

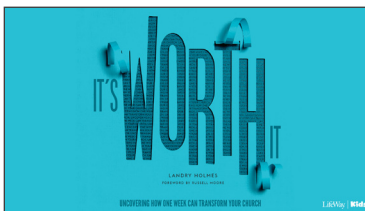
# IT'S WORTH IT!

## PRESENTATION OUTLINE

### PREPARE:

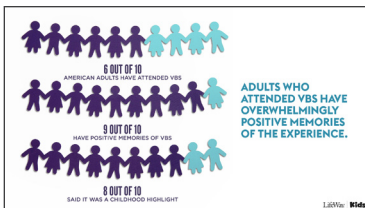
- Gather media resources and equipment (projection equipment, etc.)
- Make copies of the “It’s Worth It” handout.
- Display or distribute copies of *It’s Worth It*.

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION



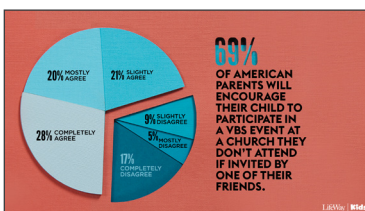
SLIDE 1

- Introduce yourself and explain that the information in this presentation comes from a joint effort by LifeWay’s Kids Ministry Publishing and the LifeWay Research team in an effort to determine the current, cultural relevance of Vacation Bible School
- The research began by interviewing a demographically balanced online panel of American adults. The second and third phases focused on children’s ministry leaders from a random sampling of Protestant churches. The responses confirmed what we have heard consistently from churches. But, let’s take a few moments to discover—Is VBS worth it?
- Share a brief personal story about VBS.



SLIDE 2

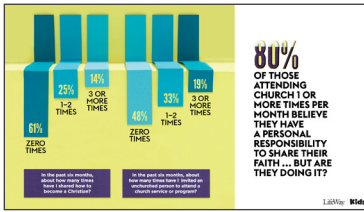
- What is your VBS story? Are you among the 60% of adults who attended VBS while growing up? If so, the odds are that your experience was positive.
- Nine out of 10 American adults who attended VBS while growing up report having positive memories of those experiences. And, if you did attend VBS, chances are that you went because your immediate family, relatives, neighbors, or friends took you or invited you.



SLIDE 3

- One of the most exciting facts to come from the research is this: 69% of American parents will encourage their child to participate in VBS IF THEY ARE INVITED BY A FRIEND.
- Dissect that piece of information. Over TWO-THIRDS of American parents (remember that’s those who attend church and those who don’t, all denominations, believers and unbelievers) will ENCOURAGE (not just say “OK,” but encourage!) their child to participate in a VBS event at a church THEY DON’T ATTEND (this is over and above those who already attend your church) IF INVITED BY ONE OF THEIR FRIENDS (and there is the key—a personal invitation by a friend or family member).
- Share a brief personal story of a child or family who attended a VBS due to the influence of a friend.

## WE ARE IN CRISIS (CRISIS OF EVANGELISM)



SLIDE 4

- The research reveals a point of crisis with our churches. We are in a crisis of evangelism.
- Churches are not doing a good job of reaching their communities.
- 48% of us are not inviting our unchurched friends to an event or a service at church.
- 61% of us are not sharing our faith.

## KIDS ARE IN CRISIS (CRISIS OF LONELINESS)



SLIDE 5

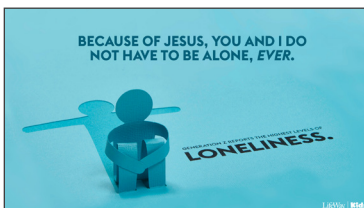
- LifeWay's Nothing Less Study, conducted in 2016, also told us that kids are in crisis.
- Gen-Zers, also known as the i-Gen, are digital natives, never knowing the world without the internet or smartphones. This is creating a crisis of loneliness.
- Kids are on their phones, tablets, and gaming devices. They are photographing their food, their friends, themselves (hello selfies), and posting everything going on in their lives without actually living real-life experiences. They are more concerned about followers and likes than true relationships. They text or snapchat more than they call on the phone or see each other in person. They watch Netflix or YouTube videos more than they participate in events and experiences with real people and social relationships.
- And what does that make them—and the adults around them? LONELY.
- Research tells us that kids and teens who have Christian friendships at church have healthier spiritual lives as adults. VBS can provide the opportunity to meet and develop friendships through fun and real-life experiences. Similarly, kids and teens who connect with godly men and women at church have healthier spiritual lives into adulthood.
- God did not create us to be lonely—He made us to live in community. There are very few times in the rhythm of church calendars that provide a whole week of human and multi-generational interaction for the sake of the kingdom of God. VBS is one of those times.

## WE HAVE A TIMELESS SOLUTION



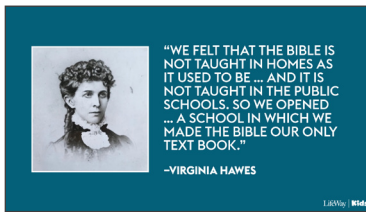
SLIDE 6

- The crisis that we as churches and individuals find ourselves in today is not new.
- Jesus Himself declared, "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest." (Matthew 9:37-38)



SLIDE 7

- Neither is the reality of individual loneliness only a contemporary crisis.
- Jesus experienced ultimate loneliness when He cried out His last words on the cross.
- However, because of Jesus' horrific moment of complete and absolute loneliness, you and I do not have to be alone, ever.



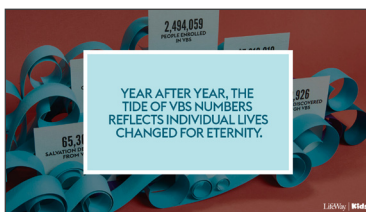
SLIDE 8

- VBS began in a moment of crisis, not so different from the one we face today—churches needed to spread the gospel, and individuals longed for meaningful community. Enter Virginia Hawes, a godly woman who noticed a problem and did something indicative of her go-getter personality—she began searching for a solution.
- Mrs. Hawes noticed that after the public schools closed for the summer, the streets in a section of New York City’s East Side swarmed with “idle and sometimes unruly children.”
- So in 1898, Virginia Hawes opened what has become known as the most prominent precursor of today’s VBS, in a beer parlor.
- “We felt that the Bible is not taught in homes as it used to be, nor as it should be, and it is not taught in the public schools. So we opened ... a school in which we made the Bible our only text book,” Hawes said.
- By 1934, approximately 700 Bible schools reached as many as 100,000 children. And those numbers continued to grow, through two World Wars, the Great Depression, the turbulent 60’s, to today.
- Our goal for VBS is not much different than those who went before us.
- According to our latest research, today’s VBS leaders “hold the two goals of evangelism and discipleship—without indicating too much tension or conflict between those.”



SLIDE 9

- Let’s take a look at VBS by the numbers from 2017, according to “LifeWay VBS Report Forms.”
  - 21,376 churches reported a VBS
  - 2,494,059 people enrolled in VBS
  - 65,301 salvation decisions from VBS
  - 835 decisions made for vocational ministry at VBS
  - 160,926 prospects discovered through VBS
  - \$7,012,010 given to missions during VBS



SLIDE 10

- Year after year, the tide of numbers reflects individual lives changed for eternity. And yet, some churches are resistant to continuing this ministry, even with its proven track record. The reasons are common, so let’s look at some of the most frequently used negative responses and debunk some misconceptions. Let’s bust the myths!

## VBS BUSTS THE MYTHS



SLIDE 11

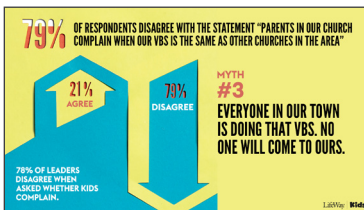
- **MYTH #1:** People are just using us for free child care.
- First, according to LifeWay Research, only 12 percent said they were interested in VBS as a form of free child care. So, if 60 families had kids who attended your VBS, only 7 of those families chose your VBS for free child care.
- However, the good news is—THEY CAME! This makes it imperative to select a curriculum that is intentionally designed to provide opportunities for evangelism.

- Every activity, every rotation, every song should be especially crafted to fit the main biblical point of the day, making it possible for every person the child encounters throughout their VBS day to “live out” the gospel in front of them.
- Without gospel intentionality, then VBS could become just “free child care.”



SLIDE 12

- **MYTH #2:** We don't have enough workers. No one volunteers.
- First, think about this: How many key leaders do you have? What would a VBS designed with just those leaders in position look like?
- Then begin to incorporate less experienced leaders and teenagers as “leaders in training.”
- Also, how are you enlisting them? “All call” announcements rarely work. Ask God to point out people to you, then ask them one-on-one. Give them simple but clear expectations of the role and give them time to think and pray (but set a deadline for an answer).
- Provide multiple ways to serve based on individual talents, interests, and abilities.



SLIDE 13

- **MYTH #3:** Every church in town is doing that VBS. No one will come to ours.
- “We want to be different.” There’s nothing wrong with planning ministries that uniquely fit the context of your church and community. However, according to our research, 79% of leaders say parents don’t complain when their VBS is the same as other churches in the area. In fact, leaders say that most kids never complain about a duplicate theme.
- Maybe the solution involves just a bit of rethinking. Kids learn best through repetition. Kids never tire of singing songs they love. (Ask parents who live with the VBS music blaring in their car all summer!) Except for the sign out front, your VBS will be unique to you because the people leading it are different. And, not to be flippant, but there are no new Bible stories.

- Choose a curriculum you can trust to be biblically accurate and consistent with age-appropriate activities. Why should we give that up just to avoid duplicating themes?



SLIDE 14

- **MYTH #4:** VBS is too expensive! We have to buy too much stuff.
- Start with the basics, as you would if shopping for groceries. Just because the items are in the store doesn't mean you have to buy them.
- Choose what's most important: quality curriculum (teaching guides and student pieces). The content should be carefully crafted to share the gospel and help kids grow in their faith.
- Decide what other elements are most important to you. Snacks, crafts, and decorations can be areas to look for savings.



SLIDE 15

- **MYTH #5:** The only kids who come are our church kids.
- What if no one comes but “our church kids”? Aren't they worth it?
- The fact, however, is that about half of the participants attending VBS at a given church are either unchurched or attend another church.
- What better way to teach your kids and kids in the community the gospel, knowing that the gospel you teach is true?
- VBS is one of the few events most churches do that focuses on the kids and invests in their discipleship through a time of intentional, concentrated Bible learning.



SLIDE 16

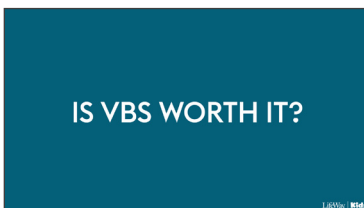
- **MYTH #6:** All our kids are already Christians. VBS is not about discipleship.
- **OR IS IT?** Kids who are already Christians affirm their faith through Bible study at VBS. Each time believers review the plan of salvation, their foundation of faith is strengthened and they are better equipped to share that message with others.
- Bible study is a key component of discipleship. During VBS, participants of all ages are tutored in using their Bibles and challenged to make Bible reading a part of their daily lives.
- Leaders mentor new leaders. Many who serve as assistant teachers during VBS often become future children’s teachers and leaders.
- Kids get to know Christian adults and learn from them how important following God is in their lives.
- 78% of churches use VBS as their largest outreach to unchurched kids in a given year.
- 64% rely on VBS to create excitement about their children’s ministries.
- An equal number—64%—use VBS to disciple kids within the church.
- A trustworthy VBS curriculum will help kids learn biblical truth and how to apply that truth to their daily lives. They will be given opportunities to open their Bibles and to memorize Scripture. And kids will be encouraged to continue studying God’s Word after VBS has concluded.
- Teaching, sharing the gospel, and helping kids know more about Jesus is true discipleship.

## CONCLUSION



SLIDE 17

- Consider this: For over 120 years, God has used VBS to impact the eternity of millions of people, all over the globe.
- The opportunities for evangelism, discipleship, and relationship-building that can take place in one week of VBS might take half a year for a Sunday School teacher, or small group leader.
- If we stop using VBS as a tool for evangelism and discipleship, where will our churches be 10, 20, 30 years from now?
- Knowing that 22 percent of children who participate in VBS do not attend any church, what will take the place of VBS to reach kids and families for the sake of the gospel?



SLIDE 18

- What about you and your church?
- As you cut 50 pieces of construction paper, the enemy may whisper, “Is it worth it?”
- After you burn yourself with hot glue, the enemy may whisper, “Is it worth it?”
- When the three-year-old with authority issues punches and kicks you, the enemy may whisper, “Is it worth it?”
- When the seven-year-old has a meltdown on the last day of VBS, the enemy may whisper, “Is it worth it?”
- As you reassure the doubting preteen that she is made in God’s image, the enemy may whisper, “Is it worth it?”
- When the alarm goes off at five in the morning on the third day of VBS and you know what’s waiting for you at the office in the afternoon, the enemy may whisper, “Is it worth it?”

VBS is the one week that mobilizes the entire church to reach the community with the gospel, while simultaneously providing a unique discipleship experience for the individual child and volunteer.

LARRY WIDE

**SLIDE 19**

- We are in a crisis of evangelism and loneliness, but we have a timeless solution.
- God continues to use VBS as a powerful tool of the church to reach all ages with the gospel and to invite people into the community provided by Christ and His church.
- VBS is worth it—all the effort, all the expense, all the hours, all the tears. Why? Because VBS is the one week that mobilizes the entire church to reach the community with the gospel, while simultaneously providing a unique discipleship experience for the individual child and volunteer.
- VBS is not a program to save, it's a ministry tool with a future.
- May our prayer be that when faced with the question, "Is VBS worth it?" we can respond with renewed fervor ...

IT'S WORTH IT

LARRY WIDE

**SLIDE 20**

- "Yes, it's worth it, because eternity is worth it."