

SHARING THE GOSPEL AT VBS CONFERENCE PLAN

Purpose Statement

This 45-minute conference plan is designed to prepare leaders to share the gospel with kids during VBS. VBS is ultimately about leading kids to know Christ as their Savior. In this session participants will explore foundational principles of readiness, learn to ask good questions that lead to discernment, and be equipped to share “The Gospel God’s Plan for Me” with kids.

Needed Resources

- *VBS 2022 Gospel Guide* (005834361) — Provide one guide per expected participant.
- *Levels of Biblical Learning Poster* (005817005) — Display the Levels of Biblical Learning Poster. Use construction paper arrows to highlight the Salvation concepts.
- *The Gospel: God’s Plan for Me* (005567178) — Display on the focal table.
- *VBS 2022 Devotional Bible for Kids* (005834092) — Display on the focal table.
- VBS 2022 Gospel Presentation Video (found on the *VBS 2022 Worship Rally DVD*)
- Item 1: “Handout” — Print and photocopy one for every expected conferee.
- Item 2: “Response Cards” — Print, photocopy, and cut apart. Prepare one response card for every expected conferee.
- Item 3: “Characteristics of Kids Posters” — Print the posters and attach to walls around the room to create “Paint Splat Assignment” areas.
- Pink, blue, and yellow highlighters
- 4 different colored large paint swatches — Print one of the following terms on a separate paint swatch: *Mental/Emotional; Social; Physical; Spiritual*.
- 12” wooden paint stirrers (10) — On separate paint stirrers, print one of the following statements:
 - *The child was attentive while the gospel was being presented.*
 - *The child has responded independently.*
 - *The child is persistent about having spiritual conversations.*
 - *The child shows a basic level of understanding regarding the gospel.*
 - *The child is extremely emotional.*
 - *The child asks about baptism with little interest in salvation.*
 - *The child sensed pressure from well-meaning parents or a teacher.*
 - *The child changes the subject to non-salvation topics.*
 - *The child has obviously reached his limit for sitting still and listening.*
 - *The child knows Bible facts but isn’t interested in application.*
- 2 clean gallon-sized paint cans — Paint one can red and the other green (covering the cans with red and green contact paper will also work).
- TV/DVD player

Room Setup

Arrange chairs in a semi-circle. In each chair place a handout, a *VBS 2022 Gospel Guide*, and a single copy of the response card. Place a table at the front of the room and for teaching tools, and recommended resources to which you will refer. Create “Paint Splat Assignment” areas by attaching the 3 posters (Item 3) to different wall locations around the room. Enhance the areas by using pink, blue, and yellow paint splat clip art (found on the *VBS 2022 Administrative Guide* CD-ROM). Use rolled tape to attach a corresponding highlighter to the paint splat assignment areas. If you expect more than 18 conferees, plan to double the number of paint splat assignment areas to keep small groups to 6 or less participants.

Teaching Steps

1. Introduction (2 minutes)

- Say: "For many churches, VBS is the #1 evangelistic event of the year. Statistically, more people come to know Christ as a result of VBS than any other organized program in our churches. That said, understanding how to lead a child from *hearing the gospel* to *responding* to the gospel is one of the most important tools/skills on our VBS toolbelt."
- Continue: "In this session we will consider the foundations of salvation, learn to recognize a child's readiness to respond to the gospel, and then walk through leading a child through a gospel presentation."
- Pray. Ask God to lead during this important time together.

2. Understanding the General Characteristics of Kids (15 minutes)

- Say: "Understanding general characteristics of kids will lay a wise foundation for sharing the gospel with boys and girls."
- Explain that Luke 2:52 teaches us that Jesus increased in "wisdom, and in stature, and in favor with God, and with man." We know that while fully God, Jesus was also fully man, and he grew according to God's plan for how children grow. Jesus grew mentally and emotionally (in wisdom), physically (in stature), spiritually (in favor with God), and socially (in favor with man). We can expect boys and girls to grow in these ways, too.
- Group participants into 3 color splat teams by numbering them off by colors: pink, blue, yellow. Lead conferees to move to their color splat assignment sheets. Quickly lead a group member to pull a prepared paint swatch from the can to determine their team's category assignment (Mental/Emotional, Physical, Spiritual, Social).
- Say: "Each color team is now standing at an age level chart: 1st & 2nd (pink), 3rd & 4th (blue), or Preteen (yellow). You also have a category printed on your team's chosen paint swatch. Over the next three minutes your group is to read aloud the characteristics under your assigned category and highlight the characteristics that are especially relevant when talking with kids about salvation. Be prepared to share the statements your team has highlighted and why those characteristics are important."
- Allow 2-3 minutes for groups to work. Then lead each group to elect a spokesman to report their group's thoughts. (Other team members may return to their seats.)
- Refer to the Levels of Biblical Learning poster and encourage conferees to consult with that resource for additional understanding of the concept of salvation.

3. Asking Good Questions (5 minutes)

- Mention that at VBS we often don't have the luxury of *really* knowing all the kids. We're asked to make quick assessment of a child's readiness to respond to the gospel often based on limited knowledge of the child's understanding. We must heavily depend on the Holy Spirit to help us discern a child's readiness.
- Explain that asking "good" questions can help. There are three types of questions:
 - **Closed Questions:** Questions that can simply be answered with a simple "Yes" or "No."
 - **Limited Questions:** Questions that can be answered with a correct answer.
 - **Open-Ended Questions:** Questions that spark conversation that help reveal a child thoughts and feelings.

- Ask participants for examples of closed questions that might be asked when talking with a child about salvation (accept 2-3 quick replies). Continue by asking for limited questions (2-3 quick replies), then open-ended questions. Emphasize the importance of asking as many open-ended questions as possible.
4. **“Stop and Pray” or “Prayerfully Proceed”** (10 minutes)
- Say: “So, we’ve done our homework ... we have some general understanding of the kids we’re leading, we’ve prepared some good questions, now what? How can we know if a child really is ready to make Jesus her Savior and Lord? You can’t! Unfortunately, there’s not a “black and white” answer. There is no ‘litmus test’ to determine a child’s readiness. However, you can trust the Holy Spirit, seek His guidance, believe in His love, grace, and mercy, and prayerfully proceed.”
 - Call attention to the 10 prepared paint stirrers. Invite conferees to pull a paint stirrer, read the printed statement, and encourage the group to determine if that stirrer goes in the “Stop and Pray” can (red) or the “Prayerfully Proceed” can (green).
5. **Sharing the Gospel** (12 minutes)
- **The Gospel: God’s Plan for Me**
 - Lead the group to view the VBS 2022 gospel presentation video and to follow along by using the *VBS 2022 Gospel Guide* (previously placed in their seats). Explain that this tool can be a helpful reminder (memory prompter) as they lead a child through a gospel presentation.
 - **Helping a Child Respond to the Gospel**
 - Call attention to the “We Respond” portion of the outline. Emphasize that the transition from “sharing the gospel” to “responding to the gospel” is very important. Again, encourage participants to lean heavily on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Be careful to recognize if the child is still attentive and responsive. If he’s “moved on” or has reached his limit for sitting still and listening, schedule another time to continue the conversation.
 - If you feel led to continue, the following transition statements can be helpful:
 - Have you ever made the decision to respond to the gospel?
 - Do you think you’re ready to Admit, Repent, Believe, and Confess?
 - **Review the Response Cards**
 - Refer to the response card (previously placed in their seats). Explain that Lifeway’s VBS curriculum encourages leader to use a response card to allow kids to make a private decision. This response card will require follow-up on the part of leaders but can help ensure that a child’s decision is based on his personal convictions.
 - **Understanding What the Bible Says about Being Saved**
 - The Bible says: if we believe and confess, we will be saved.
 - John 3:16: For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that **everyone who believes** in him will not perish but have eternal life.
 - 1 John 1:9: If we **confess** our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 - Romans 10:9-10: If you **confess with your mouth**, “Jesus is Lord,” and **believe in your heart** that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **One believes with the heart**, resulting in righteousness, and **one confesses with the mouth**, resulting in salvation.

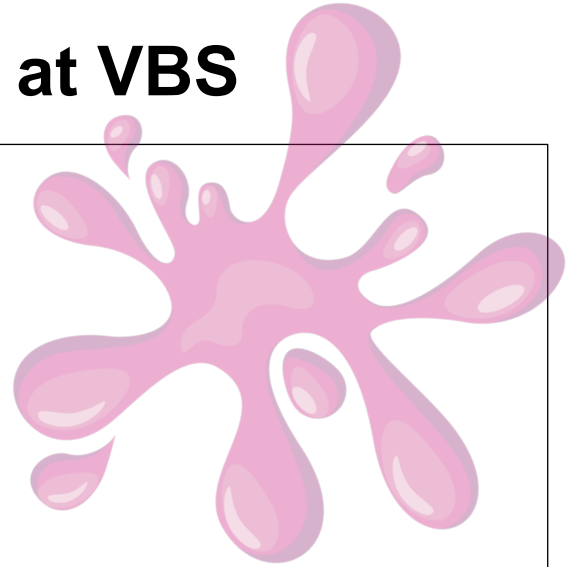
- Confess and believe. That's the simple response to God's plan for you.

6. **Close with Prayer** (1 minute)

- Close in prayer. Ask God to go before us, prepare the way for us, and give us opportunities to share His story with His kids this year during VBS.

Sharing the Gospel at VBS

Understanding Characteristics of Kids:



Asking Good Questions:

Closed Questions:

Limited Questions:

Open-Ended Questions:

STOP & PRAY:

PRAYERFULLY PROCEED:

Responding to the Gospel:



RESPONSE CARD

- ☐ I have already trusted Jesus as my Savior and Lord.
- ☐ I'm ready right now! Please help me pray to trust Jesus as my Savior and Lord.
- ☐ I have some questions about what trusting Jesus to be my Savior and Lord means.
- ☐ I'm not ready to trust Jesus as my Savior and Lord today.

Name and Grade _____

Counseled by _____

RESPONSE CARD

- ☐ I have already trusted Jesus as my Savior and Lord.
- ☐ I'm ready right now! Please help me pray to trust Jesus as my Savior and Lord.
- ☐ I have some questions about what trusting Jesus to be my Savior and Lord means.
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- ☐ I'm not ready to trust Jesus as my Savior and Lord today.

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Counseled by _____

Characteristics of Younger Kids

Mental:

- Have a limited ability to think abstractly
- Can follow specific short and simple instructions
- Frequently ask teachers for help
- Want their work to be perfect and are afraid to fail
- Love to ask questions
- Are eager to learn

Physical:

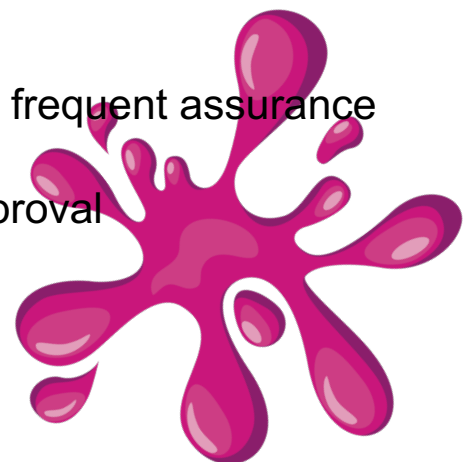
- Are developing small muscle control and hand-eye coordination
- Are extremely active and have difficulty sitting still for long periods of time
- Use their entire body to learn
- Can be sloppy and in a hurry; speed is a benchmark

Spiritual:

- See Jesus as a friend and helper
- Are beginning to feel the need to trust Jesus as Savior
- Are beginning to have a simple understanding of sin and the Gospel
- May know the right answers but not understand the application
- Are beginning to understand truth and honesty, right from wrong
- Are beginning to recognize the consequences for their sin

Social/Emotional:

- Are moving toward independence but still needs frequent assurance
- Tend to focus on their own needs before others
- Are sensitive to what others think and desire approval
- Cry easily when scolded
- May avoid new situations
- Are often talkative
- Can be self-centered



Characteristics of Middle Kids



Mental:

- Attention spans are lengthening
- Can be involved in experiences that deal with feeling and thinking
- Accept carefully worded criticism
- Are beginning to think abstractly
- Are eager to learn

Physical:

- Are active, energetic, and enthusiastic by nature and need an outlet for those physical characteristics with active learning experiences
- May overdo it with physical activities and have trouble calming down
- Have slow, steady growth and good muscle control; girls usually develop more quickly than boys

Spiritual:

- Are developing values and thinking in terms of right or wrong instead of good and bad
- Are learning that the Bible tells of God's plan of salvation
- Can memorize short Bible passages and learn and apply Bible truths about salvation
- Can ask serious questions about religion
- Can follow the examples, teachings, and commandments of Jesus
- Are aware that God loves and values all people

Social/Emotional:

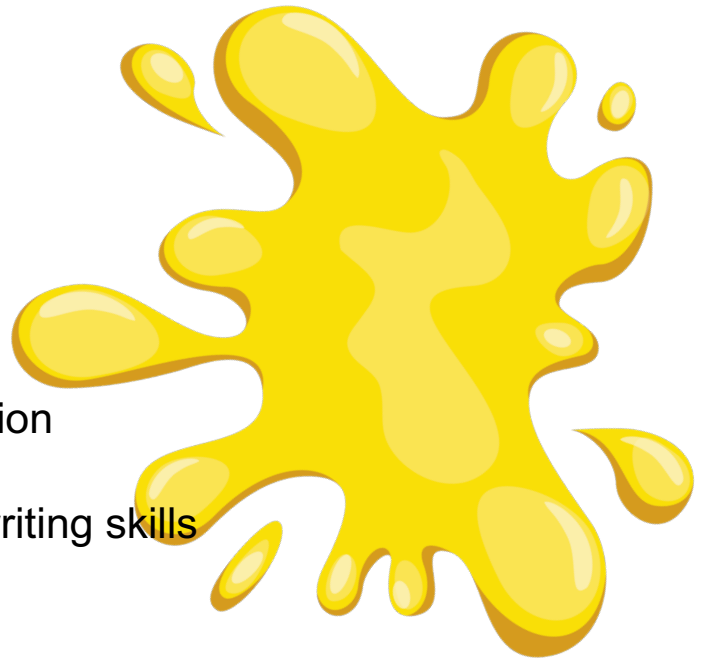
- Like to work in groups and focus on fairness
- Are in the process of building relationships, usually loyal to their friends (generally of the same gender) and want to be helpful to the group or team
- Are increasing in their self-concept
- Can be strong-willed at times as they seek ways to show independence.
- Are generally sensitive, their feelings are hurt easily, and they can cry easily



Characteristics of Preteens

Mental:

- Are capable of thinking abstractly
- Can distinguish between fact and fiction
- Are capable of deep thoughts
- Have developed basic reading and writing skills
- Can concentrate when interested



Physical:

- Are experiencing growth spurts
- Can be noisy and boisterous
- Enjoy competition, active games, and like to win
- Like to use abundant energy and physical skills
- Are approaching puberty; girls are usually ahead of boys

Spiritual:

- Can be sensitive to the conviction of the Holy Spirit
- Have developed concepts of love and trust
- Are developing their own conscience and value system
- Beginning to adopt a belief system of their own
- Are ready for spiritual answers and direction
- Are learning the limits of behavior

Social/Emotional:

- Like acceptance and need approval of their peers
- Can be easily discouraged
- Enjoy companionship
- Can be sensitive to others
- Are worried about fitting in and rejection
- Experience extreme emotions
- Are easily influenced emotionally
- Are beginning to be interested in the opposite sex

