

DIRECTOR

Answers **VBS**



Tracking Down the One True God

LEADER GUIDE

Director Guide

To make your job as VBS Director easier, make sure you

- ☑ read the *Director Guide* completely.
- ☑ check out the Digital Resources thoroughly.
- ☑ spread out all the materials that came in your kit.
- ☑ browse the other leader and teacher guides to become familiar with all aspects of this VBS.



Course

Day 1

GR+8

God is Great!

Day 2

ALL+MY+T

God is Almighty!

Bible Passages

Paul in a City of False Gods
Acts 17:16–34

Jonah and God Almighty
Book of Jonah, Psalm 139

Treasured Verses

Psalm 145:3

Jeremiah 32:27

Animal Pals

Camo the Chameleon

Flip the Flapjack Octopus

Apologetics Focus

There's only one God as revealed in the Bible.
You can't make up a god of your own choosing.

Nothing is too hard for God.

Deep Sea Crafts



Tropical Tree

Glass Gem Magnets



Shell Necklace

Splash Octopus

Deep Sea Science

Rainbow Water

Mystery Color

Can Crushing

Diving Octopus

Ride the Tide Games

Island Ambush
Island Olympics

Fish Out of Water
Sharks and Minnows

Tropical Treats



One and Only Bread

Seascape Snacks



Pail of Whales

Omni Os

Cool Contests

Swedish Fish® Guessing Game

Team Cheers

Overview

Day 3 RUE+LEARN-N God is Ruler!

Isaiah's Vision of God
Isaiah 6:1-3, Psalm 8

Isaiah 6:3

Clark the Great White Shark

God is the same in the Old Testament as he is in the New Testament. He was and is and always will be in charge.



Wind Chime

Great White Game

Diaper Duty

Shark Float

Glory Corners
Tropical Relays



Shark Teeth

Moon and Star
Sammies

Dress-Up Day

Day 4 E+MAN+YOU+L God is Emmanuel!

God Comes to Earth (Gospel Presentation)
Select Scriptures

Romans 5:8

Jam the Immortal Jellyfish

God is three-in-one—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Even though there is mystery to this, God is knowable.



Mini Diorama

Gospel Sand Art

Lava Lamps

Sea Snakes

Triple Play
Take Heart



Heart Melts

Jolly Jellyfish

God of Wonder Challenge

Day 5 TRUSTY-Y+WORD-D+THEE God is Trustworthy!

David Trusts God
1 Samuel 17

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trusty the Macaw

God is bigger and greater than our unanswered questions. We can trust him.



God's Attributes
Treasure Chest

Seek and Find
Treasure

Salty or Fresh?

Jewel Treasures

Buccaneer Barriers
What's the Treasure?



Hidden Treasure Treats

Treasure Maps

Mission Money Mania

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Director Guide

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OVERVIEW

Fun in the Sun

What is it about a tropical island that is so captivating—the beach, sunny skies, sparkling water, and awesome resorts? Or how about the beauty, sunsets, island animals, and glittering stars? It certainly is a special place on earth.

On *Mystery Island*, prepare to be thrilled from the top of your sun-drenched head to the tip of your sandy toes as we explore an intriguing and mysterious tropical paradise while tracking down the one true God.

Day 1: God is GREAT!—As we stop in Acts 17 and find a city full of idols, we'll hunt for clues about our great God and discover we must have the right view of him. We can't make up a god of our own choosing.

Day 2: God is ALMIGHTY!—Our mighty God knows everything, is everywhere, and has the power to do anything. As we study the account of Jonah, we'll ooohhhh and aaahhh as we focus on the three big Os of God—his omniscience, his omnipotence, and his omnipresence.

Day 3: God is RULER!—We'll check in with Isaiah and realize God is not like us. Our minds will be blown away by his vastness, beauty, and holiness.

Day 4: God is EMMANUEL!—God is high and mighty, Lord of all creation. And yet, he also came to earth (Emmanuel means “God with us”) and desires a relationship with the people he has made. He is good and he loves us.

Day 5: God is TRUSTWORTHY!—With the account of David, we'll learn that God is great, God is good, and God is perfect in all things, so we can trust him with our lives. He is our rock.

From the minute our islanders arrive at *Mystery Island*, they'll find fun waiting to happen. The day begins at the **Islander Assembly**, a supercharged opening complete with entertaining welcomes, rockin' songs, a mission moment, and prayer. Then we're off to four fun rotation sites:

Lighthouse Lessons, the teaching time. Here, islanders will track down truths about the one true God and discover he is a priceless treasure.

Tropical Treats, the snack spot. Islanders will enjoy island eatables at this yummy stop.

Ride the Tide Games, the recreation location. At this location, islanders attempt fun surf and sand challenges.

Deep Sea Science and Crafts, the science, craft, music, mission, and memory verse spot. This location features a wide array of activities to choose from: electrifying science experiments to explore, creative crafts to invent, high-energy songs to sing, fun memory verse games to play, or mission time to investigate (for those who want to spend more time than is given during the Assembly).

After finishing the day's rotations, everyone heads back to the **Islander Assembly** for the closing that includes more singing, a Creature Feature, contest results, and the greatly anticipated daily drama, which is a highlight of the kids' day. The drama features two siblings who are invited to an island treasure hunt as part of their inheritance from a rich uncle. In the midst of their search, much mystery, intrigue, adventure, and humor occur, and valuable lessons are learned.

So grab your beach tote, and let's head out for some fun in the sun at *Mystery Island*!

Our Goal

We are so thankful for how God has chosen to use the Answers VBS programs over the past years! But why did we decide to embark on such an undertaking in the first place, and why are we still at it, by God's grace?

Our primary goal has always been to bring God glory by boldly and unashamedly proclaiming him to a strategic group—young people! From both a biblical and statistical point of view, young people are a big deal. They're not only awesome—we love 'em!—but they're also dearly cherished by our Lord and tend to be soft-hearted toward spiritual things. Researchers generally agree most people become Christians when they're children, so it's apparent this age group is a huge mission field!

Children are loved by their Creator. Jesus said to let them come to him (Luke 18:16). We want children to come to Christ and not be hindered in any way from doing so. To that end, we combine a biblically rich VBS with off-the-chart, irresistible fun. In a day and age when content sometimes suffers, it's critically important to us not to sacrifice rich teaching. But it's also crucial that the most exciting

book in the world not come across as boring or irrelevant. We want to reflect our creative, inspiring, joy-giving God who made laughter and fun!

So why do we do it? We want kids around the world to hear about and personally meet our awesome God and to understand how they can receive eternal life through repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. We believe VBS is a

great way to introduce them to God, as it is one of the biggest outreaches of the year for most churches.

We pray you will find that every prayer prayed, every minute invested, every dollar spent, and every word spoken will bring God glory as you reach kids for Christ. Just remember—VBS is worth it! May God richly bless your VBS. We're praying for you!

Your Role

As the director of VBS, you are someone who possesses vision, organizational and people skills, and a heart for children. The following are your responsibilities.

- Oversee the entire VBS (read through the *Director Guide* and other manuals for further information)
- Work with the church staff on VBS-related issues such as goals, dates, and budget
- Recruit, organize, and oversee the entire VBS staff
- Run training workshops
- Organize the WOW! Treasure Hunts and cool contests (see Cool Contests section) and communicate pertinent info regarding this to your staff
- Coordinate the Fin-tastic Finale closing program to bring everyone back together after VBS is over
- Establish effective follow-up
- Pray over all aspects of this job before, during, and after VBS

Frequently Asked Questions

The content of *Mystery Island* may be new to you. For a list of helpful articles on the topics covered in this VBS program, please visit AnswersVBS.com/mifaq.

Terms to Know

Throughout the VBS curriculum, various terms will be used. Here's a list of some of the most common terms to know.

Islanders: The kids at VBS. Islanders are put in groups named after tropical islands (e.g., Puerto Rico, Bora Bora, Fiji).

Group Guides: Adults who guide the islanders from place to place during VBS. No teaching is required for this position.

Lighthouse Keepers: Teachers at the Lighthouse Lesson time.

Lighthouse Lessons: Rotation site where Bible and apologetics teaching occurs.

Islander Assembly: Spot where everyone joins together for the opening and closing assemblies.

Deep Sea Science and Crafts: Rotation site where kids make crafts, perform science experiments, sing songs, learn memory verses, and explore missions around the world.

Tropical Treats: Indoor or outdoor site where island eatables are served.

Ride the Tide Games: Indoor or outdoor site (outdoor is preferred) to dive into surf and sand games.

Treasured Verses: Daily memory verses.

Animal Pals: Friendly animal mascots used to emphasize the key point of each day's lesson.

Creature Feature: Daily time during the opening or closing assembly when we marvel together at God's design of various thematic animals.

Toddlers: 2–4 year olds.

Pre-Primaries: 4–6 year olds, or kids who are age 4 through those who have completed kindergarten.

Primaries: 6–9 year olds, or kids who have completed grades 1–3.

Juniors: 9–12 year olds, or kids who have completed grades 4–6.

For multi-age K–6 teams, we recommend using the material for the Primaries.

Top 20 Tips for the VBS Director

Whether you're a first-time recruit or a seasoned director, here are some tips just for you.

1. Pray and study God's Word. "We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). You *will* be busy, so keep in mind that the busier you get, the more you need to pray and study! God will multiply your time if you give him your best.
2. Read through the various guides thoroughly and early. Become familiar with the Digital Resources, which contains clip art, logos, printable and customizable versions of the forms mentioned throughout this guide, and more. If you're a first-time director, ask previous directors and VBS veterans what's been done in the past. It helps to receive counsel! At the same time, don't be afraid to try something new.
3. Be sure to check out the WOW! Treasure Hunt info in the Cool Contests section to find out more about the treasure hunts that are an important part of this year's VBS.
4. Check out the web address listed on page 8 for great articles on the teaching at *Mystery Island*. This is a good resource for you and a good reference for volunteers or parents who have questions.
5. Many hands make light work. Be careful not to overextend yourself. Delegate areas of responsibility to people and allow them the joy of serving, even if it is not quite how you would do it.
6. When working with people, there most likely will be conflicts. Resolve conflict with prayer and gentle answers based on principles from God's Word. "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).
7. Have a backup plan for games in case it rains and you need to be inside all day.
8. Have fun. Directing your VBS should be a joy for you. At the same time, though, remember you are in a spiritual battle with an enemy who will try to throw darts your way. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).
9. Label file folders or electronic file folders with different areas of VBS, and use these to file ideas and suggestions.
10. Help your church catch the significance of this event by sharing that VBS is a huge, God-given opportunity to reach many with the gospel of Christ.
11. Get enough sleep and exercise.
12. Make people feel loved, appreciated, and needed.
13. Communicate well. Make announcements, require attendance at the training workshops, send emails, and keep everyone informed.
14. Be enthusiastic! Your excitement is contagious and makes others want to be in on the fun.
15. When deciding on the ages to include in your VBS, keep in mind that this VBS is written to appeal to not only young children but also older elementary kids. It has real answers from God's Word for real issues all kids face.
16. Be the *director*. Don't commit to teaching or any other VBS leadership role during VBS week. Stay as free as possible to greet, encourage, and troubleshoot.
17. Carry a cell phone or walkie-talkie with you during VBS week so you can be reached throughout the building.
18. Prepare two containers for each group guide. See page 38 for more information.
19. Soon after VBS is over, survey the staff so you can make improvements for next year.
20. Keep a list of answered prayers and praises. Share your list with others. Continue praying, even after VBS is finished, for God to grow the seeds he planted and to bring more fruit over the next months. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Connect with us and other Answers VBS directors through the following platforms:

[Facebook.com/AnswersVBS](https://www.facebook.com/AnswersVBS)

[Facebook.com/groups/AnswersVBS](https://www.facebook.com/groups/AnswersVBS)

[YouTube.com/AnswersVBS](https://www.youtube.com/AnswersVBS)

[Pinterest.com/AnswersVBS](https://www.pinterest.com/AnswersVBS)

[Twitter.com/AnswersVBS](https://twitter.com/AnswersVBS)

Terrific Trivia Tidbits

Use the fun facts below to start thinking about the fun theme, including islands, treasures, and pirates. The trivia tidbits can be used for training meetings, during arrival and dismissal times at VBS, or during any downtime while kids wait to get to their next rotation. [Presentation images](#) are available in the Digital Resources.

Island Trivia

- Would you like to live on an island? About one out of ten people in the world do.
- Some islands have beaches with black or pink sand!
- There are lots of underwater volcanoes that release lava, making areas of the deep water super hot. As they get bigger, they sometimes break the surface of the water and an island is formed!
- Did you know there are three man-made islands in the world? The biggest is off the coast of Dubai and it's built in the shape of a palm tree.
- Only two out of every 100 islands have people on them.
- Which country has the most lighthouses? The US! Michigan is the state with the most.
- Each lighthouse has a unique look. They're given different colors and patterns so sailors can tell during the day where they are, and they have different flashing light patterns at night to distinguish one from another.
- A tiny island is called an islet.
- Ever heard of a desert island? That means it doesn't have any people living on it (it's deserted), not that it is a desert.
- There are more than 25,000 islands in the Pacific area alone. Wanna go to one?
- Do you like to chew gum? If you do, don't live on the island of Singapore. It's illegal to chew gum there.
- According to the Guinness World Records, the tallest sandcastle ever made was in Germany in 2017. It was about as tall as one and a half telephone poles.
- Biggest island in the world? Depends on who you ask. Some would say Australia. Some would say Greenland. What do you think?
- Oink! Oink! There's an island called Pig Beach that has no humans on it, but lots and lots and lots of wild pigs.
- Not all islands are warm and tropical. Can you think of one that isn't? How about Greenland?
- You better like to walk if you live on Mackinac Island, because no cars are allowed.
- How do you think Cat Island got its name? There are only about 100 people who live there, but tons and tons of cats. Meow!
- Guess what Rabbit Island is filled with? Yep—rabbits!
- Do you like snakes? Venomous snakes? Well, you may like Snake Island near Brazil, which is infested with extremely poisonous snakes. But you can't go there. There are so many snakes, it's illegal to step foot on the island.
- Vulcan Point is an island in the middle of a lake that's in the middle of a volcano that's in the middle of a bigger lake that's in the middle of a bigger island that's in a group of islands in the Pacific Ocean. Follow all that?
- Guess which island has the most churches per square mile? Jamaica
- If you went to the bottom of the ocean, the water pressure on your body would be so great, you would feel like you were trying to hold up 50 jumbo jets.
- What island animal can detach part of its tail if in danger, then grow it back? An iguana, for one.
- Have you heard of a wild beach? It sounds wild, but really, it's just a beach that doesn't have any people, houses, towns, hotels, or anything else on it.
- Guess where some of the greatest earthly treasures are? The ocean! There are more riches, artifacts, and treasures at the bottom of the sea than are found in all the museums of the world combined.
- Believe it or not, stingrays are a kind of fish.
- Did you know there are lakes and rivers under the ocean?
- The ocean is so amazingly huge that only a tiny bit of it has been explored.

Pirate/Treasure Trivia

- Pirates (sea robbers) have been around since early civilizations, hiding among tiny islands and bays to surprise passing ships.
- Did pirates wear eye patches? Yep! Some suggest one reason for the patch was to help the pirate's covered eye quickly adjust to the dark below deck.
- Blackbeard was the most feared pirate of all time. Before a raid, he would stick smoking fuses in his hair to make himself look scary. Don't try this at home.
- Was every pirate treasure filled with gold, jewels, and silver? Nope. They often contained more down-to-earth things like food, cloth, and lumber.
- A favorite pirate food was . . . turtle! Turtles were easy to catch on beaches, and their meat and eggs were prized.
- Do you know what the famous pirate flag was nicknamed? The Jolly Roger
- Pirates were also called privateers or buccaneers. Privateers if given permission by their countries to be pirates, and buccaneers if not.

- Can you whistle? Pirates wouldn't have you on their ship if you did, because they thought whistling would cause a storm to blow up.
- Pirates figured they wouldn't wash their hair because they could just cover it with hats or handkerchiefs, and

they wouldn't brush their teeth because they would fall out anyway.

- A famous pirate, Captain Kidd, is fabled to have buried treasure on an island named, of all things, Money Island!

Lakeshore Laughs

Jokes and Riddles

Day 1 Animal Pal Jokes— Chameleon

- Why did the chameleon get an award? *Because he was one in a chameleon.*
- Why did the chameleon wear the same clothes everyone else had on? *So he could blend in.*
- Why did the chameleon decide to take the lifeguard job? *Well, there are a chameleon reasons.*

Day 2 Animal Pal Jokes— Octopus

- What does a flapjack octopus like to eat for lunch? *A peanut butter and jellyfish sandwich.*
- Why would an octopus be a good soldier? *Because he's well armed.*
- What did the flapjack octopus say to the airplane traveler? *Sorry, this seat is octopied.*

Day 3 Animal Pal Jokes—Shark

- What fish make the best librarians? *Sshhharks.*
- What sea animals are carpenters? *The hammerhead shark and the sawfish.*
- What did the great white shark say to the small fish? *Nice to eat you.*

Day 4 Animal Pal Jokes— Jellyfish

- What's fun to poke on a jellyfish? *Its jellybutton.*
- What did the jellyfish write on the birthday card? *Have a jelly good birthday.*
- What treat is a jellyfish's favorite? *A float.*

Day 5 Animal Pal Jokes— Macaw

- Why do macaws love playing tricks on sea gulls? *Because they're so gullible.*
- What do you call a boy macaw and a girl macaw who are dating? *Tweet-hearts.*
- What do you call a macaw that jumps out of military airplanes? *A parrot trooper (paratrooper).*

Miscellaneous Jokes and Riddles

- What fish is the best at duels? *A swordfish.*
- What fish are you most likely to take on a walk? *A spiny dogfish.*
- Why are fish so smart? *They stay in schools.*
- What fish has a niece and nephew? *An aunt-chovy.*
- What fish plays an instrument? *A trumpet fish.*
- What fish is the funniest? *A clownfish.*
- What island is square? *Cuba.*
- What island is the coldest? *Brrr-muda.*
- What did the island say to the ocean? *I sea you.*
- What island rodent loves dessert? *A pie-rat (pirate).*
- How much does it cost a pirate to buy corn? *A buck an ear (buccaneer).*
- What's a pirate's favorite exercise? *Planks.*
- What's a pirate's favorite letter? *Arrr.*

- What's a pirate's favorite football team? *The Buccaneers.*
- What's a pirate's favorite way to travel? *By carr.*
- Who won the rodeo of the sea? *The sea horse.*
- How do clams call each other? *On their shell phones.*
- What's the richest sea creature? *The goldfish.*
- What did the tree wear to the ocean? *Swim trunks.*
- How do you know the ocean is friendly? *Because it waves.*
- What did the boy volcano say to the girl volcano? *I lava you.*

Knock Knock Jokes

- Knock knock. *Who's there?*
Frank. *Frank who?*
Frank you for the coconut.
- Knock knock. *Who's there?*
Annie. *Annie who?*
Annie body up for a swim?
- Knock knock. *Who's there?*
Lena. *Lena who?*
Lena little closer to see the lizard.
- Knock knock. *Who's there?*
Ida. *Ida who?*
Ida come sooner if I knew it was a whale sighting.
- Knock knock. *Who's there?*
Dozen. *Dozen who?*
Dozen-y body want some seafood?

Tongue Twisters

- Fry fresh fish.
- She sells seashells by the seashore.
- Shirley, see the sunshine.

A to Z Fun Theme Words

A algae, aloha, anchor, angelfish

B banana, barnacle, bay, beach, beach ball, beach towel, boardwalk, boat, boogie board, bucket hat, bungalow, buoy

C cabana, cape, cay, chameleon, coast, coconut, coral, cove, crab, current

D daybreak, deep sea fishing, deep sea turtle, dive, dock, dolphin, dragonfly, dune, dune buggy

E eagle ray, ebb tide, electric eel

F fan, fin, fish, flamingo, flapjack octopus, flip flops, flippers, floating

G gecko, grass skirt, great white shark, gulf, gull

H hammock, hang five, hang ten, harbor, hermit crab, hibiscus, high tide, horizon

I ice cream, iguana, inlet, inner tube, island, isthmus

J jellyfish, jewels

K kayak, kelp, king crab, kingfisher, kite

L lagoon, lei, lifeguard, life jacket, life preserver, lighthouse, limbo, lobster, loggerhead turtle, longboard, low tide, luau

M macaw, manatee, mango, manta ray, marina, moorish idol, mussels

N nautilus, neap tide, netting

O ocean, octopus, oyster

P paddle, palm tree, pearl, pelican, pier, pineapple, pirate, popsicle, porpoise, port, pufferfish

Q queen conch, queen parrotfish

R raft, ray, reef, relax, riptide, rope

S sail, sailboat, saltwater, sand, sandals, sandbar, sandcastle, sand dollar, sea, seagull, seahorse, seashore, sea star, seaweed, shell, ship, shore, shrimp, snail, snorkel, soak, splash, sponge, spray, stingray, submarine, sunglasses, sunrise, sunset, surf, surfboard, surfing, swim, swordfish

T taffy, tide, tide pool, tiger shark, toucan, tropical, tuna, turtle

U ukulele, umbrella, under-the-sea, underwater, urchin

V vacation, volleyball

W water, waterfall, wave, wave runner, wet, whale, whale shark, wharf, white caps, wind surfing

XYZ X marks the spot, yacht, yellowfin, zooplankton, zoris

A to Z Attributes/Names of God

A	Almighty, Alpha and Omega, Anchor	N	Name Above All Names, Near, Never Fails
B	Bread of Life, Bright and Morning Star	O	Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Only God, Overcomer
C	Caring, Comforter, Compassionate, Creator	P	Patient, Perfect, Powerful, Promise Keeper, Protector
D	Defender, Deliverer, Divine	Q	Quieter of my Soul
E	Emmanuel (God with us), Eternal	R	Redeemer, Refuge, Resurrection and the Life, Righteous, Rock, Ruler
F	Faithful, Father, Forgiving, Friend	S	Savior, Shield, Son, Sovereign, Sure Foundation
G	Gentle, Good, Good Shepherd, Great	T	Teacher, Three-in-One (Trinity), Transcendent, True, Trustworthy
H	Healer, Holy, Holy Spirit	U	Unchanging, Understanding, Unequaled
I	Immanent, Incomprehensible, Infinite	V	Very Present Help, Victorious, Vine
J	Jesus, Judge, Just	W	Way, Wise, Wonderful, Worthy
K	Kind, King	XYZ	X-cellent, Yahweh, Zealous
L	Lamb of God, Light of the World, Lord, Loving		
M	Magnificent, Majestic, Master, Merciful, Mighty, Most High		

A to Z Island Names

A	Amelia Island, Antigua, Aruba	M	Madagascar, Majorca, Maldives, Malta, Martinique, Maui, Molokai, Monteserrat
B	Bahamas, Bali, Barbados, Bonaire, Bora Bora	N	Nauru, Navassa Island
C	Canary Islands, Cayman Islands, Christmas Island, Cook Island, Coronado Island, Cozumel, Crete, Cuba, Curacao	O	Oahu, Orcas Island
D	Dominican Republic	P	Papua New Guinea, Pig Island, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Punta Cana
E	Easter Island, Elba	Q	Quail Island
F	Fiji, Florida Keys	R	Reunion Island
G	Galapagos Island, Grenada, Guadeloupe	S	Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Martin, San Benito, San Carlos, San Juan, San Lucas, Seychelles, Singapore, South Sandwich Islands
H	Haiti, Hawaii	T	Tahiti, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos
I	Ibiza	U	Union Island
J	Jamaica	V	Vanuatu
K	Kauai, Key West, Ko Lipe	W	West Dog Island
L	La Blanche Island, Lanai	XYZ	Xiushan Island, Yuma Island, Zanzibar

Top 20 Tips When Working with Children

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 19:13–14

1. Show love. All children, regardless of age or appearance, need to be loved. Greet them warmly each day, and always be ready with smiles, giggles, encouraging words, and appropriate hugs. (Make sure all staff are aware of your church's appropriate touching policies.)
2. Learn names. It makes children feel important and loved to be called by their name. Make sure visible name tags are always on each child.
3. Keep it moving. Children have short attention spans.
4. Use active learning. The more children can actively be involved in the learning process, the more they will retain.
5. Be all there! Try to leave behind whatever is currently going on in your life and focus your attention on the children under your care during VBS. Listen to them and care for them.
6. Eliminate downtime. Find activities to do when you have a few free minutes so all time is being used in a fun and productive way. Practice memory verses, share Terrific Trivia Tidbits and jokes (page 10–11), play impromptu review games, or ask fun conversation starters (page 80).
7. Think safety. Read the Child Safety Precautions on page 56. Ensure there are always at least two unrelated adults with the children at all times.
8. Be thematic. Get the kids enthused and excited about participating in the daily contests. Children love costumes, fun cheers, songs, and anything that goes with the theme, so dress as if you live on a tropical island. Think casual island clothes (but not swimsuits). Check the VBS catalog for cool island T-shirt and hat possibilities. Sunglasses or a lei can complete the look.
9. Walk worthy. Be an example in both word and deed. Children need to see authentic Christianity, so make sure you are walking the walk and not just talking the talk.
10. Notice the good. Children want attention and will sometimes act up in an effort to receive attention, even if it is negative attention. Be proactive by noticing and praising the things they do right. Be an encourager.
11. Be aware of age-level characteristics. With younger children, activities need to be hands-on, concrete, short, and simple. Older children love to talk and are processing and questioning information. Be ready to give an answer for the hope that is within you.
12. Challenge them. Children generally rise to the level expected of them, so challenge them to learn their memory verses and song lyrics. At the same time, encourage in them a true love for the Lord and his Word.
13. Pray. Before, during, and after VBS, be a faithful prayer warrior for the children in your care.
14. Be organized. Read through all training information, ask questions, and faithfully prepare any materials for which you are responsible.
15. Be a team player. Children do not need to hear negative words from their leaders. If you are frustrated or upset, take it to the Lord, but do not complain or get angry in front of the children.
16. Remember to take bathroom breaks. The younger the children, the more important this is!
17. Maintain order. Children like order! Think through potential trouble spots in your day and decide on a firm, loving discipline strategy. Ask for help from experienced individuals.
18. Build team spirit. Work as a team rather than allowing cliques to develop. Everyone should be an important member of the team.
19. Use guided conversation. Be alert and ready to turn conversations to spiritual matters. Build upon what the children are learning throughout the VBS day.
20. Be prepared to lead a child to Christ. Attend the Gospel Presentation Workshop to be equipped should God give you the awesome opportunity to talk to a child about Christ.

Age-Level Characteristics

Kids are awesome! Each one is unique and is a special creation from the hand of our amazing Creator. With all their uniqueness, however, they also share some common characteristics. That doesn't mean every child always exhibits the following characteristics at the corresponding age, but these guidelines can be a benchmark to use when looking at

characteristics of children as a whole. It can be helpful to see how God has wired children as they develop, enabling us to be more effective in teaching and interacting with them.

First, you'll see characteristics of children in general and then characteristics broken down by the four age groups we use with Answers VBS.

Common Characteristics

- Children are born sinners.
- God has given each a conscience, and they (generally) want good to win over evil.
- God has shown himself to all children through his creation, making it obvious to all that there is a Creator.
- Children enjoy active learning—moving around, seeing things, touching things, smelling and hearing things, and being involved.
- Children need to be loved, encouraged, and praised.
- Children are rapidly growing and changing.
- Children trust the adults who are responsible for them.
- Children can get discouraged by criticism and failure.
- Children are eager to learn and are curious about the world and about God.

Toddlers (2-4 years old)

Physical Characteristics

Toddlers are active! They're on the move, running, climbing, and exploring. Some are beginning to perform simple tasks like using scissors. They can easily get hurt as they are rapidly developing physical skills but don't have wisdom to know when to stop running, climbing, etc.

Takeaways for Us

- Keep toddlers moving. Engage them actively as much as possible. Have them do motions to songs and actions to Bible accounts.
- Supervise them carefully.
- Provide chunky, nontoxic supplies.
- Intersperse periods of sitting with something active.

Emotional/Social Characteristics

Toddlers want to do things by themselves, such as picking out their clothes and dressing themselves. They like imaginative, dramatic play. They're testing their powers and saying "no" a lot. They often want to please adults and try to mimic their behaviors. They're affectionate toward others. Toddlers are fearful of things that are loud and out of the ordinary.

Takeaways for Us

- Let toddlers be helpers. Give them simple one-step jobs to do, and have them help pick up things and straighten the room at the end of the lesson. Let them know they've done a good job.

- Be consistently present all week; establish routines and stick with them.
- Be consistent in discipline. Let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no."
- Give them opportunities to dress up and play imaginatively.
- Don't dress in elaborate costumes that may seem unfamiliar and scary.
- Be careful to walk worthy—act and speak in godly ways. Little eyes are watching and will want to imitate you!

Spiritual/Mental Characteristics

Toddlers are curious and want to touch, smell, feel, see, and experience their world. They have short attention spans and learn and communicate in short sentences. They understand short and simple directions. They believe what you say. Their attitude toward God and others is in the process of being formed during these years.

Takeaways for Us

- Involve toddlers' senses in learning! The more they can touch, smell, see, taste, and feel, the better!
- Give clear, simple directions.
- Keep activities and lessons short. Toddlers' attention spans are only a few minutes long before they need to switch to something new, so keep it moving!
- Be careful to speak accurately and truthfully.
- Show care and respect for your Bible, and help them see your love for it and for the Lord.

Pre-Primaries (4-6 years old)

Physical Characteristics

Pre-Primaries are active and more confident in physical activities like jumping, hopping on one foot, and walking backwards. They love to be moving. They're improving in hand-eye coordination. They're rapidly growing and may need rest after active play.

Takeaways for Us

- Pre-Primaries like to play hard, so keep them moving with short, simple games and activities. They may need to sit and rest for a brief time afterwards.

Emotional/Social Characteristics

Pre-Primaries are less fearful than toddlers but may still be afraid of common things like dogs or the dark. They can have emotional extremes and are testing others to see who can be controlled. They want to please adults and want praise. They will often mimic adults' behaviors. They like imaginative play. Pre-Primaries can handle small tasks and levels of responsibility.

Takeaways for Us

- Let them be helpers. Give them simple jobs to do, and have them help pick up things and straighten the room at the end of the lesson. Let them know they've done a good job.
- Give them opportunities to dress up and play imaginatively.
- Be consistent in discipline. Let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no."
- Be careful to walk worthy—act and speak in godly ways. Little eyes are watching and will want to imitate you!

Spiritual/Mental Characteristics

Pre-Primaries talk a lot and ask a lot of questions, including questions about God. They understand that sin is disobeying God. They need a lot of guidance in tasks but can also follow a simple series of directions. They have an attention span of approximately 5 minutes. They enjoy doing new things and hearing stories and songs. They're not always able to tell the difference between reality and fantasy. They're developing attitudes toward right and wrong and can do basic memory work.

Takeaways for Us

- In downtime, give them time to ask questions and be ready to patiently answer! During teaching time, however, be careful you don't get so wrapped up in letting them talk that the lesson doesn't happen!
- Vary activities often—every 5–10 minutes.
- When engaged in pretend activities, name them as such (e.g., "Let's pretend to be explorers!"). At the same time, point out often that God's Word is not pretend but true!
- Repetition in songs and stories works great and is enjoyed by Pre-Primaries.
- Sing the memory verse songs with them. They will be able to learn at least parts of the verses by the end of the week.
- Use visuals.
- Teach them about sin and asking God for forgiveness.
- Show interest in each child, helping them sense your care and interest in them.
- Be careful to speak accurately and truthfully.
- Show care and respect for your Bible, and help them see your love for it and for the Lord.

Primaries (6-9 years old)

Physical Characteristics

Primaries love games and competitions, but it can be hard for them to lose. They are continuing to grow and improve in hand-eye coordination and fine and gross motor skills. They need to have opportunities for movement.

Takeaways for Us

- Use games to teach! Primaries love any kind of games, whether active or learning-type games.
- Help them learn to take turns and to be good winners and good losers! Both winning and losing well are important in God's sight.

- Use boy vs. girl competitions to get them revved up! As long as you keep it light and fun, they will enjoy these times.

Emotional/Social Characteristics

Primaries are becoming more independent and confident in their ability to do things. Girls play most often with girls and boys with boys, but there is some mixing of girl and boy friends. They like to have a best friend and enjoy pretend play. Primaries enjoy jokes and are gaining a sense of humor. They care about being accepted by the team and want adult and teacher approval.

Takeaways for Us

- Give Primaries plenty of opportunities to work in teams or with partners.
- Use humor with Primaries. The sillier, the better!
- Be careful to walk worthy—act and speak in godly ways.

Spiritual/Mental Characteristics

Primaries like to talk and ask questions. They understand simple concepts and sentences and are concrete rather than abstract or symbolic thinkers. They're learning to read. They need active learning. Their attention span is growing. They understand the consequences of their actions. They can tell the difference between reality and fantasy. They often have a strict sense of right and wrong.

Takeaways for Us

- Be concrete in what you say. Don't use abstract or symbolic language. For example, regarding salvation, don't ask if they have Jesus in their hearts. They will take that literally. Becoming a child of God, or being in God's family, is

a more concrete way to express the same concept, as they will understand what it means to be in a family.

- Although their attention spans are growing, it's still good to vary activities and involve Primaries with movement as much as possible.
- Some children read better than others. Be careful about asking children to read out loud. Try asking for volunteers.
- Small print can be a challenge, so use larger print when possible.
- Encourage memorization.
- Use visuals.
- Show interest in each child, helping them sense your care and interest in them.
- Be careful to speak accurately and truthfully, and explain Bible words and concepts even if you think they are widely understood.
- Remember that you are a role model.
- Show care and respect for your Bible, and help them see your love for it and for the Lord.

Juniors (9-12 years old)

Physical Characteristics

Juniors can vary widely as they grow, with some having a growth spurt that launches them into puberty. (This can make them get tired easily.) Height, weight, and physical maturity can be all across the board. Their stamina, strength, and coordination are improving, and some are becoming known for their athletic abilities. Juniors enjoy going places and doing interesting things.

Takeaways for Us

- Don't comment on physical appearance, such as how tall someone is. Juniors can feel sensitive and awkward about their bodies.
- Make sure to help each child realize how special and uniquely created by God he or she is. Some have giftings and talents physically, some musically, some academically, etc. They need to be assured that they are God's masterpiece, created exactly as they are for a special purpose.
- Some love being active, and some don't, but it's good to keep them involved and moving.

Emotional/Social Characteristics

Juniors can't wait to grow up. They look up to teenagers and young adults. They like challenges and may develop interests and hobbies, although they're self-conscious about their abilities and failures. They're becoming more independent and can handle responsibilities. They enjoy

close friendships and small group discussion with peers. They're greatly influenced by their friends and want to be accepted. They look to friends for information and advice on issues. They like humor and jokes and most understand sarcasm. As they head into puberty, they may experience mood swings.

Takeaways for Us

- Make sure the teens and young adults in their VBS world are good role models.
- Don't tear down Juniors or resort to sarcasm. Be an encourager, listen well, and be patient with them.
- Incorporate small group discussion into the lesson, and do things that allow teams or pairings that don't rely solely on the children choosing partners. This helps avoid children repeatedly getting chosen last by peers.
- Be careful to walk worthy—act and speak in godly ways.

Spiritual/Mental Characteristics

Juniors are beginning to think abstractly and are asking many questions, for which they're looking for good answers. They have a much longer attention span than younger children. Their reading and memorization skills are improving. They're developing their views on current issues and often want to associate themselves with their parents' belief system. They spot inconsistencies in what people do versus what they say. Juniors enjoy serving and caring for others.

Takeaways for Us

- Ask thought-provoking spiritual questions. They are thinking and like to talk. Be there for them as a safe person to bounce thoughts and ideas off of.
- Listen well and pray with them.
- Some children read better than others. Be careful about asking children to read out loud unless they volunteer or you know they can read well.
- Allow them to act out lessons. Most Juniors enjoy this active involvement.
- Give them opportunities to be involved in missions or service projects.
- Challenge them to ask God to help them grow in their love for him and his Word. Help them set up Bible reading plans, and encourage them to memorize passages of Scripture.
- Make sure to walk the walk and not just talk the talk. They can spot inconsistencies, so it's important to walk worthy.
- Show interest in each child, helping them sense your care and interest in them.
- Be careful to speak accurately and truthfully.
- Show care and respect for your Bible, and help them see your love for it and for the Lord.

Tips for Managing a Group of Kids

Kids are fun, and kids have energy! Whether you are a group guide, a classroom teacher, or an assistant, be prepared to confidently lead them using some strategies that follow.

Attention Getters

Call and Response—The teacher teaches the kids that when she says something, they reply back with something else. Practice the following ideas so they know your expectations for responding to them.

- » **Teacher:** Blackbeard the pirate.
Kids: Everybody quiet.
- » **Teacher:** Mystery.
Kids: Island.
- » **Teacher:** Ahoy, mates!
Kids: Aarrgh!

Rhythm Claps—The teacher claps a little rhythm and the kids try to clap the exact rhythm back. Vary the clapping patterns.

Countdown—Hold up five fingers and start to count down from five to one. By the count of one, they need to be completely quiet.

Soft Talk—Start talking about something important very softly, or in a whisper. They will often get quiet to hear what you are saying.

Flash the Lights—This is a good signal to listen up.

Lining Up and Walking Through the Building

If You . . .—Say different categories for lining up in fun ways, such as the following:

- » “If you are wearing red, line up. Now, if you’re wearing blue, line up.”
- » “If your birthday is during the summer, line up. Now, if your birthday is during the school year, line up.”
- » “If you have a dog, line up. Now, if you have a cat, line up. Now, if you have no pets, line up.”
- » “If your first name starts with A–L, line up. Now, if your first name starts with M–Z, line up.”
- » “If you are quiet, line up.”

Let’s Be . . .—When you are leaving a room, encourage good behavior in the hallway by making a game out of it. This works well with younger kids.

- » “Let’s be mice and walk as quietly as we can.”
- » “Let’s be robots. No talking—just stiff movements.”

Proactive Tips

Be Prepared—One of the best ways to ward off discipline problems is to be prepared. If you have things well organized and have thought through your day so there isn’t downtime, it really helps. Keep things moving! This takes more time on your part, but is very worth it.

Active Participation—Keeping kids actively engaged in the lesson is perhaps the best thing you can do to keep the class from getting rowdy. The lessons are written to be creative, fun, and full of active participation. Play the games, act out the Bible accounts, and do the other ideas listed. Occupy kids’ minds and attention with good stuff!

Helpers—Involve the kids. Let them be helpers. Some kids just want to feel wanted, so giving them a responsibility is a way to show you trust them. Try putting them in charge of a simple task like filling out the attendance roster as kids come in to VBS, collecting name tags, carrying crafts, helping others learn memory verses, passing out papers, or holding a poster for the teacher. Sometimes a simple task can keep them busy and make them feel important!

Pray—Some kids may never have had anyone pray for them. Pray not only about behavior situations, but also about their eternal souls.

Notice the Good—Sometimes a poor behavior is an attention-seeking device, so be proactive and give attention to that child so she doesn’t feel the need to act out negatively. Negative behaviors can be a cry for love and attention.

Use Humor—Kids of all ages love to laugh! Have fun together. If you see a situation is getting tense or a child is getting upset for some reason, try thinking of a way to lighten the mood with humor.

Distraction—When young kids are dropped off or start to cry, distracting them is a good technique to try. Ask them to tell you about something on their clothes (“Oh, what’s that on your t-shirt?”), get them talking about some of their favorites, or show them an intriguing toy or puppet.

Keep Them Busy—If there is any downtime, fill it with something productive! This could occur while waiting for the next rotation or the assembly to begin, if craft time ends a few minutes early, etc. Use the time to find treasure chests, practice team cheers, or go over memory verses in fun ways (make up motions, make them into a rap, etc.). You may also want to play a quick game, like one of the following.

- » **Stone Face**—Have a competition to see which child can hold a frown for the longest without cracking a smile.

- » **I Spy**—Look for island things to spy out.
- » **Simon Says**—Simon can say Bible-themed things, like: Read your Bible (hands in front of you making a book), pray (praying hands), tell others (cup hands around mouth), go to church (make a church with a steeple out of your interlocked hands), etc.
- » **Quiet Mouse**—Have a competition to see who is the quietest in line.
- » **Follow the Leader**—Play the normal version or an island version. An island version uses island animals and activities, like the following:
 - Fly like a macaw.
 - Swim like a shark.
 - Move like a jellyfish.
 - Go windsurfing.
 - Ride a surfboard.
 - Dig for clams on the beach.

Calming Rowdiness

Don't Yell—Kids may respond at first if someone yells, but they eventually dismiss it. Try some of these other ideas instead.

Separate Kids—Separate kids who misbehave around each other, but also encourage problem-solving when possible. “What are some things we could do to help you and ___ get along?”

Give Choices—Avoid power struggles by giving choices. If a child is resistant to doing something you've asked of her, try your command another way. “You can either sit with the rest of the group and listen to the teacher or sit with ___ (leader's name) at the back of the room.”

Praise in Public, Correct in Private—If someone does need correction, be careful not to embarrass him in front of his peers. If you need to talk to a child about a misbehavior, pull him aside at a time when the rest of the group is distracted. Kids will be less defensive if they don't feel they have to “save face” in front of their peers, and if they feel you really care and aren't just coming down on them.

Know Church Policies—Know your church's policy for severe behavior issues. Do you take the child to your VBS director? Do you alert the child's parents? Do you involve other staff members? Be prepared.

What's in the Digital Resources?

All resources listed on this page can also be downloaded from AnswersVBS.com/IslandResources. They are also included in the Digital Library, which is available to purchase at MyAnswers.com.



Assembly Resources

This folder contains what is referenced in the *Assembly Guide*, including the daily Scripture videos, presentation images for the Creature Features, contests, WOW! Treasure Hunt Cards, and assembly scripts. For Children's Hunger Fund materials, see **Mission Moment_Childrens Hunger Fund** folder. For materials referenced in the drama, see the **Assembly_Drama** folder.



Assembly_Drama

This is the folder that will be used by your drama director. It features the sound effects, scripts, and prop lists needed to perform the drama. It also includes **two shorter script options**. The main drama features seven characters. One shorter option is based on the main drama but features fewer characters. The other shorter option is a completely different scenario with just three people.



Bible Lessons

These folders are used by your Lighthouse Lesson (Bible lesson) teachers. A DVD-ROM is included in each teacher guide.

The simple songs referenced in the teacher guides for younger children have their own folder. They can be uploaded onto an MP3 player (on a phone, tablet, or other device) to be played in the classroom. These songs are also available to purchase on a CD (11-8-141) or as a download through our online store.

The patterns and coloring sheets referenced throughout the teacher guides are found in their respective age folders, along with an RTF document of each teacher guide.

Presentation images of the memory verses, animal pals, and illustration posters are found in the **Presentation Images** folders.



Clip Art

A variety of clip art pertaining to the theme is found in this folder in both color and black-and-white versions.

The clip art is provided in three formats. Each format has a specific type of use. **PDF** files are vector files, which have transparent backgrounds and are scalable for shirt printing or to make large signs or banners. **PNG** files are a general image format that contain transparent backgrounds. They can be used for any print or web use but cannot be scaled up without resolution issues. **SVG** files are the simple vector formats required for Cricut® machines.



Coloring pages



Craft and Science Patterns

Your Deep Sea Science and Craft leaders will use this folder. A DVD-ROM is included with their leader guide. PDFs of the patterns referenced throughout the science and crafts book are included in this folder.



Director folders

These folders are for the VBS director and feature the forms listed throughout the *Director Guide*.

The **Fun in the Sun Carnival** folder has what you need to host the carnival mentioned on page 71.

The **Helps and Forms** folder features editable forms mentioned throughout this guide.

Registration forms are also available. You may also want to register children online through the MyAnswers.com portal.



Game Patterns

Your game leader may need the patterns in this folder. A DVD-ROM is **not** included with the game guide so you may want to print the PDFs in this folder and give them to your game leader to use as she deems necessary.



Logos

We have provided a variety of logo options for you to use in promoting your *Mystery Island* VBS program. You have permission to use these logos in any way that pertains to your VBS. You will also find images to use on various social media platforms in order to advertise you VBS.

NEW This year, we have also provided a Spanish logo (only the logo is available in Spanish).

Logos are provided in three formats. Each format has a specific type of use. **PDF** files are vector files, which have transparent backgrounds and are scalable for shirt printing or to make large signs or banners. **PNG** files are a general image format that contain transparent backgrounds. They can be used for any print or web use but cannot be scaled up without resolution issues. **SVG** files are the simple vector formats required for Cricut® machines.



Mission Moment

One folder features the mission moment with *Children's Hunger Fund*, and the other folder features the *Wild Brothers* mission videos. Determine when you would like to show these videos—either during the opening assembly or during

one of your rotations. Check the *Assembly Guide* and the *Deep Sea Science and Crafts Guide* (there is a mission rotation featured here) for more information. The CHF folder features presentation images, printable activities, as well as a reply form for whatever money is collected. Longer CHF videos may be downloaded from AnswersVBS.com/Island-Resources.



Presentation Images

These folders feature slides of the animal pals, Bible lesson illustrations, blank backgrounds, memory verses (in KJV and ESV), course overviews, and trivia (including daily jokes). We have also included PDFs in case you would like to print some of the files.

The **All** folder contains a PowerPoint® file that contains all the images. Use this file to manipulate the images for your specific use by moving them around, deleting what you don't need, and adding in any videos (we aren't able to include videos in the file because it becomes too large for the DVD-ROM).



Short Animations

Animations used in our videos and on our website can be found here for inclusion in your media. MOV files of the web render files may be downloaded from AnswersVBS.com/IslandResources.



Snack Patterns

Your snack director will need to have access to the PDF in this folder. A DVD-ROM is *not* included with the snack guide. You may want to print this file and give it to your snack leader for use as necessary.



Supply Lists

The supply lists for each leader guide are included in this folder, as well as in the Procedure section of this guide. They are included as RTF documents so that you can modify them according to which activities you choose for your VBS.

Music DVD-ROM Contents

All music resources (hand-motion videos, song lyric videos, lyrics, and presentation images) are found on the Resource DVD-ROMs that come with the various music leader sets (contemporary and traditional). These resources are also available with the Digital Library.

Notes

PRIORITIES

Be Anchored

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. Psalm 1:1–3

To ensure that your VBS doesn't take a dive, work on deepening your relationship with the Lord before, during, and after VBS. As director, your commitment to continual growth in your personal relationship with the Lord is vital. This comes as you depend upon the Lord and eagerly follow after him. Daily prayer and Bible study provide fuel for your growth. The Lord tells us that “whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Encourage your staff to regularly spend time fellowshiping with the Lord through prayer and reading his Word.

Take seriously the responsibility of finding a prayer coordinator to head up a VBS prayer ministry. Copy the

following page for your prayer coordinator and encourage him to put together a combination of ideas that suits your situation.

Devotions for each VBS day have also been provided. You may want to read through these together or encourage your staff to read them on their own. Copies of the [devotions](#) can also be found on the Digital Resources, in the *Helper Handbook* (item 11-8-007), and in the teacher guides for each age group.



Praying for Your VBS

Praying that the Lord will use this VBS program for his purposes is vital. Apart from him, we can do nothing. As you launch your prayer ministry, choose from the following ideas.

Top 10 Tips for a VBS Prayer Ministry

“When God plans a great work, he first sets his people to prayer.”—Charles Spurgeon

1. Find prayer warriors. Enlist people who are willing to pray consistently for VBS. Send each of them a list of VBS prayer requests for which they can regularly be praying. See the [Prayer Calendar sample](#) for ideas.
2. Set up an email prayer loop. Use your church's email prayer loop—or create your own—to pass along VBS prayer requests.
3. Gather your VBS crew to pray. Pray at meetings and encourage them to pray on their own. Write all VBS crew names on slips of paper and have each draw a name of a fellow crew member to pray for and with.
4. Hold a weekly prayer meeting devoted to VBS. Pray over that week's praises and prayer requests.
5. Encourage your group guides to pray through the names on their class lists before, during, and after VBS.
6. Hold a dedication service. Encourage the pastoral staff to include a time of prayer during the church service the Sunday before VBS.
7. Print maps and prayer request sheets and encourage your church family to walk the premises and pray over every area of the building and grounds.
8. Pass out “Praying for You” postcards (item 11-8-028) to willing and trustworthy church members with instructions to write a quick note to a child, letting him know someone is praying for him. Collect the postcards the week before VBS begins, and have church staff address and mail them.
9. People who may not be able to make it to VBS can help by praying during the VBS hours from work, home, or wherever they are.
10. When VBS is over, continue to encourage your church family to pray for the children who came to VBS. Ask God to continue to work in their hearts and minds.



Staff Devotions

Devotion 1 God Is Great

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. Proverbs 9:10

At *Mystery Island*, we're encouraging our kids to discover the one true God. But . . . how do we know the one true God even exists? It's a question that has crossed the mind of every believer at some point—sure, I believe in God, but how do I know the God I love and serve is truly the one true God?

Before we answer that question, let's go a bit further by asking another question: how can we know anything? How do we even know to question the surety of God's existence? Here's the answer: apart from the perfect, truthful, unchanging, eternal God of the Bible, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3) and from whom come knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 9:10), we cannot know anything.

Think about it.

If, as some suggest, there is no god—no ultimate standard of truth and knowledge—and we are simply the product of random processes operating on chemicals over time, then the thoughts in our brains are nothing more than the product of random chemical interactions. How could we know anything?

If, as others suggest, our universe is ruled by a god who is not eternal (Mormonism, *History of the Church*, vol. 6, ch. 14, p. 305–6) or who is deceptive (Islam, *Koran* 3:54, 8:30), how could we be sure that what we know is true today will still be true tomorrow?

The one true God of the Bible has created each person in his image and given us the ability to think rationally, to question thoughtfully, to know truth fully. And he has revealed himself to everyone so that no one is without excuse (Romans 1:18–21). Those who deny his existence or seek to change him into a false version of himself are

willfully ignorant, suppressing the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18).

We can know the one true God exists because we have the ability to know in the first place. And we can praise him that he freely gives wisdom to those who ask for it (James 1:5). This week, let's be quick to seek wisdom from the one true God as we teach our children to know the one true God and embrace him fully.

May we be thankful as the Puritans were, not only that we can know things, but also that the one true God has enabled us to know him.

Glorious God,
I bless thee that I know thee.
I once lived in the world, but was ignorant of its Creator,
was partaker of thy providences, but knew not the
Provider,
was blind while enjoying the sunlight,
was deaf to all things spiritual, with voices all around me,
understood many things, but had no knowledge of thy
ways,
saw the world, but did not see Jesus only.
O happy day, when in thy love's sovereignty
thou didst look on me, and call me by grace.
Grant that I may always weep to the praise of mercy
found,
and tell to others as long as I live,
that thou art a sin-pardoning God,
taking up the blasphemer and the ungodly,
and washing them from their deepest stain.

—(Excerpt from "The Great Discovery"
in *The Valley of Vision*)