

## VBS 2024 VBX PRETEEN BASE CONFERENCE PLAN (1½ HOURS)

### Purpose Statement

This 90-minute conference plan is designed to encourage and equip church leaders to minister to preteens using Lifeway's Breaker Rock Beach™ VBX curriculum.

### Needed Resources

- VBS 2024 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide (005846915)
- VBS 2024 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Pack (005846916)
  - Pack items 1, 9, 14, 21, and 27: "Days 1–5 Overview Posters" — Hang on the focal wall as the conference progresses.
  - Pack items 5, 11, 16, 24, and 29: "Days 1–5 Bonus Verse Posters" — Hang on the focal wall as the conference progresses.
  - Pack item 6: "Theme Verse Poster"
  - Pack item 17: "Gospel Poster"
  - Pack item 25: "Tiny Puzzles" — Cut up two of the eight puzzles and place in ziplock bags.
  - Pack item 30: "Speak the Truth in Love Scenarios"
- VBS 2024 VBX Preteen Activity Book (005846804)
- VBS 2024 Music for Kids CD (included in leader pack)
- VBS 2024 Memory Maker (005846493)
- VBS 2024 Administrative Guide (005846937)
- (1) VBS 2024 Cups (005846481)
- VBS 2024 Sandcastle Molds (005847241)
- VBS 2024 Travel Sticker (005847240)
- (1) VBS 2024 Gospel Guide (005846982)
- (1) VBS 2024 Parent Guide (005846983)
- Rock Solid Devotional: 100 Days to Know and Trust God's Truth (005846815)
- CSB Explorer Bible for Kids (005836549)
- CSB Outreach Bible for Kids (005841718)
- VBS 2024 Wall Art (005846918)
- VBS 2024 String Flags (005846824)
- VBS 2024 Tablecloths (005846832)
- Giant Inflatable Game Cube (005841133)
- Item 1: "Handout" — Photocopy one per conferee.
- Item 2: "Characteristics" — Print onto cardstock. Cut around edges of each card and then cut each in half with the description on one side and the characteristic on the other. Tape the descriptions to the walls around the room and set aside the characteristics.
- Item 3: "Daily Overviews" — Print and roll up each day's overview. Place one inside each toy kayak.
- Item 4: "Gospel Icons" — Print and insert one icon into each pocket of the Giant Inflatable Game Cube.
- 5 toy kayaks (or sandcastle buckets)
- Painter's tape
- Scissors
- 2 ziplock bags
- VBS 2024 music & CD player or bluetooth speaker

## Room Setup

Arrange chairs in a semi-circle facing the front of the room. Cover a table with a *VBS 2024 Tablecloth* and display all needed resources to be referenced throughout the session. Save space on the focal wall for the Days 1–5 Overview Posters (pack items 1, 9, 14, 21, and 27) and the Days 1–5 Bonus Verse Posters (pack items 5, 11, 16, 24, and 29) to be added as the session progresses. Decorate around this space with the *VBS 2024 Wall Art* and *VBS 2024 String Flags*. Use painter's tape to stick the characteristic descriptions (item 2) around the room.

## Teaching Steps

### 1. Welcome (5 minutes)

- Play "Truth Comes from God" from the *VBS 2024 Music for Kids CD* as conferees enter.
- Greet conferees at the door and give each a copy of the handout (item 1) as they enter. Instruct conferees to think of words they associate with VBS while they wait.
- Introduce yourself when it's time to start and say: "We're going to play a game that you have had a little head start with. I want every person to share aloud one word that is associated with VBS. Here's what will make this interesting ... much like a beach ball blowing all sorts of directions in the wind I want us to say our answers out loud, but we cannot make a plan for the order we plan to speak. If anyone speaks at the same time as someone else, we'll have to start again!"
- Play the game, counting how many people shared before the group needed to start over.
  - The intention here is to get the class moving, so there is no need for this to take more than 2–3 minutes. Consider offering an incentive for reaching a certain number (for example, if you have 10 participants, give a reward if your class makes it up to 8).
- Mention that this activity was adapted from "Everyone Together ... Or Not" (p. 23 in the *VBS 2024 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide*). Explain that the adaptation was for participants to start thinking of words ahead of the game to encourage more people to feel comfortable and take part.
- Say: "A similar approach can be used when thinking about activities at VBX. There will be children who might engage more if we provide warning of what is to come, giving them time to prepare."
- Lead in prayer thanking God for everyone who has sacrificed their time to be here today and for the work they will do with VBX. Thank God for being kind to us and using us to point preteens to His love for them. Ask God to guide the time today and to help everyone to leave feeling encouraged and equipped.

### 2. Preparation for Leading VBS—Who are Preteens? (10 minutes)

- Explain that preteen years are fun but can also be awkward. Some conferees might work with these kids every week at church and know that age well, others may be serving for the first time this summer.
- Say: "Let's get to know the preteens we'll serve at VBX!"
- Distribute the developmental characteristics and lead the group to match them to the correct definitions. Point out that definitions are stuck to the walls around the room.
- Once they have found a match, participants can pull the definition off the wall and bring the matched pair to the front.
  - Possible adaptations:
    - ♣ Form eight groups so that everyone can participate.

- ♣ Don't stick definitions on the wall. Instead distribute all sixteen cards. Guide conferees to find a partner who holds the card corresponding to theirs.
- Review the matching pairs for the group as described below:
  - **Social/Emotional**
    - ♣ Need encouragement—Preteens desire to fit in. Let them know they have a place here and are loved!
    - ♣ Collaborate and compete—Preteens enjoy working with peers, especially those of the same gender. Even better if there is room for competition along the way!
  - **Cognitive**
    - ♣ Thinking abstractly—Preteens are moving from being concrete thinkers to exploring more abstract ideas, which is an opportunity we cannot miss!
    - ♣ Problem solvers—Preteens have big questions and want help learning to find the answers for themselves. Challenge them!
  - **Physical**
    - ♣ Movement—We often think of younger kids needing to move, but with all the changes happening in their bodies, movement is great for preteens too!
    - ♣ Autonomy—Preteens desire to have an active role in deciding how they learn. Create a learning space with a variety of different choices.
  - **Spiritual**
    - ♣ Spiritual ownership—Preteens are taking more ownership of their faith and are learning how to navigate life choices based on the Bible.
    - ♣ Role models—Preteens look to others, including friends, to see faith lived out.
- Say: “It’s important that we carefully consider our audience when preparing for the time we will spend with them at VBX. Your VBX Leader Guide will have some tips (highlighted in the next section), the *VBS 2024 Administrative Guide* also has a downloadable PDF on stages of development (including 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grade, where these kids are going next), and Lifeway has additional resources such as *Wholly Kids* and *Ages and Stages* which are helpful in this area.”

### 3. Preparation for Leading VBS—Resource Overview (15 minutes)

- Ask conferees to meet someone nearby and take turns sharing five things each partner would take on a beach trip.
- Explain that there are some things that most of us would probably have on our lists, such as sunscreen. But there are other things that maybe only a few people might have thought about, such as a fitted bed sheet (can be used to create a relatively sand-free area). Say: “Events like this are great for finding out all of the different things you can bring to VBX to make it the best experience it can be. Some of you may be new to this, others may have led VBX for many years. We’re going to look over the different tools Lifeway provides so that you will know what is available and where to find it.”
- Hold up the *VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide*. Talk through the features of the leader guide directing attention to each sections as follows:
  - Explain that the “VBX Checklist” (p.4) provides a simplified overview of how to prepare for success. One thing to note is the schedule options. Review the sample schedule and explain the purpose of Excite, Explore, and Excel. Explain that there are likely a lot of different churches represented who run VBS in different ways. Say, “If you are just going to be leading the Bible Study content, you will want to utilize the Explore sections each day—but consider pulling in

- ideas from Excite and Excel where possible too!" Mention that the *VBS 2024 Administrative Guide* contains even more ideas for scheduling.
- Point out that "Connecting with Preteens" (p.5) provides great insight related to how preteens develop and think. Say: "A great way to connect with preteens is thinking through who will be helping you. Consider enlisting high school volunteers for VBX. Preteens tend to love opportunities to learn from older teens and younger adult helpers. You can prepare them for the transition to student ministry by introducing some faces they will see more of in the future. Plus, seeing a high schooler or college kid doing the motions, for example, makes it more likely that preteens will join in!"
    - ♣ Mention that preteens also need time to talk, so try to include time for that and use the small group questions provided each day (pack item 4).
    - ♣ Reference the gospel icon that appears in the leader guide each day. Explain that it will draw attention to opportune moments to share the gospel with preteens as led by the Holy Spirit.
  - New this year is "Make VBS Great for All Kids" (p.6) with some tips on engaging kids unfamiliar with church and kids with special needs. Additionally, every day there will be one or two distinct special needs adaptations within sessions.
  - Read 1 Thessalonians 2:8 from the CSB Explorer Bible for Kids or CSB Outreach Bible for Kids. Say: "Each day of content begins with a leader devotion. There's a reason for this. Preteens want to connect with role models—they desire authenticity. Connect with God as you prepare and share your life with the preteens as you teach."
  - Continue: "As you plan, you'll notice helpful tips in the margins throughout the session citing supplies, transitions into a gospel conversation, or special needs adaptations among other things."
  - Explain that there is a full overview of supplies listed by section and activity name on pages 43-44. This can help leaders organize each day's supplies into buckets ahead of time.
  - Remind conferees that the VBX leader guide can also be purchased digitally and that every teacher (volunteer) in the room will need his/her own leader guide.
- Hold up the *VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Pack*. Display items as you talk about them, either pulling them from the pack or pointing to them on the wall.
    - Say: "In this pack you'll find full-size posters showing the theme verse and bonus verses, overview posters, and cards to be cut up for use in different activities. You'll also find a copy of the *VBS 2024 Music for Kids CD*."
    - Mention that each class needs one leader pack.
  - Hold up the *VBX Preteen Activity Book*.
    - Say: "These books are small so they can get lost, but do not miss out on them! They can be used during class time or to recap content at the end of the day. You can even send these out ahead of time to VBX prospects to generate curiosity."
    - Say: "There are a few things I want to highlight in here. Toward the end of the book (pp.14-15) there are some great tools for studying the Bible, which is something many preteens in church are trying to learn. The 'Keep Digging' page (p.16) could also be adapted into a reading plan for your class to work through to keep momentum after VBX."
  - Briefly reference other items displayed on the resource table and encourage conferees to interact with them before they leave, including the:



- *VBS 2024 Administrative Guide*—Say: “Your director should have one of these and there are some helps for you in there related to scheduling and development.”
- *VBS 2024 Memory Maker*—Say: “You can give out one tag each day to help preteens remember what they have learned.”
- *VBS 2024 Gospel Guide*—Say: “This is a great tool for walking through the gospel with preteens or even their parents.”
- *VBS 2024 Parent Guide*—Say: “Parents want to know what their kids are learning. Here is something you can use to show them.”
- *Rock Solid Devotional: 100 Days to Know and Trust God’s Truth*—Say: “This can be a good gift to help preteens continue studying the Bible after VBS.”
- *VBS 2024 Travel Sticker*—Say: “I see so many kids with stickers on their phones, tablets, or water bottles. Use these as incentives during VBX.”
- *CSB Explorer Bible for Kids*—Say: “This is a great Bible for kids.”
- *CSB Outreach Bible for Kids*—Say: “This can be purchased at a bulk price to ensure every child has access to God’s Word.”

#### 4. Presentation—Excite, Explore, Excel (40 minutes)

- Form five groups. Give each group a toy kayak that contains a copy of selected curriculum content from one of the days (Item 3). Additionally, some groups will need a few extra items.
- Give the group assigned Day 1 leader pack item 6, one *VBS 2024 Cup*, and the *VBS 2024 Sandcastle Molds* in addition to their kayak and overview sheet. Give the Day 4 group the ziplock bags containing pack item 25. Give the Day 5 group pack item 30.
- Explain that the overview sheets inside the kayaks will have all of the information listed on the overview poster (session title, Bible story title and reference, “Some People Sa/God Says” statements, daily point, and bonus verse) as well as one activity from the Excite, Explore, or Excel section that day. Following directions on the handouts, group members must assess the activity by answering the following questions:
  - Which of the preteen characteristics referenced earlier could this activity be used to engage?
  - How does this activity relate to the day’s Bible story and today’s point?
  - How could you transition from this activity to a gospel conversation?
  - How might you modify this activity if...? (Each group will have a different adaptation listed.)
- Suggest that conferees may want to look up their assigned activities in their leader guides if they have them already.
- Instruct a group member to take notes on the handout. Explain that as you review the daily content, each group will give feedback about its assigned day. Set a timer for five minutes, giving appropriate warnings half-way through and with one minute remaining.
- At the end of 5 minutes, call on each group in turn to share their findings. Talk through the highlights of each day’s Bible content before each group shares.
- **Day 1:**
  - Mention a few of the song lyrics from the Day 1 song, “Truth Comes from God”: “In every trial look to the Bible because God’s Word is final” and “There’s no denying we all need reminding truth comes from God.”
  - Hang the “Day 1 Overview Poster” (pack item 1) on the focal wall. Explain that this year in VBX kids will look at popular “truths” being taught by culture and compare them to real truth—what God says in the Bible. Preteens today are navigating an environment where people might say “God didn’t mean that.” Or

“I don’t think God really feels that way.” Or even “It doesn’t matter what God thinks; do what you want!” There is no better place to begin than the very first example in the Bible of God’s truth, the truth, being questioned. On Day 1 kids will look at how Satan Tricked Adam and Eve (Genesis 2–3).

- Read the following Bible story summary taken from the *VBS 2024 Administrative Guide*. Emphasize that this is not the full story kids will hear, only a summary. Model good storytelling techniques by making eye contact with attendees, varying speed, pitch, and volume where necessary. (Note: The summaries found in the *VBX Preteen Leader Guide* are shorter and could be used instead to save time.)
  - ♣ God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden of Eden. He told them they could not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan, disguised as a serpent, came and urged Eve to eat from the tree and become like God, knowing good and evil. Eve wanted the knowledge Satan talked about. So, she took the fruit and ate it. Adam ate it too. When they ate the fruit, they understood the difference between good and evil and immediately felt shame. Disobeying God was a choice to sin. That sin immediately broke their relationship with God. God told them about the bad things that would happen because they sinned. But God also promised a plan to defeat Satan. We now know God’s plan was to send Jesus to restore the relationship between people and God.
  - Explain that “Some people say: Truth can be different for different people.” Yet, in this Bible story God says: “Truth comes from Me.” Preteens will learn that truth comes from God.
  - Lead a conferee to read Psalm 119:160 aloud. Display the “Day 1 Bonus Verse Poster” (pack item 5) underneath the “Day 1 Overview Poster” as the volunteer reads.
  - Say: “We talked earlier about how our preteens are taking ownership of their faith and trying to understand how to navigate life decisions influenced by a Biblical worldview. They need to hear this message—we don’t define truth, God does. God’s truth is for His glory, and our good, and will last forever!”
  - Invite Group 1 to briefly explain their assigned activity and to share the answers to their questions.
  - Highlight the Excite activity, “Beach Rules” (p.9), that engages preteens’ competitive natures and desire to move to get them thinking about where rules come from.
  - Direct attention to the Excel activity, “Don’t Be Conformed” (p.12), as an avenue to provide autonomy by offering different types of sand or molds, such as the *VBS 2024 Sandcastle Molds* or *VBS 2024 Cups*.
- **Day 2**
  - Mention a few of the song lyrics from the Day 2 song, “Even Better”: “So trust the Lord in everything you do, in all your ways let His truth be guiding you. God’s plan is even better, even better than whatever you have in mind. God’s plan is even better!”
  - Hang the “Day 2 Overview Poster” (pack item 9) on the focal wall, to the right of the “Day 1 Overview Poster.”
  - Say: “Preteens may hear that they should do whatever they want because that is what is best for them. On Day 2 we will explore the story of Daniel to learn about the truth Daniel lived out when Daniel Chose God’s Way (Daniel 1).”
  - Read the following story summary taken from the *VBS 2024 Administrative Guide*:
    - ♣ Daniel and his friends were taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The king ordered that the young men who had been captured

should be served the same food and drink as the king and be trained for three years. Then they would attend to the king. Daniel asked if he and his friends could eat only vegetables and water. He wanted to follow God's plan with the foods he ate. Daniel and his friends were healthier and stronger than all the other men who had been eating the king's food! The friends chose to follow God's plan and God gave them knowledge and understanding. The king found the four friends even wiser than the other men who had been working for him.

- Explain that "Some people say: Do what makes you happy." Yet, through this story God says: "My plan for you is even better." Preteens will learn that God's plan is best.
- Invite a volunteer to read Proverbs 3:5-6 while you hang up the "Day 2 Bonus Verse Poster" (pack item 11).
- Say: "We talked earlier about how preteens are moving towards abstract thinking and have a lot of questions. Here is a great opportunity for us to show them where they can find their answers—the Bible. We can't trust what we think, we need to look at what God says."
- Invite Group 2 to briefly explain their assigned activity and to share the answers to their questions.
- Highlight the Excite activity, "Would You Rather?" (p.16), that includes the movement characteristic discussed earlier, but could be adapted to include collaboration (share answers with a partner) or autonomy (choose your own motion for A and B).
- **Day 3:**
  - Mention a few of the song lyrics from the Day 3 song, "The Only Way to Heaven": "Some people say there's more than one way to get to heaven. Be kind enough, show people some love and you'll be okay."
  - Hang the "Day 3 Overview Poster" (pack item 14) on the focal wall, to the right of the "Day 2 Overview Poster."
  - Say: "Preteens are growing up in a world that has either diluted what is required to get to heaven or doesn't really seem to care about it at all. Our society is wrapped up in us determining what is good or bad, who is or isn't worthy. On Day 3 we will explore the story of a man who had it all, but it wouldn't be enough—The Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17-27)."
  - Read the following story summary taken from the *VBS 2024 Administrative Guide*:
    - ♣ Jesus is the One that God promised would come to fix the relationship between God and people. One day a rich man asked Jesus how to get to heaven. Jesus reminded the man of God's commandments. The man said he had kept those. Jesus said he needed to sell all his things and follow Jesus. The rich man went away sad. A person does not have to sell everything to get to heaven, but the rich man cared more about his things than following Jesus. Jesus said, "It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." The disciples asked, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus said, "It's impossible for human beings, but all things are possible with God." God sent Jesus to make it possible for all people to be saved.
  - Explain that "Some people say: Being a good person gets you into heaven." Yet, through this story, preteens will learn that God says: "Everyone sins and needs a Savior." Preteens will learn that everyone needs Jesus.
  - Invite a volunteer to read Romans 3:23-24 as you hang up the "Day 3 Bonus Verse Poster" (pack item 16) underneath the "Day 3 Overview Poster."

- Say: “It doesn’t matter whether the world thinks you are good or bad, God’s Word is clear that we are all undeserving of forgiveness for our sin, yet God loves us so much that He chose to offer us forgiveness anyways. For preteens searching for belonging and knowing this truth is crucial.”
- Invite Group 3 to briefly explain their assigned activity and to share the answers to their questions.
- Highlight the Excite activity, “Everyone Together ... Or Not” (p.23), that conferees played at the beginning of the session. Suggest utilizing this game as an opportunity for providing encouragement and a place to belong as previously mentioned.
- **Day 4:**
  - Mention a few of the song lyrics from the Day 4 song, “Name Above All Names”: “He’s the solid rock, the Great I Am, when all other ground is sinking sand.”
  - Hang the “Day 4 Overview Poster” (pack item 21) on the focal wall, to the right of Day 3 Overview Poster.
  - Say: “Preteens are entering into a confusing stage of life—what can they depend on when they’re changing, their friendships are changing, their relationships with parents are changing? Jesus. They can depend on Jesus. He doesn’t change. On Day 4 preteens will read what John Wrote about Jesus (John 14:1-6; 18–20; Acts 1:9-12).”
  - Read the following story synopsis taken from the *VBS 2024 Administrative Guide*:
    - ♣ John was one of Jesus’ disciples and closest friends. John wrote a book about what he had seen and heard. Jesus often told the disciples that He would be killed, but after three days He would be alive again. Jesus explained that He is the only way to have eternal life. Jesus was arrested and put on trial, then sentenced to death. Jesus was taken to a nearby hillside and nailed to a cross. After Jesus died, He was buried and a large stone was rolled across the opening of the tomb. Three days later, some women walked to the tomb. The stone was rolled away and the tomb was empty! Jesus is alive! Over the next forty days, many people saw the risen Jesus, talked with Him, and even ate with Him. Finally, Jesus returned to heaven.
  - Explain that “Some people say: There are many ways to get to heaven.” Yet, in this story God says: “Jesus is the only way to get to heaven.” Preteens will learn that Jesus is the only way.
  - Invite a volunteer to read Acts 4:12 as you hang up the “Day 4 Bonus Verse Poster” (pack item 24) underneath the “Day 4 Overview Poster.”
  - Say: “We’ve already explored that there is one truth—what God says. Here God tells us through John that there is only one way to get to heaven and it is through Jesus. Preteens can be encouraged to join God’s family through belief in Jesus.”
  - Invite Group 4 to briefly explain their assigned activity and to share the answers to their questions.
  - Highlight the Excel activity, “Tiny Puzzles” (p.33), which provides opportunities for collaboration and competition, and leads into an opportunity to share the gospel.
- **Day 5:**
  - Mention a few of the song lyrics from the Day 5 song, “God’s Love”: “It’s the kind of love that never lets you go, it’s the kind of love you need to show—God’s love.”
  - Hang the “Day 5 Overview Poster” (pack item 27) on the focal wall, to the right of the “Day 4 Overview Poster.”
  - Say: “Preteens are walking (or sometimes running) towards those middle school years where kids can be mean and relationships can be hard. As Christians, truth and love cannot be separated. If we know the truth, we must share it with love. The

balance between truth and love is something that isn't just hard for preteens—it is hard for us too! On Day 5 preteens will explore how Paul Encouraged the Ephesians (Acts 9:1-6; 19:1-10, 21-31; 20:1; Ephesians 3:14–4:16). Remember the earlier cited adaptations for kids unfamiliar with church—do not assume everyone has the backstory on Paul when you teach.”

- Read the following story summary taken from the *VBS 2024 Administrative Guide*:
  - ♣ Paul persecuted Christians before he learned that Jesus is God's Son. After that, Paul worked to tell people about Jesus. Paul visited a town named Ephesus. God did amazing things there. Many people became believers and stopped worshiping idols. Those who still worshiped idols became upset, and there was an angry fight in the city. Later Paul wrote a letter to the church at Ephesus. Paul knew what life was like there. Believers in Jesus were persecuted, and people taught wrong things about Jesus. Paul reminded the believers that God loved them. He said believers should show God's love to others whether they agreed with them or not. Paul challenged the people to grow in their relationships with Jesus so that they would know God's truth and not be easily fooled.
- Explain that “Some people say: If you don't agree with me you don't love me.” Yet, in this story preteens will learn that God says: “Speak the truth in love.” Preteens will learn that they can and should speak the truth in love.
- Invite a volunteer to read Ephesians 4:15 while you hang up the “Day 5 Bonus Verse Poster” (pack item 29).
- Say: “Let's acknowledge that this is hard. Relationships are already tricky enough for kids heading towards middle school. The pressures to compromise are weighty even for preteens. Yet, they can be assured that Holy Spirit is with them as they obey God in this way.”
- Invite Group 5 to briefly explain their assigned activity and to share the answers to their questions.
- Highlight the Excel activity, “Practice Makes Better” (p.40), which provides opportunities for preteens to exercise two of the characteristics discussed earlier, thinking abstractly and problem solving. This could be adapted by collecting real-life scenarios from preteens or parents ahead of time and modifying those to use in the activity.
- Summarize the weekly content by pointing out that preteens should leave VBX having learned and understood five core truths that counter messages they are hearing in the world around them.
- Read all five daily points from the “Days 1–5 Overview Posters.”

#### 5. Post-Event Continued Connections (Follow Up) (15 minutes)

- Ask conferees to turn to a neighbor and discuss the following questions. Allow 30 seconds for discussion and then move on to the next question.
  - “Who do you think is the best person to follow up with preteens outside of VBS?”
  - “When do you think is the best time to follow up with preteens?”
  - “Does my church use the best methods for follow-up? Why or why not?”
- Review each question, asking for feedback from participants. Incorporate the following into your responses:
  - “Who do you think is the best person to follow up with preteens outside of VBS?” (Whoever they connect with! Not necessarily the pastor, children's minister, VBS director, or even Bible study leader!)

- “When do you think is the best time to follow up with preteens?” (Don’t wait until after VBX—start that week! Consider meeting parents at drop-off, home visits, and sending texts to parents with pictures of their child having fun if this is allowable under church policy.)
- “Does my church use the best methods for follow-up? Why or why not?” (Sometimes we do this well, other times we are exhausted after a busy VBS that we neglect this. It’s OK to give ourselves some grace.)
- Say: “If the best person to follow up with preteens was whoever they connected with, this also means that this person is best positioned to have a gospel conversation with the child. The child might even seek this person out after hearing the gospel, so everyone needs to be prepared.”
- Reference the “Teaching Others to Share the Gospel” printable from the *VBS 2024 Administrative Guide* (found inside the “powerpoints\_training” folder). This provides a great training framework for teams to review together. Before moving into sharing the gospel, share the Levels of Biblical Learning for salvation for preteens as listed below (also found on page 4 of the recommended printable). Explain that these reflect what an appropriate level of understanding of salvation is for a preteen:
  - God had a plan for salvation before the beginning of time.
  - Jesus willingly died to provide salvation. Jesus’ death and resurrection make salvation possible.
  - The punishment for sin is eternal death and hell.
  - People cannot save themselves. Jesus died to pay the penalty for my sins, redeeming and rescuing me from sin and death.
  - God’s salvation is eternal. Nothing can separate Christians from God’s love.
  - A growing relationship with Jesus is important and necessary. A Christian experiences joy when he recognizes God is at work in his life and in the lives of others.
- Hold up the “Gospel Poster” (pack item 17) for conferees to see. Suggest this item be placed somewhere prominently in the classroom so they can refer to it multiple times each day.
- Show the Giant Inflatable Game Cube with gospel inserts (Item 4). Review the “Gospel: God’s Plan for Me” outline using the icons in the cube as you discuss each point. Mention that this outline is found on the inside front cover of every leader guide:
  - God Rules—The Bible tells us God created everything, including you and me, and He is in charge of everything.
  - We Sinned—Since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. 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.
  - God Provided—God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It’s something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us.
  - Jesus Gives—Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God’s family for eternity. This is the best gift ever!
  - We Respond—We can respond to Jesus. The ABCs of Becoming a Christian is a simple tool that helps us remember how to respond when prompted by the Holy Spirit to receive the gift Jesus offers.
  - ABCs—A: Admit to God that you’re a sinner and repent; B: Believe that Jesus is the Son of God and receive God’s gift of forgiveness from sin; C: Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

**6. Closing** (5 minutes)

- Lead conferees to shout the *Breaker Rock Beach* motto: “God’s truth never changes!” Remind them that preteens are going through a season of life where many things change—but they can trust that God will not!
- Hold up the “Theme Verse Poster” (pack item 6) and guide the group to read the verse aloud. Explain that the pressures preteens face to conform to this world are real. Share with joy that God in His kindness has allowed us to be a part of pointing preteens to transformation in Christ, so that they can rely on a relationship with Him and wisdom from His Word to help them navigate life.
- Encourage conferees to remember this joy as they begin to prepare for VBX. Remind them that preteens are looking for role models who demonstrate an authentic faith.
- Close in prayer, asking for God’s blessings over each VBS represented in the room. Ask for God’s wisdom as conferees prepare and for preteens to experience transformation through Christ this summer.

# VBX OVERVIEW

## Who Are Preteens?

## Resource Overview

## Daily Content



Session Title  
Bible Story  
Scripture Reference  
Today's Point  
Bonus Verse



Session Title  
Bible Story  
Scripture Reference  
Today's Point  
Bonus Verse



Session Title  
Bible Story  
Scripture Reference  
Today's Point  
Bonus Verse



Session Title  
Bible Story  
Scripture Reference  
Today's Point  
Bonus Verse



Session Title  
Bible Story  
Scripture Reference  
Today's Point  
Bonus Verse



**PRETEENS DESIRE  
TO FIT IN. LET THEM  
KNOW THEY HAVE  
A PLACE HERE AND  
ARE LOVED!**

**NEED  
ENCOURAGEMENT**



Item 2. Characteristics — Print on cardstock. Cut each image in half to separate the definition (on solid background) from the term (on sandcastle image background).

**PRETEENS ENJOY  
WORKING WITH PEERS,  
ESPECIALLY THOSE OF  
THE SAME GENDER.  
EVEN BETTER IF  
THERE IS ROOM FOR  
COMPETITION ALONG  
THE WAY!**

**COLLABORATE  
AND COMPETE**



Item 2. Characteristics — Print on cardstock. Cut each image in half to separate the definition (on solid background) from the term (on sandcastle image background).

**PRETEENS ARE  
MOVING FROM BEING  
CONCRETE THINKERS  
TO EXPLORING MORE  
ABSTRACT IDEAS.  
WHICH IS AN  
OPPORTUNITY WE  
CANNOT MISS!**



Item 2. Characteristics — Print on cardstock. Cut each image in half to separate the definition (on solid background) from the term (on sandcastle image background).

**PRETEENS HAVE BIG  
QUESTIONS AND WANT  
HELP LEARNING TO  
FIND THE ANSWERS  
FOR THEMSELVES.  
CHALLENGE THEM!**



Item 2. Characteristics — Print on cardstock. Cut each image in half to separate the definition (on solid background) from the term (on sandcastle image background).

**WE KNOW YOUNGER  
KIDS NEED TO  
MOVE. BUT WITH  
ALL THE CHANGES  
HAPPENING IN THEIR  
BODIES. MOVEMENT  
IS GREAT FOR  
PRETEENS TOO!**



Item 2. Characteristics — Print on cardstock. Cut each image in half to separate the definition (on solid background) from the term (on sandcastle image background).

**PRETEENS DESIRE TO  
HAVE AN ACTIVE  
ROLE IN DECIDING HOW  
THEY LEARN. CREATE  
A LEARNING SPACE  
WITH A VARIETY OF  
DIFFERENT CHOICES.**

**AUTONOMY**



Item 2. Characteristics — Print on cardstock. Cut each image in half to separate the definition (on solid background) from the term (on sandcastle image background).

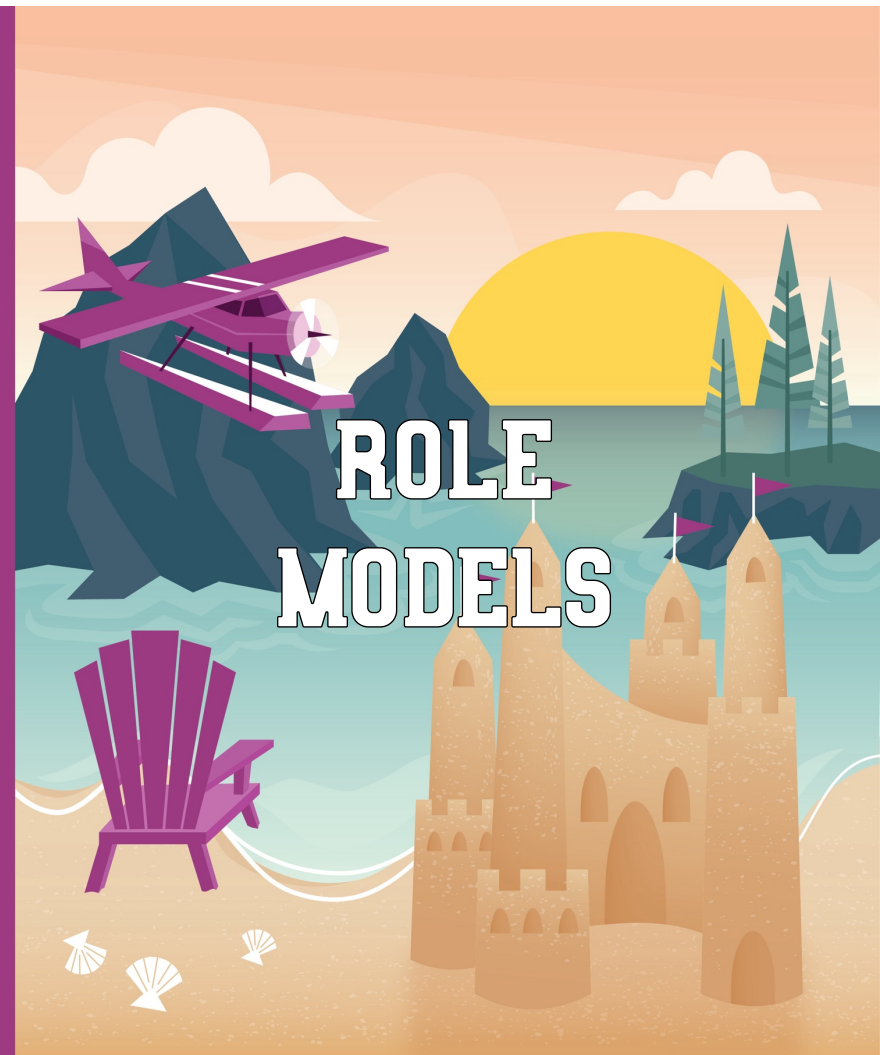


**PRETEENS ARE  
TAKING MORE  
OWNERSHIP OF THEIR  
FAITH AND ARE  
LEARNING HOW TO  
NAVIGATE LIFE  
CHOICES BASED  
ON THE BIBLE.**



Item 2. Characteristics — Print on cardstock. Cut each image in half to separate the definition (on solid background) from the term (on sandcastle image background).

**PRETEENS LOOK TO  
OTHERS, INCLUDING  
FRIENDS, TO SEE  
FAITH LIVED OUT.**



Item 2. Characteristics — Print on cardstock. Cut each image in half to separate the definition (on solid background) from the term (on sandcastle image background).



## DAY 1

Satan Tricked Adam and Eve (Genesis 2–3)

### SOME PEOPLE SAY:

Truth can be different for different people.

### GOD SAYS:

Truth comes from Me.

### TODAY'S POINT:

Truth comes from God.

### BONUS VERSE:

Psalm 119:160

*Adam and Eve listened to Satan's temptation, chose to disobey God, and broke their relationship with God. Their disobedience brought sin into the world. But God also promised a plan to defeat Satan. We now know God's plan was to send Jesus to restore the relationship between people and God.*



### ACTIVITY FROM LEADER GUIDE — “Don't Be Conformed” (p.12)

- Call attention to the “Theme Verse Poster” (pack item 6). Invite kids to point to words that are unfamiliar to them. Pronounce and define those words, then provide everyone with cups or sand molds.
- Guide kids to pack sand tightly into the cups or molds, then invert the molds onto plates and remove the molds.
- Explain that the sand has conformed to the shape of the cup or mold. Say: “It's easy to push the sand into the shape of the mold. And it can be easy to let people push us around and change our opinions on things. It's important not to let people push you into believing things about God that aren't true!”
- Guide kids to say the entire verse with you. On the word conformed, prompt kids to pantomime packing sand tightly into a cup.
- Ask if any volunteers would like to pray, asking God to help them know God's truth. Close in prayer. Ask God to help kids know and follow God's truth.

### GROUP TASKS:

Which of the characteristics referenced earlier could this activity be used to engage?

How does this activity relate to the day's Bible story and today's point?

How could you transition from this activity to a gospel conversation?

How might you modify this activity if you had 30 children in your group?

## DAY 2

Daniel Chose God's Way (Daniel 1)

### SOME PEOPLE SAY:

Do what makes you happy.

### GOD SAYS:

My plan for you is even better.

### TODAY'S POINT:

God's plan is best.

### BONUS VERSE:

Proverbs 3:5-6



*Daniel and his friends were taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. They chose to follow God's plan with the foods they ate while being trained in the king's palace. The friends chose to follow God's plan and God gave them knowledge and understanding. The king found the four friends even wiser than the other men who had been working for him.*

### ACTIVITY FROM LEADER GUIDE — “Would You Rather?” (p.16)

Explain that you will be giving preteens some choices. If a kid chooses your first option, he will pretend to be a starfish by standing up and spreading his arms high above him. If a kid prefers the second option, she should be a sea turtle by lying down and pushing her arms and legs through the “sand.”

- Would you rather (A) go to the beach or (B) hike in the mountains?
- Would you rather (A) travel somewhere far away or (B) stay near home?
- Would you rather (A) eat green beans or (B) eat brussels sprouts?
- Would you rather (A) change your name or (B) get a new name from someone else?
- Would you rather (A) eat familiar foods or (B) try a fancy food you don't recognize?
- Would you rather (A) take a risk or (B) play it safe?

### GROUP TASKS:

Which of the characteristics referenced earlier could this activity be used to engage?

How does this activity relate to the day's Bible story and today's point?

How could you transition from this activity to a gospel conversation?

How might you modify this activity if you were in a smaller classroom?

## DAY 3

The Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17-27)

### SOME PEOPLE SAY:

Being a good person gets you into heaven.

### GOD SAYS:

Everyone sins and needs a Savior.

### TODAY'S POINT:

Everyone needs Jesus.

### BONUS VERSE:

Romans 3:23-24

*A rich man asked Jesus how to get to heaven. Jesus told the man to go sell everything and then come follow Him. Jesus knew the man cared more for his things than following Jesus. The man went away feeling very sad. Jesus said it is nearly impossible for a rich person to enter God's kingdom, but all things are possible with God. God sent Jesus to make it possible for all people to be saved.*



### ACTIVITY FROM LEADER GUIDE — “Everyone Together ... or Not” (p.23)

- Play “Breaker Rock Beach” as you welcome preteens back to VBS. As preteens enter the room, guide them to say hello to at least two people they don’t know really well. Then, guide them sit in a circle around the “fire” you built. Explain that at Breaker Rock Beach people love to make s’mores over campfires. Mention that this is a great place to get to know people better.
- Next, explain you are going to play a game that sounds simple but is hard to win.
- Explain that you will give kids a topic such as lighthouses. The goal is for each team member to say one descriptive word or phrase aloud that has anything to do with that topic (examples: light, night, at sea, guidance, tall). But, every preteen must respond, no one can talk at the same time, and the group cannot make a plan for the order in which they will go. If anyone speaks at the same time as someone else, the group must start over.

### GROUP TASKS:

Which of the characteristics referenced earlier could this activity be used to engage?

How does this activity relate to the day’s Bible story and today’s point?

How could you transition from this activity to a gospel conversation?

How might you modify this activity if you had a class who might be less willing to take part by speaking aloud?

## DAY 4

John Wrote about Jesus (John 14:1-6; 18–20; Acts 1:9-12)

### SOME PEOPLE SAY:

There are many ways to get to heaven.

### GOD SAYS:

Jesus is the only way to get to heaven.

### TODAY'S POINT:

Jesus is the only way.

### BONUS VERSE:

Acts 4:12

*John was one of Jesus' disciples and closest friends. John wrote an eyewitness account of Jesus' ministry. Jesus taught that He is the only way to have eternal life. Jesus was arrested, tried unfairly, and sentenced to death. He died on a cross and was buried in a tomb. Three days later, He rose from the dead. Witnesses found the stone that sealed the tomb rolled away! Jesus appeared to many people over the next forty days before returning to heaven.*

### ACTIVITY FROM LEADER GUIDE — “Tiny Puzzles” (p.33)

- Guide preteens to form groups of 2–3 kids. Distribute bags containing “Tiny Puzzles” (item 25). Set a two-minute timer and see how much of the puzzle kids can put together in that amount of time.
- At the end of the time, see which group came the closest to finishing the puzzle. Next, have each group explain their strategy for how they worked the puzzles. Ask if they started with edge pieces, sections by color, and so forth.
- Say, “There are many ways to work a puzzle, and everyone has a different method they prefer. Unlike working a puzzle, there is only one way to heaven, and His name is Jesus. Only Jesus never sinned, so only Jesus could die to take the punishment for our sins. Let's see what the Bible says about why that is.”

### GROUP TASKS:

Which of the characteristics referenced earlier could this activity be used to engage?

How does this activity relate to the day's Bible story and today's point?

How could you transition from this activity to a gospel conversation?

How might you modify this activity if you were teaching a group of just five children?



## DAY 5

Paul Encouraged the Ephesians (Acts 9:1-6; 19:1-10, 21-31; 20:1; Ephesians 3:14–4:16)

### SOME PEOPLE SAY:

If you don't agree with me you don't love me.

### GOD SAYS:

Speak the truth in love.

### TODAY'S POINT:

Speak the truth in love.

### BONUS VERSE:

Ephesians 4:15

*Paul used to persecute Christians. Then he learned that Jesus is God's Son and began sharing the gospel as he traveled. Paul visited a town named Ephesus, where many people became believers. Later Paul wrote a letter to the church at Ephesus reminding them to show God's love to others whether they agreed with them or not. Paul challenged the people to grow in their relationships with Jesus and to know God's truth.*



### ACTIVITY FROM LEADER GUIDE — “Practice Makes Better” (p.40)

- Form groups of no more than six preteens with an adult helper standing by to help as needed.
- Distribute a scenario to each group and guide them to talk through how they would speak the truth in love in their scenarios.
- After about five minutes of discussion, ask each group to share its scenario and some of the thoughts group members came up with. Gently guide and correct kids where needed as they discuss. Remind kids that we are called to love people because God loves people!
- Say, “Speaking the truth in love can be hard, especially when we are speaking to the people who matter most to us. Yet, it’s really showing love to speak the truth to people. God didn’t create the truth in the Bible to make things hard or punish us. He loves us and knows the best plan for our lives. It shows love to tell people about that plan!” Remind preteens that they’ll never be perfect at speaking the truth in love. Explain that you aren’t either. But tell them that practicing like this will help them get better.

### GROUP TASKS:

Which of the characteristics referenced earlier could this activity be used to engage?

How does this activity relate to the day’s Bible story and today’s point?

How could you transition from this activity to a gospel conversation?

How might you modify this activity to give preteens more choices?





Item 4. Gospel Icons



Item 4. Gospel Icons





Item 4. Gospel Icons



Item 4. Gospel Icons



Item 4. Gospel Icons