

## VBS 2025 VBX EXTRAS CONFERENCE PLAN (45 MINUTES)

### Purpose Statement

This 45-minute conference plan is designed to encourage and equip church leaders to minister to preteens through rotation activities using Lifeway's Magnified!™ VBX Curriculum.

### Needed Resources

- *VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide* (005850083)
- *VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Pack* (005850084)
  - Pack item 6: "Theme Verse Poster" — Hang somewhere easily referenced during the session.
  - Pack items 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11: "Days 1–5 Bonus Verse Posters" — Hang somewhere easily referenced during the session.
  - Pack item 13: "Gospel Poster" — Hang somewhere easily referenced during the session.
  - Pack item 14: "Motto Poster" — Hang somewhere easily referenced during the session.
  - Pack item 18: "Balancing Bug Template"
  - Pack item 24: "Flower Template"
  - Pack item 29: "Gospel Icons"
- *VBS 2025 Administrative Guide* (005850180)
- *VBS 2025 Music for Kids CD* (005850227)
- *VBS 2025 Crafts Rotation Leader Guide* (005850078)
- *VBS 2025 Recreation Rotation Leader Cards* (005850081)
- *VBS 2025 Tablecloths* (005850169) — Use to cover table for displaying resources.
- *VBS 2025 Wall Art* (005850173)
- *VBS 2025 String Flags* (005850175)
- *VBS 2025 Sticky Foam Shapes* (005850055)
- *VBS 2025 Theme Stickers* (005850057)
- *VBS 2025 Pencils* (005849921)
- Small balls such as stress balls or ping pong balls (the number required will depend on how many people you want to play "How Far?" in Teaching Step 1)
- Painter's tape
- Samples of each of the VBX craft projects found in the leader guide
- CD player or Bluetooth speaker

### Room Setup

Arrange chairs in a semi-circle facing the front of the room. Leave space at the front of the room to play the "How Far?" activity listed in Teaching Step 1. Cover a table with a *VBS 2025 Tablecloth* and display all needed resources to be referenced throughout the session. Display the "Theme Verse Poster" (pack item 6) and Days 1–5 Bonus Verse Posters (pack items 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11) prominently on a focal wall. Decorate around this space with the *VBS 2025 Wall Art* and *VBS 2025 String Flags*.

### Teaching Steps

1. **Welcome** (5 minutes)
  - Play the *VBS 2025 Music for Kids CD* as conferees enter.
  - Greet conferees at the door.

- Introduce yourself when it is time to start and inform conferees that you are going to explain a game found in the *VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide* and then give them the option to take part.
- Say: “This game is called “How Far?” To play, you will need a partner and should stand facing them, about two feet apart. It is important that you can see the “Day 5 Bonus Verse Poster” (pack item 11) from where you are standing. One partner will be given a ball and toss it to her partner. As the partner catches, she must say the first word from the bonus verse—and both should take a step back. Continue throwing the ball and say the next word with each successful catch. Don’t forget to step back! The goal is to completely finish the verse without dropping the ball.”
- Explain to conferees that the instructions on page 44 of the leader guide suggest that preteens sit down when they are out, having dropped the ball. Clarify that during this session, conferees who get out should return to their seats.
  - An adaptation could be challenging conferees to take big steps back—who can finish the verse while being the furthest away from their partner?
- Invite those who desire to play to find a partner, collect a ball, and play. (NOTE: Space limitations might lead you to selecting a set number of players.)
- Read the “Debrief” associated with this game (p.44) verbatim:
  - This verse reminds us of the important truth we’ve learned about God today. He always keeps His promises. That’s part of what faithfulness means. And even better, this verse tells us that God is good. That means the things He promises to do, like never abandoning us, loving us, and providing salvation through His Son Jesus are always good. I am so thankful God is like that!
- Invite conferees to return to their seats. Open the session in prayer. Thank 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—even though we don’t deserve it! Ask God to guide the time today and to help everyone to leave feeling encouraged and equipped.

## 2. Preparation for VBX Rotations (5 minutes)

- Ask for a show of hands to determine the following scheduling differences among conferees:
  - Whose VBS is 3/4/5 days?
  - Whose VBS is during the day/at night?
  - Whose VBS is 2/3/4+ hours?
  - Whose VBS happens all in one week/is spread out?
- Use the differing responses to illustrate that there are many ways to make VBX work for your church and community. Encourage conferees to learn not just from presenters, but from each other at training events and online through the “Lifeway VBS Community” group on Facebook.
- Explain that VBX curriculum is written for a five-day, three-hour event, which would take place concurrently with VBS but look different in several scheduling elements.
- Inform conferees that if they are new to serving with preteens at VBX, but have led in other areas at VBS before, there are some terms in the leader guide that will be unfamiliar. Briefly review “Parts of a VBX Session” (*VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide*, p.6):
  - Excite—Introduces the theme and Bible content with an icebreaker and introductory activity. Pick one or both activities based on your time.

- Explore—Engages preteens in the Bible story and makes the Bible connection to daily life. This is the core content. Use these plans no matter what else you choose to include.
- Excel—Reviews the Bible story and life application for the day. Pick one or both activities based on your time.
- Small Group Time—Time to discuss Bible content. One leader will stay with the group all week to develop relationships.
- Continue reading from page 6 to review the sample VBX schedule. Inform conferees that timings throughout the leader guide are based on this sample schedule and would need to be adjusted should that change.
  - Worship Rally 30 minutes
  - Excite 20 minutes
  - Snack 15 minutes
  - Explore 30 minutes
  - VBX Crafts 25 minutes
  - Missions 20 minutes
  - Excel 20 minutes
  - VBX Recreation 20 minutes
- Mention that additional scheduling helps can be found in the *VBS 2025 Administrative Guide* that your VBS Director should have. Page 20 shows the same schedule reviewed above whereas page 22 offers a 2½ hour option. Point out that VBX Crafts and VBX Recreation have been included in the Explore and Excel sections.
- Say: “Scheduling for VBS is an incredibly important dynamic that your VBS Director will be working through. Liaise with them as you determine the schedule and structure of VBX.”
- Share that VBX curriculum is written for a context where preteens have separate crafts and recreation activities from younger elementary grades. These rotations are hosted in their Bible study space, which forms the hub of VBX activity, yet preteens would participate alongside the other age groups in Worship Rally, snacks, and missions.
- Remind conferees that VBS is not a one-sized fits all model. Each church should determine what will work for them and utilize curriculum to support that.

### 3. VBX Crafts (15 minutes)

- Explain that VBX leaders and VBS Directors have a choice to make about crafts during VBX. Preteens could utilize the same crafts as 1<sup>st</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> graders, led by the crafts rotation leader, found in the *VBS 2025 Crafts Rotation Leader Guide*. However, the VBX Bible Study Leader Guide contains a daily craft suggestion which was created with 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders in mind. These might take a little more time and be a little more advanced than other elementary crafts—though not so difficult as to exclude anyone.
  - NOTE: Preteen crafts are not available for purchase in craft packs like some 1<sup>st</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> grade crafts.
- Encourage conferees to always test crafts ahead of time and use their experience making the crafts to inform kids as they create. Testing crafts in advance will help them determine what they want to prepare ahead of time and any adjustments they want to make. Say: “Don’t let the first time you closely read through the instructions be in front of a group of kids!”
- Briefly summarize each craft for conferees.
  - Day 1 Craft—A-Maze-Ing Verse Maze
    - Hold up page 15 of the *VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide* for conferees to see.

- Direct attention to the sample craft. Say: “Showing a sample craft will help preteens know what their craft is going to look like.”
- Explain that this craft results in a fun game that can be played to help preteens memorize Psalm 34:3.
- Comment: “Preteens can be competitive—this craft can be used to your advantage in class! Preteens also desire choice—there are opportunities for autonomy in decorating their maze.”
- Mention that it is important to buy a plant saucer with ridges that will create a maze—ones without adequate ridges would be unsuitable for this craft.
- Highlight step 2. Words are to be written on the inside ridges of the saucer, not on the bottom.
- Day 2 Craft—Balancing Bug
  - Hold up page 22 of the *VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide* for conferees to see. Direct attention to the sample craft.
  - Hold up the “Balancing Bug Template” (pack item 18) to show the two options preteens could choose from.
  - Mention that this craft utilizes a craft knife which should only be used by leaders. The step requiring the knife can be done in preparation to save time.
  - Explain that this craft utilizes supplies you likely already have.
  - Highlight that the craft includes the bonus verse. Point to the verse written on the “Day 2 Bonus Poster” (pack item 8) hung on the wall.
  - Say: “Just like Day 1’s craft, this craft provides room for autonomy and competitiveness—could teachers face off against kids in a balancing bug competition?”
  - Point out that this is not just a fun game, but also provides a teaching moment. You must stay very still and calm for the bug to balance, kind of like the weather was after Jesus told the storm to be still.
  - Say: “We too must be still and calm in the face of trials and trust God!”
- Day 3 Craft—Toss & Catch Flowerpot Game
  - Hold up page 29 of the *VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide* for conferees to see. Direct attention to the sample craft.
  - Hold up “Flower Template” (pack item 24) to show the template to be used on the shrink-art plastic.
  - Mention this craft involves more supplies and preparation than the previous two. Suggestions are given for alternate supplies such as using a cup (or plastic plant pot) instead of a terra cotta pot.
  - Point out that this craft also requires the use of a toaster oven.
    - If conferees are unable to utilize that, there are other options for the flower element such as utilizing foam or cardstock. These will not work as well but could still be decorated and have a weight (such as paperclip) attached to help.
    - Alternatively, you could purchase fake flowers and use these, but that removes an activity for the preteens doing the craft.
- Day 4 Craft—Magnified Gospel Projector
  - Hold up page 36 of the *VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide* for conferees to see. Direct attention to the sample craft.
  - Hold up the “Gospel Icons” (pack item 29) to show the template that will be traced in the craft.

- Explain that this craft provides an opportunity for teachers to walk through the gospel with preteens and allows them to take home something that will help them continue to engage with the Good News!
  - Point out that this craft will take less time if the report covers are cut, following directions in the margin, ahead of time. Cutting the bottom out of the cups will also save time and ensure a less stressful experience for preteens completing the craft.
  - Encourage conferees to test their sample craft ahead of time and ensure they have an adequate flashlight to demonstrate the projector working!
  - Point out that there are a few required tools for this craft that should be operated only by adults—a paper cutter and craft knife.
- Day 5 Craft—Faithful Growing Flowers
  - Hold up page 43 of the *VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide* for conferees to see. Direct attention to the sample craft.
  - Explain that this craft ties into the Bible story for the day and provides an opportunity to encourage kids to take their worries to God.
  - Say: “This craft utilizes supplies you likely already have. Additionally, consider utilizing leftover stickers from Day 1 to decorate the pot.”
- Say: “These crafts were designed uniquely for preteens to engage them based on their characteristics. At the same time, we must remember that our goal for VBX is to maximize our time with the kids, building relationships with them and pointing them to Jesus. Plan for opportunities for conversations and gospel connections even as you assemble crafts.”

#### 4. VBX Recreation (15 minutes)

- Say: “Similar to the discussion around crafts, VBX leaders and VBS Directors will need to discuss the direction for recreation for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. Preteens could attend the same recreation rotation as other elementary aged kids, led by a rec leader utilizing the *VBS 2025 Recreation Rotation Leader Cards*, or they could utilize preteen-specific options found in the *VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide*.”
- Inform conferees that each day of VBX contains two suggested rec activities. Each game will have a detailed explanation of how to play, a list of supplies needed (both pack items and additional items), as well as a “Debrief” section allowing the leader to conclude the game with a spiritual conversation. Some games also include a “Special Needs Adaptation.”
- Say: “Some activities will require less preparation, whereas others will require more supplies. Some games could be played anywhere, but for some location will be a factor. Preparation is key. This might involve preparing multiple options and deciding in the moment. To set yourself up for success organize supplies ahead of time.”
- Briefly summarize each game for conferees.
  - Day 1 Recreation—“Mole ‘I Spy’” and “Spiderweb”
    - Hold up page 16 of the *VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide* for conferees to see.
    - Explain that the first activity requires various supplies they are likely to already have. An easy modification could be utilizing rice instead of dirt for a less messy experience.
    - Comment that the second activity provides a great opportunity for kids to familiarize themselves with the Day 1 bonus verse and could be played in any size space.
  - Day 2 Recreation—“Water Relay” and “Verse Square”

- Hold up page 23 of the *VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide* for conferees to see.
  - Mention that the first activity utilizes water, but not to the extent the activity would need to be outdoors. Precautions could be taken such as having children sit on beach towels or waterproof tablecloths while taking part.
  - The second activity involves creating four square courts to play while reciting the daily bonus verse. A variation is suggested to pair up players. Preteens enjoy working together.
- Day 3 Recreation—"Reverse Kickball" and "Can't Earn It"
  - Hold up page 30 of the *VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide* for conferees to see.
  - Explain that the first activity requires a large playing area to play kickball—with a twist! Players must stand facing the opposite direction than they usually would.
  - The second activity utilizes a basketball hoop and basketballs. Suggest modifications such as throwing a small dodgeball into a bucket.
- Day 4 Recreation—"Possum Tag" and "Rain Gutter Relay"
  - Hold up page 37 of the *VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide* for conferees to see.
  - Explain that the first activity involves preteens using their minds more than their legs. Remind conferees that recreation is not just a sports rotation, but one where a variety of games are played to engage preteens with a diverse range of interests.
  - Explain that the second activity enables kids to engage with the bonus verse. Highlight that many of the games outlined so far have facets where preteens can engage with Scripture. Say: "Just as crafts could be used for spiritual conversations, so too can Recreation be utilized to reinforce Bible truths."
- Day 5 Recreation—"Blind-folded Maze" and "How Far?"
  - Hold up page 44 of the *VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide* for conferees to see.
  - Explain that the first activity involves creating a maze for preteens to guide a blindfolded partner through.
  - Point out that the second activity was played at the beginning of this session. All preteens can engage in this game, regardless of their athletic ability. However, this game could be modified, by moving outside and allowing some pairs to use real sports balls, to allow those gifted at throwing to challenge themselves.
- Direct attention to pages 7 and 8 of the *VBS 2025 VBX Preteen Bible Study Leader Guide*. Highlight the list of supplies organized by day, session section, and activity title. Remind conferees to organize supplies needed ahead of time, for example utilizing a large tote for each day.

##### 5. Closing (5 minutes)

- Encourage conferees to view sample crafts and take pictures to help them as they assemble their own heading into VBX.
- Ask: "Why do we do VBS?" Remind conferees of the purpose of VBX—to help kids connect with each other, with adults they can trust, and most importantly with a Savior. Encourage them to keep that at the forefront of their minds when planning for VBX. Challenge them to ask themselves how they can create opportunities for connection.

How can every moment be utilized to point kids to Jesus? How can they best be prepared to share the gospel with preteens, at any moment?

- Close in prayer, asking for God's blessings over all the VBSes represented in the room. Ask for God's wisdom as conferees prepare and that preteens would experience transformation through Christ this summer.