

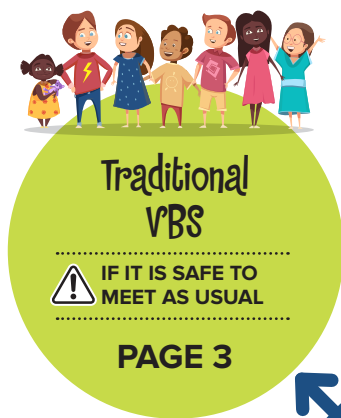


4 VBS
Strategies

FOR THIS
SUMMER

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Introduction

The rippling effects of this pandemic have rocked many to their core. Job loss, economic hardships, sickness, and death have left many wondering where to find hope, security, and stability. Praise God we have the answer! Praise God, He IS the answer! In these uncertain times, people need to hear the good news of the gospel. As the #1 evangelistic tool of many churches, VBS is more important now than ever. It may take flexibility and creativity and more than a little effort to pull off VBS this year, but it's worth it because the gospel is worth it!

This eBook is designed to help you plan and conduct the exceptional VBS your community has come to expect from you—even in the midst of unprecedented circumstances. We've identified four strategies in which VBS can take place this summer, using either Concrete & Cranes or Destination Dig curriculum. You won't need special tools or resources, just your creativity, and these practical helps. If you haven't yet decided what form VBS will take, read through the entire book. It may surprise you how quickly you can see any of these strategies working in your context! Or if you've already narrowed it down to a specific strategy, click on it in the Table of Contents to be taken directly to that section.

Thank you for your commitment to sharing the gospel with your community—no matter what. I'm looking forward to hearing the incredible stories that will come out of this VBS because I know God is going to use the hardships we're experiencing now to draw people closer to Him and to prepare their hearts to receive Him.

Serving together,

Melita Thomas

Melita Thomas
VBS Specialist

Traditional VBS



It may well be that by the time summer rolls around, we are free to gather together once again and your traditional five-day VBS can go on as scheduled. For kids who are ready to be with friends and parents who are more than ready for their kids to get out of the house, VBS will be a highly anticipated event. In fact, it might be your best attended VBS in years! But the extended time in “physical distancing” will likely have eaten into your planning and preparation time. So what ordinarily would have taken months to do might have to be done in just a few weeks. Don’t worry; we’re here to help!

In addition to all of the helps in the *VBS Administrative Guide*, here are some tips to help you plan and conduct an exceptional VBS experience:

- **Reserve an alternate date on the calendar** as a back-up or reschedule your VBS for later in the summer. It’s too early to know what summer will look like, but it’s never too early to have a Plan B on the books.
- **Scale back plans for decorations.** With limited access to the church building in the months leading up to VBS, the scope of your decorations may have to change. Focus on only a couple of key areas (such as Worship Rally and registration/check-in) for large-scale decorations and then utilize ready-made decorations from Lifeway.com for Bible study and rotations.
- **Preregister volunteers and participants online** through *KidEvent Pro*®. You can send email reminders to all volunteers or participants at one time, print class rolls, build your schedule, and maintain all contact information in one place.
- **Help parents feel secure** in a post COVID-19 environment. Even as life returns to normal, some parents will be wary of the lingering effects of the coronavirus. Prioritize the cleanliness of your facility and the health and safety of children and volunteers. Publicize the specific steps you have taken to protect the health of all who attend your VBS, such as the daily cleaning and disinfecting of all classrooms and meeting spaces, sanitizing toys and equipment using a bleach-water solution, reducing class sizes, and so forth. Follow these *hygiene tips*, and post available hygiene, *cleaning*, and *allergy alert posters* for teachers to follow.
- **Join the *free Director’s Club*** for access to training presentations, recruiting and enlistment tools, and other special offers.
- **Rethink how you train your volunteers.** Volunteer training may have to be done via livestreaming or video conferencing. For Concrete and Cranes, use the resources in the VBS Directors Club to create virtual training experiences. Alternately, any volunteer can access role-specific training videos on the *Lifeway VBS YouTube channel*. For Destination Dig virtual training, we recommend using either the *VBS 2021 Digital Pass* or *VBS Team Training* on Ministry Grid.
- **Change up your promotion strategies.** You may not be able to go door to door to distribute flyers or door hangers, so get creative! Mail invitations (mailing lists and customized invitations are available through *Lifeway’s Prospect Services*), make phone calls, or design social media blasts. Sample social media messages can be found on the CD-ROM included in the *VBS 2021 Administrative Guide*.

No matter what changes are implemented in order to make VBS work this year, the one thing that should never change is the importance of delivering the good news of the gospel to a hurting world in need of



Consider taking VBS out of the church building and into neighborhoods. Don't worry, you don't need special equipment or a different set of resources. You can easily shift from an on-site VBS to a neighborhood VBS using the curriculum, crafts, and supplies available for either Destination Dig or Concrete & Cranes. Here are some tips to help you get started:

- **Recruit families willing to serve** as “host homes” for VBS in their neighborhoods. A good place to start is with volunteers who have already signed up to teach VBS. However, there may be many in your church who aren't able to teach but would be willing to offer their yard, driveway, or cul-de-sac as a meeting place.
- **Try to evenly distribute host locations** throughout the community so that as many children as (safely) possible have an opportunity to attend a VBS near them.
- **Determine the schedule.** Will VBS meet in the evenings or mornings? For more or less than two hours? Know your area. If it's too hot during the day, go with an early morning or early evening schedule. Want parents to participate? Go with evenings. There are literally limitless options, so pick what works best for you and for the host families.
- **Distribute the Bible study leader guides and leader packs** that have already been purchased for VBS to host homes (or to those who will facilitate the Bible study at each location). Tips for success include:
 - Go through the leader guides ahead of time and highlight the Bible story and activities each day that require few supplies and translate well to an outdoor setting. Or coach your leaders on what to look for and let them choose their own activities.
 - Prepare needed leader pack items ahead of time. At the bare minimum, make sure each host home has the Bible story picture for each day's Bible story. **TIP:** Digital copies of the Bible story pictures can be found on disc 2 of the *Worship Rally CD Set*. These can be printed and distributed or emailed directly to the hosts who can print them out or display on an electronic device.
- Put together tubs or boxes with the necessary resources (including a children's full-text Bible) and deliver them to host homes.
- **Choose which rotations to include.** Delegate to previously enlisted rotation leaders the selection, planning, preparation, and distribution of rotation activities and supplies to each host home. Tips for each specific rotation include:
 - **MISSIONS:** Use the missions story summaries printed in the leader guide instead of showing the daily videos (if outdoor viewing is not an option).
 - **MUSIC:** Use the Lifeway VBS app (available for Apple® and Android® devices) and a Bluetooth speaker for music and choreography.
 - **RECREATION:** Choose games that require few supplies. Keep extra games “in your back pocket” to play before and after the official start/end times.
 - **SNACKS:** Enlist a snack team to prepare individual snacks, as well as napkins, and water cups and deliver them to each host home.
 - **CRAFTS:** Plan ahead for wide age ranges and select one craft that is better suited to preschoolers and one appropriate for older children. Your VBS craft team can preselect crafts, then count out and prepackage all supplies to be delivered to each host home. **TIP:** Consider purchasing the **Craft Packs** (6 total), which come prepackaged with instructions and supplies for 10 kids. Or the **VBS 2021 Kids Crafts Bundle** (Destination Dig only), which includes one each of five different crafts (one craft per day), pre-sorted and packaged for an individual child.



- **Suggest a plan for rotating** kids either by age, family unit, or altogether for smaller groups.
- **Consider separate locations or times** for preschool and for older kids.
- **Train each host home** on safety and security practices such as how to handle the safe drop-off and pick-up of children by parents, restroom policies, and so forth. Create a plan for communicating these guidelines with parents.
- **Create a contingency plan for rain.** Will you allow sites to move indoors, under tents or shelter, or postpone?
- **Utilize the *Preschool Activity Books (Concrete and Cranes or Destination Dig)* and *Kids Activity Books (Concrete and Cranes or Destination Dig)*.** These handy learning tools include Bible stories and activities to enhance what was learned at VBS, but also transfer well to a home learning experience.
- **Plan a Family Night** to be held at the church campus (even outside if physical distancing is still a necessity) where all neighborhood groups can come together. Or, encourage each location to host its own Family Night (as well as other opportunities throughout the year to reconvene and touch base). Invite families to attend future activities at your church.

If you have not already purchased curriculum, consider purchasing one (total) **VBS 2021 Backyard Kids Club Directors Guide** and one **VBS 2021 Backyard Kids Club Kit** for each host location.

This curriculum line is already designed for a neighborhood VBS of 20 kids and will require minimal, if any, adaptation. Each kit includes children's and preschool Bible studies, crafts, music, recreation, and snacks, a *VBS 2021 Music for Preschoolers CD*, a *VBS 2021 Music for Kids CD*, and a choreography DVD.

Alternate VBS



VBS, at its core, was developed to be a flexible, evangelistic experience for churches. It's adaptable and customizable enough to work in any size or setting. That's fortunate in such a time as this! In a season when programming and ministry require creativity and flexibility, thinking about when and how to conduct VBS must also become flexible. The following "alternative" ideas may just spark a new way of thinking about how and when your VBS can take place this year.

ALTERNATE SCHEDULES—Consider an alternative schedule to the traditional, five consecutive days model. [Click HERE](#) to view detailed schedules for an All Day, One Day, Weekend, Two Week, and Once-a-Week VBS. Pick the schedule that works best for you, and consider the following suggestions:

- **Combine** snacks with missions or recreation rotation.
- **Alternate** rotations, rather than doing all five each day. For example, you might choose to do music and crafts every other day.
- **Show** the missions video during Worship Rally in lieu of a missions rotation.
- **Save** time by rotating the teachers, rather than groups of kids.
- **Plan** to complete some of the activities during Sunday School or on Wednesday nights.
- **Recognize** that the extended time commitment of a multi-week VBS may make it difficult for volunteers to commit. Consider enlisting those who can commit to the entire time to be Bible study teachers, and those who require shorter time commitments as rotation leaders since they can commit to only the day/time/week of their rotation.

ALTERNATE VBS EVENTS—Use the VBS curriculum to conduct VBS in an alternate event setting such as:

- Parents' Night Out
- Back-to-School Blast
- Fall Break Bonanza
- After-School Program

SMALL GROUP VBS—Break your VBS down into small groups based on age, grade, or family units to follow the current federal and state recommendations for gathering sizes (e.g. groups no larger than 10-20). Here are some tips on rotating smaller groups through VBS:

- **Repeat** a VBS schedule throughout the day, allowing kids to come at designated times. For example, kids in grades 1–3 may come in the morning and grades 4–6 in the afternoon.
- **Rotate kids** through using family groups. For example, families with last names in A–M may come at one time, and then N–Z at another time.
- **Rotate groups** on opposite days. For example, grades 1–3 come on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and grades 3–4 come on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.
- **Make sure** to leave time between groups to properly clean the facility.



If VBS at home is the best and safest option, planning what to deliver to kids and how to get it home can feel overwhelming. But remember, you don't do VBS by yourself during normal circumstances. Look for ways to involve those same volunteers to make this unique option happen. To get started, download the [Virtual VBS Directors Guide](#) to walk you through every step of planning your VBS or use the ideas below. Also, an online registration tool, such as [KidEvent Pro](#), will be imperative to know who is attending and can make sending email information or generating mailing labels so much easier!

1 UTILIZE THE TEAMS you already have in place for VBS. Decide what their new roles can be and delegate responsibilities to them. Here are some examples:

- **Prayer Team**—Continue as before, but challenge them to think of new ways to communicate prayer needs (e.g. text groups, private Facebook groups, phone trees).
- **Promotion Team**—Utilize typical promotion methods but also publicize using any new formats or platforms your church has begun using during the pandemic (e.g. social media, livestreaming). Mailing lists and customized invitations are available through [Lifeway's Prospect Services](#).
- **Bible Study Leaders**—Encourage age group teams to meet virtually or in small groups and brainstorm how to make Bible study time portable and transferable to the home. Provide them with the ["Starting Points for Leaders"](#) at the end of this book to get them started.
- **Rotation Leaders**—Encourage rotation leaders to gather their teams and re-imagine what they can provide for kids and families to do at home. MOST IMPORTANTLY, challenge rotation leaders to think how they can provide helps for parents to reinforce Bible-learning while playing games, making crafts, sharing a snack, learning about missions, or enjoying music.

2 GATHER THE IDEAS FROM EACH TEAM

and, together with key leaders, plan what will be included in the package for each home to use. Answer these questions:

- **Will each child** receive an individualized packet or will a "family box" be created?

- **Will the package** contain resources for one day (session) or multiple days?

- **How will we** deliver them?

3 DETERMINE THE BEST WAY to deliver the "VBS at Home" packages.

- **Family Connection Bundle**—provides great resources for parents to connect with their kids through VBS. Purchase one for each family participating in your VBS. If your VBS is in-person, send the *Family Connection Bundle* home for follow-up. The *VBS 2021 Family Connection Bundle* includes: *Parent Guide*, *Gospel Guide*, *Music for Kids CD*, *Worship Rally Booklet*, *Folding Magnifier*, and *Dig Site Tool Set*.
- **Church Pick Up**—Containers are prepared and labeled at church. Families can pull through and pick up a "VBS at Home Pack." Families could also call or text when they arrive in the parking lot for a runner to bring it to the car.
- **Mail Delivery**—Either choose the maximum size box you plan to ship and work with teams to keep things within the limitations, or gather everything for a single mailing address and package accordingly. (For example, you might choose the flat rate shipping box from the post office and work with your teams to be sure everything fits inside.)

4 PLAN THE VIRTUAL COMPONENTS

of your VBS. The simplest solution is to provide a virtual Worship Rally and let the other elements of VBS (Bible study and rotations) be facilitated at home by parents. This would be similar to the way your church has recorded or livestreamed weekly worship services during this time of "social distancing."



- **Pick your platform.** For virtual Worship Rallies, use the same platform your church has been using during the pandemic. A lot of the bugs will have been worked out by the time VBS rolls around and you'll have the added advantages of (1) your team already knowing what they're doing and (2) your congregation being used to tuning in on that platform. This could be livestreaming on Facebook, YouTube, or your church's website through a multi-cast streaming service, or it could be prerecorded and posted to your website or social media. Either works, so go with what you know. Simply publish the link or tell people where to go to view Worship Rally each day and families can participate whenever they choose to begin their VBS day.
- **Think through the risks** if you want to use a platform like Zoom® that allows viewers to call in and participate live. The risk of indecent exposure, privacy concerns, and virtual access to minors in such a platform are certainly challenges that can be overcome, but may be more than you want to worry about right now. In this case, simpler may be safer. So stick to a prerecorded or livestreamed experience.
- **Consider posting to a password protected site** or private social media group if you will be showing children as part of your virtual Worship Rally. Be sure to secure parental permission regardless.
- **Can I use VBS music, choreography or lyric videos,** and the daily drama videos in my virtual Worship Rally? The short answer is yes, but there are some quick, easy steps you'll need to complete first. Follow the instructions provided on page 17 of the *[Virtual VBS Directors Guide](#)*.
- **Note that this permission allows you** to include music and video as part of your livestream or prerecorded rally. It does not give you permission to post only the videos or music by themselves. (In other words, you can't post the videos publicly on YouTube and then tell your families to go watch them there.)
- **Where can I find digital files** for all of these videos? If you've already purchased the *Worship Rally Pack*, you have everything you need! Graphics, lyrics, blank backgrounds, and other assets for PowerPoint® or ProPresenter® presentations are on disc 2 of the *Worship Rally CD Set*. All of the video files are on disc 2 of the *Worship Rally DVD Set*. Simply pull off the files you need and drag them into ProPresenter (or whatever presentation program your church uses). If you haven't already purchased the *[VBS 2021 Worship Rally Pack](#)*, you can get it as a *[digital download HERE](#)*.
- **Structure your virtual Worship Rally** the same way you would your live, in-person rally. Your pastor, children's minister, or VBS Director should still greet and welcome families. Use the skits in the *Worship Rally Guide* to engage the audience. Use your music rotation leaders to lead the songs and motions on the platform while showing the lyric or choreography videos behind them on a screen. Show the daily drama videos and use the suggestions in the *Worship Rally Guide* to transition in and out of the videos. You may want to consider having a master storyteller tell the day's Bible story, since Bible study will have to take place at home.

With everyone pitching in, VBS can take place at home. When you present the idea to your leaders, remember that they may feel the same panic you did at first. Give them specific tasks, a few starting point ideas (see next page), and remind them why VBS is so important in your church's strategy to reach your community with the gospel. As they envision the faces of the kids they know, their own ideas will soon blossom!



STARTING POINTS FOR LEADERS

Share these ideas with your leadership teams as they brainstorm how to translate their area of responsibility into an “at home” experience. Note the suggested items and resources that could be included in your “VBS at Home” packages. Destination Dig Bible stories are available for download from the [VBS Directors Club](#).

PRESCHOOL BIBLE STUDY

- Select one activity per day from the leader guide that families can do together (regardless of which age group leader guide you’ve purchased). Choose an activity that uses items parents will already have in their homes. Copy or type up the instructions. Suggested adaptations for Destination Dig may be found on page 13 of the [Virtual VBS Directors Guide](#).
- Send home copies of the coloring pages from the preschool crafts leader guide (included in the *VBS 3s–K Rotation Pack*). This is an easy way to help parents talk about the Bible stories with their kids.
- Include the *Preschool Activity Book* and a *Music for Preschoolers CD* in each “VBS at Home” pack.
- Include a parent letter with any instructions such as, “Join us for Bible story time at 10:00 a.m. using this Zoom link” or “Text us a photo of your completed activity to (phone number).” Suggest a method that parents can use to tell the Bible story to their kids (using their own Bible, by reading it from the *Preschool Activity Book*, or by including a photocopy of the Bible story from the leader guide).

KIDS BIBLE STUDY

- For younger kids, send home copies of the coloring pages from the preschool crafts leader guide (included in the *3s–K Rotation Pack*). This is an easy way to help parents talk about the Bible stories with their kids.
- Provide the Bible story for kids to read or parents to read to their kids. The story could be copied from the leader guide or the back of the teaching pictures. (If copying directly from the leader guides, be sure instructions are also included for any interactive elements or activities that are

called for in the Bible story.)

- Include the *Kids Activity Book* and a *Music for Kids CD* in each “VBS at Home” pack.
- Include a note encouraging parents to download the Lifeway VBS app (includes Bible stories, music videos, and more) to their Apple or Android device.
- Provide a simple outline for kids (or parents) to follow. (For example: “Sing ‘song title,’ read the Bible story, locate the bonus verse in your Bible, then do this activity.”)
- Make copies of the review or discussion questions included in the leader pack.
- Suggested adaptations for Destination Dig Bible study activities may be found on pages 13–14 of the [Virtual VBS Directors Guide](#).

RECREATION

- Choose rec games that go specifically with the Bible story as one of the options. Suggested games for Destination Dig may be found on page 15 of the [Virtual VBS Directors Guide](#).
- Choose games that can be played using common household items.
- Choose games families can play together and that don’t require too many players.
- Make copies of the game instructions from the *Recreation Rotation Cards* to send home. Include simple items (such as bandannas or bean bags) if required to play the games.

CRAFTS

- Determine how many crafts to provide (e.g. 1 per day, 3 per week, etc.).



- Package items needed to make one craft per child.

TIP: Simplify this process by using Craft Packs.

One craft pack is enough for 10 kids. Simply redistribute supplies into 10 ziplock bags and photocopy the provided instructions. Or provide individually packaged crafts per child using the VBS 2021 Kids Crafts Bundle.

- Print a biblical connection with the instructions for each supplied craft (or simply photocopy the instruction sheet if using Craft Packs).

MUSIC

- Provide a *Music for Preschoolers CD* or *Music for Kids CD* for each family based on children's age range. Or recommend that parents purchase the Lifeway VBS app, which includes music and motions videos, Bible stories, games, and more.
- Provide a set of printed lyrics. (Lyric files are available on disc 2 of the *Worship Rally CD Set*.)
- Print a couple of questions or conversation starters designed to help tie each song to The Point or Bible truth for each day on a card. Pull these from the teaching plans in the *Music Rotation Leader Guide*.

MISSIONS

- Provide instructions on how kids can view the missions videos (via a password protected site) or send copies of the missions story summaries (from the missions leader guide) for each day.
- "Invite families to donate at www.imb.org/vbs or www.sendrelief.org to support the work of VBS missionaries. Choose a local mission action project that encourages families to collect, make, or contribute to the project. Include a simple instruction sheet.

SNACKS

- Include store-bought, prepackaged snacks in each "VBS at Home" pack.
- Attach a note or prayer thought to the snack.

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

- Encourage a family devotion time using the *Parent Guide (pkg. 10)*.
- Help parents share the gospel by providing *Gospel Guides (pkg. 20)* or sharing this link to watch the *gospel presentation video*.
- The *Family Connection Bundle* provides great resources for parents to connect with their kids through VBS. Purchase one for each family participating in your VBS. The *VBS 2021 Family Connection Bundle* includes: *Parent Guide*, *Gospel Guide*, *Kids Music CD*, *Worship Rally Booklet*, *Folding Magnifier*, and *Dig Site Tool Set*.
- Follow-up with new families and work to enfold them in your ongoing ministries to kids.



Traditional VBS



IF IT IS SAFE TO
MEET AS USUAL

- Go all in and all out!
- You may have to pick an alternate date.
- You might even experience record-breaking attendance!



Neighborhood VBS



IF IT IS SAFE TO MEET
IN SMALLER GROUPS

- Church-members host small-scale VBS in their homes in multiple neighborhoods.
- Use driveways, front porches, backyards, or cul-de-sacs to meet in smaller groups.



VBS at Home



IF IT IS NOT SAFE TO
MEET IN GROUPS

- Post or livestream media-driven Worship Rallies to engage kids.
- Utilize home delivery methods to equip parents to facilitate Bible study, rec, and crafts at home.



Alternate VBS



IF IT IS SAFE TO MEET
LATER OR SMALLER

- Conduct VBS over five consecutive weeks, as a back-to-school kick-off, over Labor Day weekend, or during Fall Break.
- Minimize your prep needs and push your schedule later in the season.

4 VBS Strategies FOR THIS SUMMER

Lifeway™ kids

Lifeway.com/kids