



praise night



e



water fun



VBS water day



friendship



best friends



pool time

CREATING A GREAT SUMMER EXPERIENCE FOR YOUR YOUTH

Every church and every family can't afford to send their kids to faraway and costly summer camps. Many can't afford to send their kids to daycares or put them in after school programs. Churches can serve their families by providing families a safe, cost effective, local summer experience for their children.

Traditionally, churches call these experiences Vacation Bible School (VBS), but they go by many names. They're called Vacation Bible School, day camps, church camp, summer events, and retreats.

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR WAYS TO MAKE THIS YEAR'S THE BEST ONE YET?

With many kids living in families where both parents work, Vacation Bible School is a great way to serve both kids and families.

Vacation Bible School (VBS) is an institution in many churches. It has been around since the 1890s.¹ VBS is declining,² but it doesn't have to. Here're some tips to make your VBS the best one yet.



¹ "Standard Publishing's VBS Celebrates 80th Birthday" (PDF). Lookout Magazine. Retrieved September 16, 2007.

² Kummer, Tony (2019-04-25). "Children's Ministry Statistics 2019". Ministry-To-Children.com. Archived from the original on 2019-10-24.





GETTING READY FOR THE SUMMER



CREATE A VISION

How awesome do you want your Summer Experience to be this year? How will your kids' lives be changed? How will they experience community? What will they learn about? How will it bless your community? You'll need a clear vision to recruit volunteers and your campers. Your vision should include your kids being safe, learning about Jesus, having fun, and doing good.

GET YOUR VOLUNTEERS

Stay at home parents, college students back for summer, high school seniors, and retired people make great candidates for volunteers. Find people who have a passion for children's ministry and the time to invest in them. A mixture of ages is a great way for your church to give your children a rich community experience. Some people may be able to serve the whole camp. Some may only be able to serve half days or even just one day. The more people you have serving, the more you'll have attending. Use each person's gifts to support your church's VBS vision.

SAFETY FIRST

Make sure as many volunteers as possible are CPR certified. Ensure you have a quality first aid pack on site. Make sure you have emergency contact information for every camper. Get a list of any allergies your campers or volunteers may have, and take precautions.

BACKGROUND CHECK YOUR VOLUNTEERS

Your number one priority is safety. Parents demand it, and kids deserve it. ACS Technologies offers a simple and effective way to screen your volunteers. It includes a Nationwide Criminal Database Search, including millions of State and county records, a Global Watch Lists/Homeland Security Lists and Sanctioned Lists, International & Interpol of 190+ Countries, a Nationwide Sex Offender Database Search, and a Social Security Address Trace Report, including Death Index. This ensures that no wolves will sneak into the pen with your little sheep.

PICK A THEME & RESOURCES

Your theme will help you decide how you'll structure your days and decorate your facilities. It will make your summer experience fun and memorable. You can choose any theme, and many curriculums you can purchase come with them built in. Group.com, growcurriculum.org, and vbs.lifeway.com have both free and not-free resources you can use this year.

TRAIN YOUR VOLUNTEERS

Some people are great with kids, but working with kids isn't easy for everyone. Give them tools they can use to manage behaviors, engage campers, and teach scripture. Here are some simple tools you can share with them.

- **A Good Plan Limits Misbehaviors-** Don't "wing it." Plan out activities in 15 minute increments. You can always go a little longer if you want/need to, but frequent changes in your activities will help engage your campers. It's better to run out of time before you run out of activities.
- **Work with Parents-** If a camper has a "bad day", let their parents know. Make sure to explain that you love their camper and you want them to have a great camp experience. Ask them for any advice they may have to help you with their camper.
- **The Magic Relationship Ratio-** Build and strengthen relationships with a 5 to 1 ratio. Have 5 positive interactions with your campers for every 1 negative interaction. Every time you have to hold a camper accountable, or if you think you're going to have to hold one accountable, make sure you have 5 positive interactions. This comes from research on marriage by Dr. John Gottman, but it works with every relationship.³
- **Create a Camp Contract-** Let your campers help create your rules. Ask them what they think everyone will need to do to make sure we all have a great camp. Chances are they'll come up with the same rules you would on your own. They'll say things like- Be nice to each other, listen when the teacher is talking, have good attitudes. Get big chart paper or sticky notes, and turn their ideas into your Camp Contract. Refer to it at the beginning of each day and after lunch. You can also refer to it if campers get unruly. This works well for grades 3 and up.

³ <https://www.gottman.com/blog/the-magic-relationship-ratio-according-science/>

PROMOTE YOUR CAMP IN YOUR CHURCH

Get the word out to your church. Tell them the dates early, even if you don't have all the details ready. Put it in your newsletter, share it on social media, get it on your website, and give out flyers in your children's ministry. You can never start early enough. Start today!

PROMOTE YOUR CAMP IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Get the word out in your community. Make sure your community knows there's a safe and fun place for their kids to spend part of their summer. Many families have working parents, and they'd love for their kids to attend your camp. Share it on social media. Put flyers in local businesses. Offer scholarships for families who can't afford it. Make sure you tell your community their kids will be safe, have fun, and do good. Most parents will get behind a vision like that.

DESIGN A CAMP SHIRT

T-shirts are cheap. They'll help you keep track of your campers if you take a field trip. They're a free promotion for your church. And, if they get messy at VBS, they'll clean easily.





RUNNING SUMMER EXPERIENCE

PAIR UP YOUR VOLUNTEERS

Whenever possible, make sure that each volunteer is ALWAYS within sight of another volunteer. Accountability matters. This adds another layer of protection for the children and adds protection for your volunteers. You don't want anything happening, and you don't want anyone saying something happened when it didn't. Jesus sent out His followers 2 by 2, and we should too.

SUPPORT YOUR VOLUNTEERS

Make sure you're over-communicating with them. Make sure they all have a schedule of the week's and day's activities. Make sure they have cellphone numbers of the people leading the camp. Use Relam's messaging capabilities or a group messaging app to share any updates or changes to the schedule so that everyone knows what they need to know and do. Stop by your different rooms or areas often. Don't leave them stranded or let them feel like they're stranded. Make sure they can take a break or use the restroom when needed.

TEACH THE BIBLE

VBS was created so that kids could have a chance to study scripture. Don't make scripture a 2nd thought. This is the reason you're creating a summer experiences. Teaching is just talking if they're not learning. Find creative ways to make scripture understandable and memorable. Get them talking about the bible. Have them restate the passages in their own words. Have them act out the stories they're learning about. Let them make a video about it. Give them a homework assignment that has them share what they've learned with their families at home.



GET MESSY!

Kids love to make messes. Parents know this, kids know this, and everyone knows it. Give them opportunities to be kids. Have a silly string fight, make a wild obstacle course, have a giant marshmallow fight, put on a pie eating contest, or do anything that gives them a chance to do something they can't do at home. It'll be a highlight of your camp and their summers.

BLESS YOUR COMMUNITY

Jesus' people should be blessings. Give your campers a chance to give back to their community. Do a food drive. Plant trees. Pick up trash in a park. Visit a retirement community and put on a skit or sing some songs. Sponsor a fun run for a cause where all the kids get to spray the runners with water guns. The ideas are endless, and you know what your community needs. Do something to bless your community.



AFTER YOUR SUMMER EXPERIENCE

REFLECT WITH YOUR VOLUNTEERS

Figure out what made your VBS awesome and what could have been better. Listen to the people who gave up their time to make your experience possible. Make a document with their feedback, and use it while planning next year.

GIVE THE CAMPERS A QUICK SURVEY

Before they leave, find out what the kids loved and what they think could be better. Your campers are your customers. Listen to what they think about the camp. Build on your strengths and work on your weaknesses.



GIVE THE PARENTS A QUICK SURVEY

Parents make decisions for their kids. Give them a chance to help you make your VBS better next year. Include it in your follow-up email.

FOLLOW-UP WITH NON CHURCH MEMBERS

Send them a thank you email and letter for allowing their kids to attend your VBS. Include some basic information about your church and any up-coming activities you have coming up for children.



Choosing the Right Ministry Partner

The know-how you need from experts you trust.

ACS Technologies is the original pioneer of Church Management Software (ChMS). We are firmly dedicated to serving local churches all over North America by providing the best-in-class ministry software and service solutions that help you fulfill Christ's mission for your Church.

Tools and support to strengthen churches.

We build great software, but we don't stop there. We have a "service-first" approach that truly sets us apart. With hundreds of dedicated support and consulting personnel, your staff can reach our team 24/7. We're in your corner to help you with the ministry challenges you face every day.

Ideas and solutions powered by integrity.

Integrity is real for us, and it means consistently being faithful stewards by doing the right thing for church success. We have earned the trust of pastors, church staff, congregants, our employees, and colleagues for over 40 years.

A plan to meet your needs and move your ministry.


We're not just interested in satisfied customers. We see ourselves as your real ministry partner and will work with you to make disciples that will last for an eternity. We're excited to talk about your goals, create a plan together, and set you up with the software, service, and resources you need.

We believe in YOU!

ACS Technologies believes in the local church. Over 75% of our team has experience serving in their local churches. We know firsthand that serving the Church means serving people, and we take seriously our commitment to helping ministries like yours achieve their God-given mandate - to make disciples in their communities, states, and across the world.

Let's Talk

We know the challenges of switching or implementing new technology and how that can be intimidating. But we also know the unbelievable changes that have happened within churches that have partnered with us for their ministry needs. Let's connect and see how we can assist you in the greatest thing you do - grow God's Kingdom.

 1-844-467-3256

 solutions@acst.com

 180 Dunbarton Dr, Florence, SC 29501