones. In this movie Indiana Jones is seeking lost treasure. This week during VBS we will investigate real life discoveries that will lead us to unearth the truth about Jesus.”
- Invite students to share definitions of archaeology. Share this definition—the scientific study of material remains (such as tools, pottery, jewelry, stone walls, and monuments) of past human life and activities. Say: “This week, we will journey to modern-day Israel to uncover truths about Jesus.”
- Share this week’s motto: Seek Truth! Find Jesus! Invite students to shout the motto together several times like a cheer.
- Invite a student band to lead the group in singing songs from the “Playlist”  Call on a student to pray after singing a few songs.
- Form two teams. Ask both sides to send two representatives to the kiddie pool. Provide small spades/shovels and digging tools. Tell students they are to work with the other student on their team to dig and find __ (insert number of pieces in each set) matching pieces. Return any pieces that do not match to the pool. The group that finds all matching pieces first and figures out what they represent will win. Encourage teams to cheer on their representatives.
- Ask: “What do the items represent?” (*A nativity scene, Jesus’ birth.*)
- Form four teams. Call attention to the “VBS Scripture Poster” (kit item 2). Assign one of the following phrases of Jeremiah 29:13 to each group: ‘you will seek me,’ ‘and find me,’ ‘when you search for me,’ ‘with all your heart.’ Invite the students to recite their phrase when you point to their group.
- Repeat this several more times. On the last time, lead students to recite the whole verse together. Cover the poster on the last time and invite students to say it from memory.
- Ask a student to translate the theme verse in her own words. Point back to and make comparison to the pool activity where students were searching for the nativity pieces.
- Call attention to the tear sheet and invite groups to discuss the questions. Allow time for sharing the group’s discussions by inviting the youngest student in each group to share.
- Say: “Today, we will uncover the truth that Jesus was born and is the Savior God promised.” Refer to the “Session 1 Poster” (kit item 3). Lead students to read the verse in unison.
- Ask: “When do we celebrate the birth of Jesus?” (*Christmas—December 25*) Say: “A favorite tradition at Christmas is singing carols. Let’s sing a few now.” Invite the student band to lead the group in singing a few Christmas carols.
- Invite a student to share a personal story about the true meaning of Christmas.
- Lead in prayer, asking God to reveal truths about Jesus’ birth that will impact our lives.

MOTIVATE (15 MINUTES)

PREPARE FOR THE DIG

- Instruct students to form a line in order of their birth month and day without talking.
- Designate one side of the room as January and the opposite side of the room as December. Once students are in place, check to ensure they are in the correct order. Then, form four groups: January–March, April–June, July–September, and October–December.
- Give each group a tear sheet and markers. Lead students to turn to page 4 in the learner guide for another definition of archaeology.
- Invite a student to read the definition aloud. Explain that archaeologists go on digs of sites to see what they can uncover. Say: “You do not have to be a professional archaeologist to go on one of these adventures. In fact, companies exist to make this available to the general public. Let’s pretend we have this scheduled for a group outing and that each group is part of the planning team.”
- Lead groups to discuss and note preparation and planning details on their tear sheets such as how to find a site, items to pack, transportation, length of dig, tools needed on site, and so forth.
- Invite the oldest student in each group to share briefly from their group discussions.
- Point students to page 4 in the learner guide to number the steps in an archaeological dig in the proper order. (Answer: 3, 4, 2, 1, 5)

SURVEY THE AREA

- Explain that after arriving at the dig site, archaeologists survey the area.
- Point out the city of Bethlehem on the “Map of Modern-day Israel” (kit item 4).

- Say: “We will be exploring areas in Israel this week. Our first stop is the village of Bethlehem.”
- Call attention to “Session 1 Poster” (kit item 3). Invite students to read the point aloud.
- Refer students to page 5 in the learner guide. Say: “The picture you see there is of the Church of the Nativity, the modern-day site of celebrating Jesus’ birth. The Bible does not specify the actual day or exact location of Jesus’ birth. The first official mention of celebrating His birth on December 25 was in Rome in 336 A.D.”
- Lead students to answer the questions on page 5 in the learner guide. (*What is the worst Christmas gift you received; the most useful gift; and the overall best Christmas gift?*)
-  Point out that no gift we have ever received compares to the gift of Jesus. Explain that this gift from God is free, but we have to receive it.
- Explain that in archaeology, excavation is the exposure of archaeological remains. Tell students that they are about to perform their own excavation of Scripture.
- Refer back to page 4 in the learner guide for some of the steps students can use when digging into Scripture.
- Say: “Let’s see what happens when we are exposed to the Word, process it, and apply it to our lives. We will be reading from two Old Testament passages and one New Testament passage.”
- Instruct students to find the two Old Testament Books of Isaiah and Micah in their Bibles.
- Pray, asking the Lord to reveal Himself and His truths during time spent in His Word today.

MOTIVATE PREP

- Leader kit items 3 and 4
- 4 tear sheets and markers
- VBS 2021 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)

PREPARE FOR THE DIG TIP

Allow students to use their phones to do quick research on archaeological digs if needed.

SHARING THE GOSPEL

 This icon identifies an opportune time to share the gospel with students as led by the Holy Spirit.

EXAMINE PREP

- 4 sheets of paper—Print the numbers 1–4 each on separate sheets. Hang each sheet in one corner of the room.
- 4 sheets of paper—Print the following questions on separate sheets. 1. *What was the significance of Mary being a virgin and the child being conceived by the Holy Spirit? How does it make you feel knowing that Mary was a teenager?* 2. *How was Joseph described? What did the angel keep Joseph from doing?* 3. *What was the child to be named? What did it mean? What would He do?* 4. *How did Mary and Joseph remain faithful to God? As a result, how did they help further God's kingdom?* Post one sheet of paper in each corner of the room with the corresponding number.
- VBS 2021 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)

EXAMINE (30 MINUTES)

SAY WHAT?

- Allow students to remain in their groups. Refer students to page 6 in their learner guides. Lead students to circle all the ways they communicate and to star the one they use most often.
- Instruct groups to develop a definition of the word, 'prophecy.' Allow groups to share.
- Build on their responses by using this definition: Prophecy is communication from God to humankind through a prophet.
- Say: "Back in Bible days, people communicated with God through prophets. God would share His message or vision with the prophet, who would then share it with the people. Often, the message was one of judgment for sin, devastation, and desolation."
- Ask students to answer the multiple-choice question on page 6 in their learner guides.
- Discuss as a large group the ways we communicate with God today.
- Tell students that much of this book of the Bible contains prophecy delivered by Isaiah.
- Share these facts about Isaiah:
 - » A Hebrew prophet
 - » Considered one of the major prophets of the Bible
 - » Lived about 700 years before Christ was born
 - » Received his call to be a prophet when he saw a vision the year King Uzziah died
 - » Wrote the majority of the book of Isaiah in the Bible
- Ask: "What name would the child be given according to Isaiah 7:14?" (*Immanuel*) Point students to page 7 in their learner guides for the meaning of Immanuel. Instruct them to recite the meaning together.
- Call on three students to read aloud the statements on page 7 on the significance of the name *Immanuel*.
- Discuss their responses to knowing that Jesus is Immanuel and the significance of that name.

PROMISES, PROMISES

- Within their groups, lead students to share: 1) a time someone kept a promise, 2) a time someone didn't keep a promise and 3) how they felt in both situations.
- Point out that God always keeps His promises. In the Scripture passages you read today you will see where God made promises in the Old Testament and fulfilled them in the New Testament.

IMMANUEL

- Ask students to turn to **Isaiah 7:14** in their Bibles. Call on a volunteer to read the verse aloud.

BETHLEHEM

- Lead students to turn in their Bibles to **Micah 5:2** to see another prophecy similar to the one just read. Ask a student to read this verse aloud.
- Say: "Micah, who wrote this Book in the Bible, was another prophet who lived around the same time as Isaiah. God's message to the Israelites that Micah delivered was one of judgment. The Israelites were to be a holy nation, set apart by God, but instead, they chose to blend in with the darkness of surrounding pagan peoples."
- Share how in the midst of his harsh message to the Israelites,

Micah predicted the birth of one who would make an eternal difference. Ask: "From where would this person come?" (Answer: *Bethlehem*)

- Ask students to share their prior knowledge of Bethlehem. Refer students to page 7 of the learner guide to test their knowledge of Bethlehem by completing the true/false activity. (Answers: *True, False—5 to 6 miles, True, False—David, True, True, True*)
- Share these additional interesting facts about Bethlehem:
 - » The meaning of Bethlehem is "house of bread," and Jesus would be the Bread of Life.
 - » Bethlehem was the birthplace of David, and Jesus was of the lineage of David.
- Tell students they will now look to a New Testament passage where God kept His promise of sending a Savior to His people.

THE BIRTH

- Assign each group a number: 1, 2, 3, or 4. Instruct groups to move to the corner where their number is displayed.
 - Instruct groups to turn in their Bibles to **Matthew 1:18-2:6** and read the verses aloud within their groups.
 - Lead groups to answer the questions posted at their corner after reading the passage.
 - Direct groups to rotate clockwise to the next corner and answer the questions there.
 - Rotate through all four corners. On the last rotation, read each question and allow the group at each station to share briefly.
 - Point students to look at page 7 of the learner guides and fill in the blanks of the three summary statements. Once they have had time, ask three students to each share one of the statements.
 1. The child was conceived of a teenage virgin named Mary and the Holy Spirit.
 2. The child was to be named Jesus because He would save His people from their sins.
 3. Jesus was born with a humble birth in a stable in Bethlehem.
- Remind students that Jesus had a humble birth, not one fit for a king. He was born in the small village of Bethlehem, not the large city of Jerusalem, and He was born in a stable or cave where animals were kept with His crib a common feeding trough.
 - Say: "Jesus came as a servant to fulfill His destiny and God's promise to save us from our sin. We are to follow Jesus' example of being humble servants."
 - Mention that Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem. Mary was a very pregnant teenage mom. And, they found no room to stay in, and ended up in a stable. Although their path was not easy, they loved God and remained faithful to His calling.
 - Say: "Following God's plan is not easy. When we face hardships and obstacles along the way though, God is not absent. He is with us. While He may not prevent the hardships/struggles, He helps us through these times."
 - Direct students to page 8 of their learner guides to identify a way(s) to be a part of God's plan.
-  Explain that the passage from Matthew is the fulfillment of God's promise of a Savior for His people. God provided a way for forgiveness of sin, for relationship with Him and for eternal life.

APPLY PREP

- Leader kit items 2, 5, and 6
- Printables
 - “Scripture Strips”
- 3 tear sheets—Print *God’s Promises* across the top of one, *Physical Birthday*, and *Spiritual Birthday* across the other two. Display the sheets on a focal wall.
- 8 strips of tape—Roll the tape and place on the wall near the tear sheet.
- Birthday cake or cupcakes, drinks, and party favors
- 2 sheets of paper in different colors—Print out the “Scripture Strips” on the paper. Cut the strips apart and hide them around the room.
- VBS 2021 Student Learner Guides (1 per student)

APPLY (15 MINUTES)

QUMRAN POTTERY

- Distribute copies of the “Qumran Pottery” (kit item 5) and a pen to each student.
- Hold up a copy of the kit item. Explain that pottery vessels like this were found in the Qumran Caves, an archaeological site in the West Bank area of Israel where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. The scrolls contained all but one Old Testament Book of the Bible.
- Ask: “If archaeologists hundreds of years from now were to excavate and find remnants of your life, what would they find? What would these finds tell them about you?”
- Lead students to record their responses on their copies of the “Qumran Pottery.” Share responses after a few moments.
- Ask: “What evidence would they find that you follow Jesus?”

GOD’S PROMISES

- Give eight students one of the “More of God’s Promises Strips” (kit item 6).
- Call on each of the eight students to read aloud the promise they were given.
- Instruct students to make note of each promise in their learner guides on page 8 as they are shared.
- Direct the volunteers to tape their strips to the tear sheet you have displayed.
- Call attention to the list of some of the additional promises God gives us in His Word that are listed in the learner guide.
- Remind students that God always fulfills His promises just as He did when Jesus was born.

BIRTHDAY PARTY

- Call attention to the “VBS Scripture Poster” (kit item 2). Read the verse aloud

- Say: “Part of seeking God is reading His Word and learning about Him. Today we learned that God’s promise to send His Son to be our Savior was fulfilled. When Jesus was born in the small town of Bethlehem. Today, we studied about the birth of Jesus. Now, we are going to celebrate His birth and everyone’s birth!”
- Provide cake or cupcakes, drinks and party favors.
- Guide students to write their names and birth dates on the tear sheet labeled “Physical Birthday.”
- Lead students to write the date they accepted Christ as Savior on the “Spiritual Birthday” sheet.

Leader Tip: Tell students who do not have a date for the spiritual side not to be discouraged. Explain that today could be that date. Invite any student who wants to stay after the session and talk about what it means to trust in Jesus.

- Tell everyone: “Happy Birthday!” Consider singing “Happy Birthday” together, substituting “God bless you” in place of a name. Allow a short time of fellowship.

ISAIAH 9:6A

- Form two teams. Assign each team one of the colors of paper strips.
- Instruct students to find the words to Isaiah 9:6a that have been hidden around the room. Explain that they may only take strips in the color assigned to their team.
- Direct teams to put the verse in order once all their strips are found and say them in unison.

PRAY

End the session by saying: “We are beyond thankful that Jesus fulfilled God’s promise of being our Savior and making it possible to have a relationship with God.” Close in prayer.

ROTATIONS (30 MINUTES EACH)

MISSIONS

Plans for leading a missions rotation can be found on the CD-ROM in the leader kit or in the printable resources in the digital bundle.

RECREATION

DIG SITE HIDE AND SEEK

PREP

- Establish an area of play.
- Gather an air horn, megaphone, or whistle.
- Ask adult volunteers to hide or to serve as barrier/crowd control.
- Print the "Dig Site Roles"  and give one to each adult who is hiding.
- Meet with adults before the game. Inform those who are hiding that when a group finds them, they must go with the group but not reveal their point value. Give adults time to hide. Send other adults to form a barrier around the playing area.

PLAY

- Point out the play area and adults who are serving as barriers. Explain that several adult leaders are hidden in the area and the goal is to find them all.
- Form groups by grade level. Instruct them to form a circle by joining hands. Groups must keep their hands joined and walk (no running) throughout the game. On your signal groups are to seek and find the hidden adults. Once an adult is found they must stand in the middle of the circle and travel with the group.
- Tell groups to listen for the sound of an air horn, whistle, or megaphone that designates the end of the game. When the game ends, they are to make their way back to the meeting room where points will be awarded based on the role of the adults who were found.
- Signal play to begin.

DEBRIEF

- Compare this game to our faith journey and specifically to seeking and finding the Lord.
- Refer back to the "VBS Scripture Poster" (kit item 2) and read the verse aloud.
- Point out that Jesus is not hiding from us like the adult leaders were; He is there for us but we must seek Him, and when we do, we will find Him.

CRAFTS

CHRISTMAS ORNAMENT

CRAFTS PREP

- Clear glass Christmas ornaments (1 per student)
- Ribbon (12 inches per student)
- Paper (1 sheet per student)
- Crayons in a variety of colors—Peel the paper from each one.
- Pencil sharpeners (several for students to share)
- Hair dryers
- Metallic markers

LEADER TIP

Add shavings a few at a time. Too many colors can cause a muddy effect.

WELCOME

Ask the students to recall which Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled in today's Bible Study. (*The Promised Savior was born.*) Show the students the ornament you made. Explain that students will be making an ornament that will help them remember that Christmas celebrates Christ's birth.

ASSEMBLE

Step 1: Fold the paper in half, then open the paper and lay it on the table.

Step 2: Use the pencil sharpener to create crayon shavings on the paper.

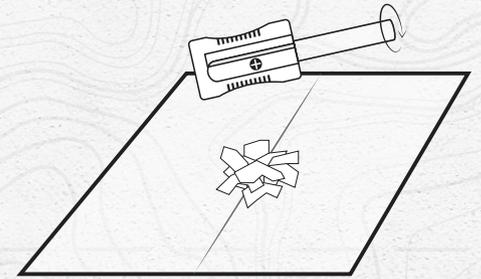
Step 3: Remove the top from the ornament.

Step 4: Pick up the paper and use the fold to create a funnel to guide the shavings into the ornament.

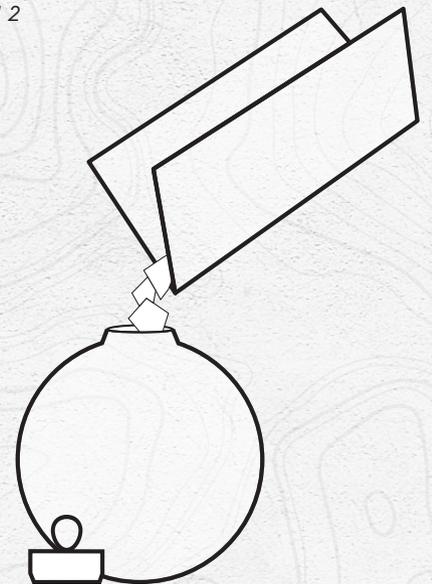
Step 5: Heat the ornament with a hair dryer to melt the shavings. Add more shavings if you need to.

Step 6: Replace the top and add the ribbon.

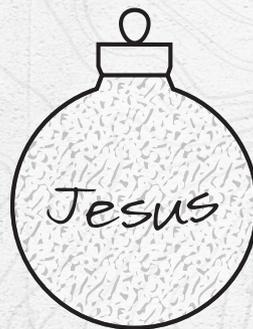
Step 7: Use a metallic marker to print *Jesus*, *Immanuel*, or *Messiah* on your ornament.



Step 1 and 2



Step 3 & 4



Step 6 and 7



Step 5

VBS 2021

STUDENT LEADER GUIDE

For Teachers of Kids Who Have Completed Grades 7–12

Accompanying Resources

VBS 2021 Student Learner Guide (005825725)

VBS Scripture

Jeremiah 29:13

VBS Motto

Seek Truth!
Find Jesus!

VBS Website

www.lifeway.com/vbs