

VBS 2021 BACKYARD KIDS CLUB BASE CONFERENCE PLAN (1½ HOURS)

Purpose Statement

This 90-minute plan is designed to train and equip church leaders on how to effectively use LifeWay's Destination Dig™ Backyard Kids Club® curriculum to reach families in their community or on a mission trip.

Needed Resources

- *VBS 2021 Backyard Kids Club Kit*
- *VBS 2021 Backyard Kids Club Director's Guide*
- *VBS 2021 Crafts Rotation Leader Guide*
- *VBS 2021 Craft Packs*
- *VBS 2021 Music for Kids CD*
- Item 1: Handout" — Copy 1 per conferee.
- 2 paper plates and 2 paper lunch bags — Write the Bible verse, Jeremiah 29:13, on each plate. Cut each plate into 10–12 pieces to create a puzzle. Place each puzzle in its own lunch bag.
- Large, solid colored flat sheet (king or queen size)
- Hardtop cooler or camping chair
- OPTIONAL: *VBS 2021 Plastic Tablecloth* and any other VBS 2021 decorations
- OPTIONAL: *VBS 2021 Visual Pack* — Use clear packing tape or spray adhesive to mount posters to foam board or large cardboard to demonstrate how they can easily be displayed outside at a Backyard Kids Club.
- OPTIONAL: Artificial trees or plants
- CD player

Room Setup

Spread a large flat sheet on the floor at the front of the teaching area (where children would sit during Bible Study) and a hardtop cooler or camping chair nearby (where the Bible Study leader would sit). Arrange chairs in a semi-circle or in rows depending on the number of participants expected. (OPTIONAL: Position artificial trees or plants to either side of the focal area to simulate being outdoors.) Cover the table with a *VBS 2021 Tablecloth* and display the curriculum alongside other outdoor decorations. If using the *VBS 2021 Visual Pack* posters, lean the mounted posters against the table and nearby walls.

Teaching Steps

1. Welcome (5 minutes)

- Play the Music for Kids CD quietly in the background and greet conferees as they arrive.
- Ask for two volunteers to play the Children's "Dig Deeper" activity from Day 2: "Pottery Shard Puzzles."
 - Give each volunteer a lunch bag of puzzle pieces and challenge them to see who can put their puzzle together the fastest.
- Thank volunteers for participating and ask them to return to their seats.
- Say: "Sometimes archaeologists find a few pieces of an artifact and use those pieces to figure out what the whole thing looked like. Today we're going to look at the pieces of Backyard Kids Clubs to see what God may want it to look like for your church this year."
- Explain that the Destination Dig theme is all about unearthing the truth about Jesus.

- Pray, asking God to give each church His plans for them for this coming summer through VBS and BKC.

2. Preparing for BKC (15 minutes)

- Discuss how BKC is like a mini-VBS. All the parts of VBS are represented in BKC except the mission rotation. Each BKC site is its own mini-VBS.
- Explain that the main difference between a VBS and a BKC is the location. In most scenarios, churches conducting BKC are going to where children are instead of asking children to come to them.
 - Encourage attendees to call out different possible locations for BKC such as: neighborhoods, community parks, open lot, apartment complex common area, school yard, outside on the church lawn, mission trip locations, and so forth.
 - Point out that BKC is excellent for church plants or small churches looking to attract young families.
- Explain that the theme for Backyard Kids Club matches LifeWay's 2021 VBS theme, *Destination Dig*. This allows BKC teams to use any VBS materials, such as crafts, decorations, promotional materials, and follow up materials to add to their BKC experience.
- Show the *VBS 2021 Backyard Kids Club Director's Guide*, which includes a CD-ROM. Explain that each church needs one copy of the director's guide for the staff member or volunteer heading up BKC, no matter how many BKC sites a church is planning. This is the same role as a VBS Director. Explain that you will reference the guide throughout the conference to show how helpful it will be. Invite conferees to take notes on their handouts (Item 1) as desired.
- Show the *VBS 2021 Backyard Kids Club Kit*. Explain that churches will want to order one kit for each BKC site. The kit is intended for up to 20 children. If churches know in advance that a site will have more than 20 children, they should consider purchasing two kits for that site. This will make sense when going through the schedule below.
 - Explain that you will go into further detail about the individual items in the kit in a few minutes.
- Discuss how training team members will vary depending on the number of sites a church conducts.
 - Show the job descriptions and list of necessary BKC kit items for each team member on pages 9–17 of the directors guide.
 - Explain that if there are only 1–3 sites, teams can meet individually with the BKC director to go through the kit, divvy up roles and supplies, plan the schedule and location, and so forth. The BKC director or other qualified leader can train the team on best practices, security issues, and answer questions that arise.
 - For churches conducting more than 4 sites, Directors may wish to do specialized training. Invite all the hosts to training to review registration, snacks, publicity, etc. Invite all the Bible Study leaders to training on how to teach the curriculum and how to present the gospel. Invite all craft leaders to training to preview the crafts pre-selected by the church. Continue with training specific to each group of leaders. This allows leaders in the same roles to share ideas and encourage one other before and after BKC.
 - Mention that pages 25–28 of the directors guide give great information on characteristics of children at different ages, as well as tips for working with children with special needs. This information is valuable to all teams.
 - Recommend lifeway.com/vbs and ministrygrid.com as sources for additional ideas and helps for training.

- Challenge leaders to conduct (or update) a background check on all adult volunteers before BKC begins and recruit enough volunteers so that there is always a minimum of two leaders with each group of children.
- Remind conferees to spend lots of time in prayer! Point out the wonderful prayer suggestions and prayer calendar on pages 30–31 of the directors guide. Suggest leaders consider sharing this with their entire congregation. Leader devotions are also provided on pages 22–24 of the directors guide.

3. BKC Daily Schedule and Team Roles (45 minutes)

- Say: “Now that we’ve reviewed some of our equipment for our sites, let’s go into further detail on each role of the BKC team and go through a daily BKC schedule.”
- Point out the recommend schedule options on pages 7–8 of the directors guide. Mention that most BKC’s last 2 hours. Churches can choose if they will do 3 days, 4 days, or all 5 days.
- Discuss the roles and responsibilities for each team leader at BKC.
 - **Host/Team Leader:** Determines early arrival activities 15–20 minutes before starting BKC. (Show the Host folder.) The host also provides the snacks. (Show the *VBS 2021 Snack Rotation Recipe Cards* included in the BKC kit.)
 - Explain that the Host/Team Leader is the on-site director. Ideally the host does not have any teaching responsibilities so he/she is available for any needs that arise.
 - Show the top of the first page in the folder and review the difference between a host and a team leader. Explain that the host can also be the team leader, or the team leader can be another person on the BKC team.
 - Mention that the host must have the gift of hospitality—making people feel welcome and loved. Someone who cares more about her flowerbeds than kids is not a good host choice. Whenever possible, recruit hosts that are open to a 2–3 year commitment. It takes time to develop relationships. In some cases, it may take families 2–3 years of participating in a BKC before making their visits to the host church.
 - Main duties: Publicity, registration, snacks, security, follow up, communicating details back to the church staff. (NOTE: Publicity and follow up will be addressed in further detail at the end of the training.)
 - Draw attention to page 11 of the directors guide for great tips regarding important safety information.
 - Hosts work with the team to set the date, schedule, and any kick off or celebration dates.
 - **Snacks (Host):** Snacks are usually the responsibility of the host. Plan for snacks to last 10 minutes.
 - Keep in mind that many children have food allergies. Plan for allergen-free snacks (or alternatives).
 - Consider only serving water since BKC is usually outside. Watch for warning signs that children are overheated or dehydrated.
 - Be sure to think through trash pickup. Tie a large bag to a tree or bring a large trashcan outside.
 - Involve the church at large by asking other church members to provide snacks for the teams. Adults who may not be able to participate the week of BKC might love to shop, prepare, and deliver snacks to host ahead of time.

- Remember to take every opportunity to teach. Snack time is a great time to review the Bible Stories and/or applications from Bible Study.
- **Music/Worship Leader:** Leads Opening Rally for 15 minutes and leads Closing Rally for 15 minutes.
 - Show Music Folder, CDs, and Choreography DVD.
 - Explain that the Music Folder gives an outline for daily opening and closing rallies. A two-character skit is also provided. This helps tie in the theme each day and sets up Bible study. Consider asking older children or middle school/high school students to perform the skits.
 - Choose leaders with high levels of enthusiasm and energy. The music/worship leader should be familiar enough with the songs and movements to teach them to the children each day.
 - If technology is available at a BKC site, the music/worship leader may choose to show the performance videos on the DVD while leading songs.
 - During Closing Rally, review the music from Opening Rally, the motto, and the memory verse. Use the Connection Questions included on the Closing Rally card to review the lesson. This can have a huge impact. Often parents arrive a little early. By reviewing everything at the end, parents can listen in on what their children learned. Parents who are already believers can continue the conversation with their child as they go home. Parents who are not believers will hopefully ask their children to explain what they learned!
- **Bible Study Leaders:** Leads Bible Study for 30 minutes. Recruit Bible Study leaders for both preschool and children's Bible studies. (Show the Preschool and Children's Bible Study folders.)
 - Explain that the daily Bible stories and applications are the same for BKC as the main VBS curriculum. Activities and games have been adapted to fit a broadly graded group of children and are easily portable and done outside.
 - Pull out the Day 1 teaching plans for both children and preschool. Show that they are the same Bible story, but use different activities based on comprehension levels and capabilities.
 - Point out that the Preschool teaching plan includes an abbreviated Bible verse (paraphrase) and coloring sheet option on the back. There is also a separate preschool music CD with songs that are incorporated into the lesson.
 - Mention that the children's teaching plans have an "Dig Deeper" activity (usually a game or craft option) to extend the time if needed.
 - Show the kit items (teaching pictures) and field guides (learner piece) for both preschool and children.
 - Share the following tips for Bible Study:
 - Think through sun versus shade. You do not want kids staring into the sun as they look at the leader.
 - Provide clear physical boundaries. A flat sheet or blanket not only gives them something to sit on but also provides a visual boundary.
 - Provide a cooler for the leader to sit on. Store supplies inside to prevent them from blowing away (other options include a large box, or basket, for bag nearby).

- Ask other team members (Music, Rec, Craft, etc.) to sit with the children during Bible Study time to assist the Bible Study leader and to help the children stay focused.
- Be spiritually and mentally prepared for distractions. Do not be surprised if a neighbor decides to mow the lawn or a hot air balloon goes overhead during Bible Study time.
- **Recreation Leader:** Leads recreation for 25 minutes.
 - Show the preschool and children's *VBS 2021 Recreation Rotation Leader Cards* (included in BKC kit). Explain that the recreation cards for BKC are identical to the cards for VBS.
 - Instruct leaders to be very familiar with the playing area. Watch for tree roots, little ditches or other items that might be hazardous or cause safety concerns.
 - Give very clear boundaries on how far kids may go during games. Consider stationing extra adults or student leaders at those boundaries.
 - Determine in advanced with the BKC team if recreation can include water or messy games.
 - Select 3–4 games per day. It is better to have more prepared to fill extra time.
 - Share the following tips for BKC recreation:
 - End a game before the kids lose interest. You can always bring it back as an opening or closing games during drop off/pick up the next day.
 - Evenly disperse younger and older children on each team when forming teams with broadly graded ages. For relay games, place the youngest children at the front of the line and older children at the back. This will help ensure that kids compete against others their own age.
 - Give teams theme related names instead of calling them "Team 1" and "Team 2," such as "Team Concrete" and "Team Cranes."
- **Craft Leader:** Leads crafts for 25 minutes.
 - Show the Craft folder, the sample craft packs, and the *VBS 2021 Crafts Rotation Leader Guide*.
 - Explain that the BKC craft pages are chosen for their suitability for outdoor use. Additional craft ideas are available in the *VBS 2021 Crafts Rotation Leader Guide*.
 - Mention that LifeWay craft packs are great options because they come in kits that are easy to distribute.
 - Share the following tips for BKC Crafts:
 - Lead kids to stand around tables instead of sitting in chairs. (12 kids can stand around a table where only 6 chairs would fit.)
 - Plan ahead for wind! Place small items/crayons/markers in heavier bowls or cups to keep them from blowing away or rolling off the table.
 - Provide a bucket of soapy water and a towel nearby if doing a messy crafts. This will give children a place to clean their hands needing to go inside to find a sink.
 - Keep extra copies of the preschool Bible Study coloring pages on hand for children who finish early. Or have the

- Recreation Leader to stand-by ready to play a favorite game again as kids finish their craft.
 - Lead kids to place their finished craft near the pick-up area so they do not forget them when they leave.
- Adjusted Schedules:
 - For groups larger than 20 children, utilize a rotation model based on ages rather than keeping all ages together the entire time. For example, after Bible study, older children go to crafts while younger children go to rec. Bring both groups back together for snacks, then flip flop rotations. Bring both groups back together again for Closing Rally.
 - For groups larger than 40 children, consider recruiting two separate teams for everything but music and snack. Children begin and end the day together with the Opening and Closing Rallies, but all other activities would be separated and on their own schedule. (Example: Elementary age would stay in the front yard for Bible study, rec and craft. Preschool age would stay in the backyard for Bible study, rec, and crafts.)
- Student Helpers: Work with the church's student ministry to recruit as many middle school and high school students as possible. Use this as an opportunity to train and guide students in leadership and prepare them for future mission trips.

4. BKC Publicity and Follow Up (20 minutes)

- Direct conferees to pages 32–35 of the directors guide and page 5 in the Host folder for great ideas on spreading the word about BKC.
- Ask attendees to share with the group some creative and successful ways they have handled publicity for their VBS or BKC. If not mentioned by the group, be sure to share:
 - Yard signs with date/time/ages
 - Fliers or *VBS 2021 Door Hangers* in neighborhoods. If going door-to-door, adults should bring their child or a child from the church with them. It is less intimidating for people to answer the door when they see a child.
 - Enlist the help of neighborhood kids in getting the word out. Kids respond best to other kids.
 - Social media that includes direct links to the registration pages on the church website.
 - Consider using the *VBS 2021 Promotional Banner* at the church to direct people to the BKC page on the website.
 - Fliers/posters in common areas of neighborhoods/apartments. Be sure to get prior approval if necessary.
 - Mail *VBS 2021 Postcards* to previous church guests listing the closest BKC to them.
 - Distribute info cards to the children who attend your church and challenge them to invite their friends to come with them to BKC.
- Direct conferees to pages 36–44 in the directors guide and Host folder pages for great ideas on registration and follow up.
- Emphasize that follow up begins with good record keeping during the registration process. Depending on the setting, it can be easy to miss a parent at registration or fail to get complete information. The host may know the family and think they will capture the information later, but if complete information is not gathered, the church will have a difficult time reaching out to the family after BKC.
 - Remind host/team leaders of the importance of turning in registration information in a timely manner. Following up with families needs to happen quickly after BKC.

- Ask attendees to share their own creative and successful follow-up strategies from VBS or BKC with the group. If not mentioned by the group, be sure to share:
 - Phone call from a BKC team member that worked with the child
 - Postcard from a BKC team member that worked with the child
 - Front porch visit from a team member with additional information about the church or delivering a photo from BKC as a keepsake for the child
 - Letter from the church
 - Email from the church
 - Phone call from a children's leader at the church representing the age of the child that attended (Children's Minister, Children's Sunday School teachers, etc.)
 - Invitation to an end of summer BKC celebration at the church
 - Invitation to a school or fall kickoff party at the church
- Ask BKC Hosts and teams to prayerfully consider doing at least one follow-up event during the year in the same location as their BKC. Families are more likely to continue the relationship with the BKC team than they are to visit a church full of strangers. Ideas include:
 - End of summer cookout
 - Back to school party
 - Fall/Halloween festival
 - Thanksgiving pot luck
 - Decorating Christmas cookies
 - Caroling around the neighborhood
 - Making Valentines
 - Easter egg hunts/parties
 - Summer kick off to promote the next BKC
 - Other ideas provided by conferees

5. Closing (5 minutes)

- Thank attendees for coming and acknowledge that this was a lot of information to cover.
- Remind them each BKC is just like a mini-VBS. What they learn from VBS can help in BKC, and what they learn in BKC can help in VBS.
- Address one final difference between BKC and VBS—parent involvement. Since most BKC's happen outside, it is easier for parents to linger or want to stay and help. This provides wonderful opportunities to connect and build relationships with parents. Consider recruiting volunteers who have the sole task of connecting with parents.
- Pray for the leaders, for the churches they represent, and for the children/families who will be reached this summer through VBS and BKC.

Possible Locations for BKC:



Team Responsibilities and Tips:

1. Host/Team Leader

2. Music/Worship

3. Bible Study

4. Recreation

5. Craft

BKC Suggested Schedule

15-20 minutes: Early-arrival
games before BKC starts

15 minutes: Opening Rally

30 minutes: Bible Study

25 minutes: Recreation

10 minutes: Snacks

25 minutes: Craft

15 minutes: Closing Rally

Publicity and Promotion Ideas:

Follow Up Ideas:



Possible Locations for BKC:

- Neighborhood
- Park
- Open lot
- School yard
- Apartment complex common area
- Outside on the church lawn
- Mission trip locations

Team Responsibilities and Tips:

1. Host/Team Leader

- Host provides/oversees location (hospitality)
- Host is onsite director, over safety and security
- Host coordinates snacks and drinks
- Team Leader sets the schedule, promotion, registration and follow up
- Team Leader communicates information back to church staff

2. Music/Worship

- Selects songs to be used in opening and closing rallies
- Plans and leads opening and closing rallies
- Needs high levels of energy and enthusiasm

3. Bible Study

- Recruit a Preschool leader and a Children's leader
- Coordinate lessons with other leaders for max impact
- Use a flat sheet for kids and a chair/cooler for the leader
- Be prepared for distractions of all kinds

4. Recreation

- Selects and prepares games for preschool and children
- Be aware of the playing area and potential hazards
- Give clear boundaries and instructions
- Arrange children so they play against other children of the same age/ability

5. Craft

- Selects and prepares crafts for preschool and children
- Consider space, wind, and clean up when choosing crafts
- Have kids stand around tables instead of using chairs
- Be prepared for kids that finish early: coloring sheets or extra games with Rec leaders

BKC Suggested Schedule

15-20 minutes: Early-arrival
games before BKC starts
15 minutes: Opening Rally
30 minutes: Bible Study
25 minutes: Recreation
10 minutes: Snacks
25 minutes: Craft
15 minutes: Closing Rally

Publicity and Promotion Ideas:

Yard Signs
Neighborhood fliers (door-to-door)
Social Media
Church roadside banner
Postcards to previous attendees/guests
Invitation cards for children to hand out

Follow Up Ideas:

Starts with good Registration/Record Keeping
Phone Call/Postcard from BKC team member
Front Porch Visit from BKC team member
Letter/email from the church
Phone call from children's leader at church
Invitation to another event