



YOUR 20-STEP GUIDE TO

AN AMAZING

VBS



ShareFaith KIDS

Sunday School Like Never Before.

An Amazing VBS

Vacation Bible School is your church's premier community outreach opportunity. When done right, VBS brings new families into your church, unifies your volunteer team and inspires your kids to grow in their faith. It's a big responsibility, but the lasting benefits for your ministry are well worth it! Whether you're looking to host a VBS for the first time, or take a fresh look at your VBS process, then you've come to the right place. This essential 20 step guide will set your children's ministry up for VBS success.

Getting Started

We know you're excited to dive in to the 20 steps, but here are three things to keep in mind as we get started. These principles will help you maximize your time and effort as we examine how to plan an amazing VBS.

1. Keep It Simple: In the end, VBS is all about empowering your team to minister to your children. If the focus becomes all the flashy bells and whistles a VBS can easily drift off course. To make a lasting impact, simplify your focus on the things that really matter: relationship building, teaching God's Word and prayer.

2. Start Early: VBS is a big undertaking, don't stress your team out by waiting until the last minute! As soon as you know you'll be hosting a VBS, start your planning. It's never too early to start discussing VBS with kids, families and especially your volunteer team. Sooner is always better than later when considering how to plan an amazing VBS.

3. Take Notes: Make it a habit to take notes during the entire process of planning your VBS. As you plan this year's VBS, you'll have ideas about next year and things you'll want to improve, adjust or stop doing altogether. Don't let these ideas escape, capture them while they are fresh in your mind! You'll thank yourself next year.





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Bible School planning by
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Why does VBS matter?***

***Or to put it another way:
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how would your church
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1. Answer the Purpose Question

Start your Vacation Bible School planning by answering this question: Why does VBS matter? Or to put it another way: If VBS was cancelled, how would your church miss out? If you can answer the purpose question with passion and clarity, you're ready to continue. In our experience, Vacation Bible School offers 3 unique opportunities that are simply too good to pass up:

1. Outreach: There are few events that have the ability to draw new families into your church like Vacation Bible School. Summer is typically a time where your church attendance will drop, but with a vibrant VBS program, you can reverse that trend.

2. Team Building: VBS has a lot of moving parts. To pull it off, you are going to need a strong volunteer team. VBS is a once-a-year opportunity to recruit new volunteers and develop the existing members of your Children's Ministry team.

3. The Gospel: During a weekend service, teachers get (at most) a couple of hours to talk to kids about the Good News of Jesus. But during Vacation Bible School, you have 5 action-packed days to present the Gospel!

2. Pray Early & Often

Any guide on how to plan an amazing VBS must include prayer! The Bible tells us in Psalm 127, "Unless the Lord builds a house, the work of the builder is wasted." If your VBS is going to be successful, you'll need God's help every step of the way. Seek God's guidance in the planning, preparation and presentation of your Vacation Bible School. When you start recruiting volunteers for your VBS, don't forget to enlist your church's prayer warriors. The very best Vacation Bible Schools incorporate prayer into the planning, promotion and execution of this amazing event.



3. Choose Your Leader

Because VBS is a big undertaking with many working parts, strong leadership is essential. And while success depends on a team of volunteers, someone must keep this team unified, equipped and moving in the right direction. The right leader helps your team cross the VBS finish line, victoriously. Or as John Maxwell says, “a leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way.” When choosing a leader for your VBS, look for the following attributes:

1. They Can See The Big Picture: VBS has thousands of details. A good leader can see the forest without getting lost in the trees. They delegate, empower and keep things moving toward the finish line.

2. They Work Well With People: VBS is all about working with people, whether that is church leadership, volunteers, parents or children. The ultimate VBS leader will have a passion for recruiting, empowering and inspiring others.

3. They Love Jesus: This may seem obvious, but VBS is more than an event that needs to be efficiently run, or a team that needs to be effectively organized. VBS is all about Jesus! The leader of your VBS should have a passion for sharing the Good News.

4. Pick Your Date

Your VBS should be the premier event on the week it’s scheduled. Be aware of other events going on in your church and community. And, as much as possible, schedule your VBS so that it’s not in competition with other big events. Check with other churches in your community to see when they’re hosting VBS and do your best to pick the best non-conflicting dates available.





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5. Assemble Your Leadership Team

Picking the right leader is important, but VBS is not a one man or woman show! A good leadership team will help shoulder the weight of VBS by overseeing key areas that include: teachings, games, snacks, decoration, registration, promotion and media. A good leadership team will help communication remain clear and problems get solved. Ideally, your leadership team will be diverse, including young and old, men and women, new recruits and longstanding volunteers. The more your team can view VBS from a diversity of perspectives, the more you can steer clear of potential blind spots.

6. Review Last Year

As you examine how to plan an amazing VBS for this year, don't forget to review last year. If possible, gather last year's team for a recap discussion. Welcome open communication and determine with your team the things that you want to stop, start and continue doing. A wise VBS leader will learn from the successes and failures of the previous year. As you gather for this recap meeting, ask and answer the following questions:

- 1. What was the absolute worst thing that happened last year?** It may be a poor check-in process, a volunteer that didn't work out or poor communication. Regardless, this question will give you some immediate areas to improve upon.
- 2. What was your biggest win from last year?** It may be decisions to follow Christ or new volunteers joining your team. Ultimately, your biggest wins are the areas you want to heavily invest in as you head into a fresh year of VBS.
- 3. What are are some big dreams for this year's VBS?** Before you and your team get too bogged down in the details, take some time to dream about what God might do for this year's VBS!



7. Set This Year's Goals

If you don't know where you're going, how will you ever get there? Setting goals is essential to the success of any event, particularly a marquee event like VBS. Your goals should directly connect to how you answered the purpose question. For example, one of your purposes is community outreach. With that, one of your goals could be to have 20% of your attendance include kids that don't go to your church. As you lay out your VBS goals, take the following steps:

- 1. Write Them Down:** This process helps turn abstract ideas into concrete actions.
 - 2. Be Realistic:** You know your ministry. Create goals that are attainable and match the context of your church.
 - 3. Identify Action Steps:** Don't let a big goal overwhelm you. Break your goals into bite-sized action steps to help your team be successful.
 - 4. Assign Responsibility:** It takes people to get things done! Assigning responsibility ensures that a goal remains a priority until it is completed.
 - 5. Establish Timelines:** Every goal needs a completion date to make sure people are held accountable for their area of responsibility.
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8. Pick Your Theme

How could we have a discussion about how to plan an amazing VBS and not talk about the theme? When picking your VBS, make sure it's bold and Biblical! A great VBS theme needs to capture children's imagination and be centered around the Gospel. A great example of this is [God of Wonders](#), the brand new VBS program from Sharefaith Kids.



GOD



WONDERS



TRY IT FREE TODAY!

9. Choose Your VBS Curriculum

At the core of your Vacation Bible School will be your VBS Curriculum. When choosing your VBS curriculum, here are some important factors to consider:

- 1. Theology:** Look for curriculum that is Gospel-centered and plays down doctrinal distinctions (this will make it more adaptable to your ministry).
- 2. Media:** Your VBS curriculum should include plenty of eye-catching videos and graphics. These should include both promotional and presentation media.
- 3. Ease Of Use:** The more volunteer-friendly and simple to understand your curriculum is, the more your team will engage!
- 4. Price:** VBS comes in a wide range of prices. One thing you always need to be on the lookout for is hidden costs like workbooks, teacher guides, activities, etc. If possible, try and find an all-in-one VBS solution like [Sharefaith Kids](#).

10. Plan Your Budget

Developing a Sunday School budget is always a delicate balance. But your VBS budget doesn't have to choose between stewardship and ministry. Here are some ideas on how you can do both:

- 1. Scholarship:** Give your church body the opportunity to scholarship kids. People love giving directly to a need, and what is better than investing in a life-changing week for a child.
- 2. Subsidise:** Pray over an ideal VBS price. If that number doesn't cover all costs, go to your church leadership. See if they would be willing to invest a little of the church's budget to bring the cost of VBS down for everyone.



11. Rally Your Congregation

Once you know your team and your theme, share your VBS vision. As you lay out how to plan an amazing VBS, don't forget presenting the vision! It's important that your presentation is more than just dates and times. Be a passionate advocate of Vacation Bible School. Let your church family know how VBS changes lives and how they can get involved. Be sure and take this opportunity to enlist all prayer warriors!

- **Mass Communication:** Church Management Systems (ChMS) provide communication tools for your VBS. Use your ChMS to organize your VBS communications by group and then easily send mass text and email messages with ease. And because it's integrated, all the emails will be logged to your attendee records. A quality ChMS is a must-have if you're looking to effectively communicate with volunteers, parents and your congregation at large!

12. Recruit Your Volunteer Team

Always start recruiting your volunteers with a VBS dream team in mind. Try to recruit the best, not just the available! This team should include people who love Jesus, have great attitudes, are teachable and most of all, LOVE KIDS! As you start talking to your dream team, keep in mind their giftings and abilities. Do your best to assign them roles that match. Also, have background checks ready to go. Having all volunteers submit a background check is an important step in making sure that you've done your due diligence to create a safe environment for kids.

- **Child Safety:** A great resource for volunteer background checks is Protect My Ministry. This service connects to several Church Management Systems and allows you to easily order and store background checks. Additionally, it includes the ability to monitor your entire team to see who has completed their background checks and who needs a new one. Child safety is too important to cut corners, so give the team at [Protect My Ministry](#) a look.





Having a mobile friendly sign up process is key for an outreach-based event like VBS. Drop your line where the fish are biting!



13. Train Your Team

Any discussion on how to plan an amazing VBS must include volunteer training. A lot goes into training your VBS volunteer team. But all good training includes two critical components:

1. Inspire: Please don't bore your volunteers to death through training! They get enough of that during their 9 to 5. Use your training time to inspire your team. Let them know how their efforts can change lives, tell them stories of victory from last year, and let them know the big things you're praying for this year.

2. Set Expectations: Your team wants to know what you expect of them. If you give them a standard to shoot for, oftentimes they will surpass your wildest expectations. But if you let a team set their own expectations, the ensuing dysfunction will likely surpass expectations as well.

14. Promote Your Event

If you want your VBS to be a success, then it needs to be promoted well. Search out a VBS that offers high-quality promotional materials that help the message of your event stand above competing noise. These resources should not only include physical resources like banners and posters, but also social media graphics and promotional videos as well.

- **Promotion On The Go:** Today's parents are packing their schedules to the brim. So as you promote your VBS, you need to find a way to make sure they get your critical info in the small window between soccer practice and family dinner. Mass texting is a great way to make sure that your VBS promotion is reaching busy parents on the go: anywhere, anytime. Parents may forget a flyer or ignore an announcement slide, but they always check their phones! High quality Church Management Systems will include mass-texting solutions.



15. Register Your Families

As soon as possible, get registration packets out to parents. These packets should include an overview of your VBS, a registration form, and a medical release form. Make sure that you have an organized system for recording all child information and keeping it confidential. Encourage parents to sign up early by providing an early registration discount.

- **Mobile Friendly Online Sign-Up:** Web traffic from mobile browsers surpassed traffic from desktop browsers worldwide in 2016. Having a mobile friendly sign up process is key for an outreach-based event like VBS. Drop your line where the fish are biting!
 - **VBS Engagement:** Keeping tabs on your VBS sign-ups is a key part of the registration process. However, many churches lock all of this information away in a single spreadsheet that has limited access. Take advantage of a Church Database where registrations can be shared in real time, follow-up communication can be automated, and reports can be easily generated to measure engagement success.
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16. Communicate Clearly

Strong communication is crucial in planning your VBS. Create an email list and keep parents in the loop about key deadlines, service opportunities and any changes to your event. If you keep parents in the loop, you'll be amazed at how much they'll support you.

- **Communication:** With VBS, it's important to invest in a communication system that will allow you to organize your volunteers, parents and children into groups; as simple or complex as you need. These groups can be communicated with via text or email. This allows your VBS communication to move from generic to specific, ensuring that you are never wasting people's time with information that is not relevant.





Rehearsals are a great time to flesh out any kinks in your plan or bring to surface any confusion that your team may have. It's much better to catch these things in a walkthrough, as opposed to a room packed with rambunctious children.



17. Gather Your Supplies

As you plan out your VBS with your team, create a detailed list of all the supplies you will need for games, decorations, crafts, and snacks. This is one of the areas that can cause a VBS budget to explode, but it is also a great opportunity for your church body to get involved. Let your congregation know the supplies you need and allow them to give directly to your needs. We've said it before, but people love giving/donating directly to a need!

18. Decorate Your Space

Ideally, you want to transform your space into a wonder-filled world of Vacation Bible School. Your VBS theme should be seen everywhere and wow your children the moment they enter. Here are some tips to help you achieve this goal.

1. Graphics: If your VBS comes with videos and graphics, orient your space around a large screen to display these. This will allow your digital VBS resources to really shine!

2. Decoration Party: Throw a party with a team of your best crafty and creative people to build various decorations that will bring your theme to life. Order pizza, bring some treats, and take an evening to transform your space into something amazing.



19. Dedicate Your VBS

In the final weeks leading up to Vacation Bible School, bring your entire ministry team in front of your congregation and dedicate your VBS. Have your congregation pray that God would do an amazing thing in the lives of all who attend, adults and children alike. To ensure that this dedication event really impacts your congregation, consider the following:

- 1. Have Your Senior Pastor Share:** People know that VBS is important to kids, but your Senior Pastor can share why it's important to the church as a whole.
- 2. VBS Testimonials:** Have volunteers and kids who attended last year's VBS share how the event impacted their lives. Testimony is powerful, it moves our hearts like few other things can.
- 3. Have The Entire VBS Team On Stage:** Having your entire team come forward gives your church family a powerful visual of the scope of VBS. If people aren't sure how big a deal VBS is, this visual will help them understand.

20. Schedule Your Rehearsal

Adress rehearsal is the final step as we discuss how to plan an amazing VBS. In the week leading up to VBS, schedule a rehearsal walkthrough with your entire VBS team. This walkthrough should give every team member a very clear picture of their role during the VBS week. Rehearsals are a great time to flesh out any kinks in your plan or bring to surface any confusion that your team may have. It's much better to catch these things in a walkthrough, as opposed to a room packed with rambunctious children. In the weeks leading up to your rehearsal, organize your teams into groups (leadership, games, teaching, small groups, etc.) and send them text message and email communications that make their roles and responsibilities crystal clear. This will empower them to come into your rehearsal, ready to go!



After Your VBS Is Over

No matter how difficult the road ahead may look, you are going to succeed in hosting an amazing VBS! When you're done, your first reaction will be to exhale and not think about VBS for another year. But, before you kick your feet up and relax, there are a few things you need to do once VBS is over.

1. Thank Every Volunteer: After the VBS whirlwind is over, make a point to personally thank every volunteer. Your team wants to know that their contributions were noticed and meaningful. Try writing "thank you" cards in advance that you can then hand out to volunteers on the final day of VBS. Also, consider incorporating a time into your VBS where students can write their own "thank you" cards to their leaders. A little thanks goes a long way!

2. Debrief With Your Team: In the week following VBS, set a time to gather your leadership team to discuss how VBS went. Encourage them to openly share the good, bad and ugly. You want to hear this feedback while it's fresh in everyone's mind. Use this feedback to confirm the things you want to stop, start and continue next year.

3. Summarize Your Notes: Hopefully, you took notes throughout the planning and presentation of your VBS. After it's over, review your notes and condense them down to the big ideas you'll want to start with next year. The perfect time to do this is the week following VBS when your notes will still make sense!

We hope this 20 step guide has given you some fresh ideas and inspiration as you plan your upcoming Vacation Bible School. If you would like to try the God of Wonders VBS program for free or learn more about the 100+ Sunday School lessons of Sharefaith Kids, follow the link below:

ShareFaith **KIDS**

VBS + 3 LESSONS FREE!

