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| VBS 2021  RECREATION RUINS  v  2018 |
| Destination Dig VBS |
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# Recreation

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| Recreation is so much more than just “play time” at VBS! It is a wonderful chance to build relationships with children and to reinforce the lesson and help to make it “stick” with them. It is also a wonderful way to engage your youth, college students, and every member of your church. So, let’s look at some tips you can use. |
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| 1.) Staff Prayerfully   * Recreation leaders should be passionate about leading recreation, and he or she should want to lead every bit as much for the Biblical application and eternal impact as for the fun. Children will know if your heart just isn’t in it. If the leader is having fun and is passionate about his or her role and the lesson, the children will also have fun and be attentive. Pray for God to lead you to the person He has for this role or to guide and equip you if you are the person He has for it. * Recruit dependable helpers. We know that extra helpers are a must for some games. This is a great opportunity for youth and college students to serve in children’s ministry as well as a great way for the recreation leader to mentor other Christian leaders on how to serve in children’s ministry. Also, be careful not to exclude the senior members or any person in your church who is safely cleared to be around children, God-fearing, enthusiastic, and very capable of helping with recreation.   + Helpers are great to help keep an eye on kids for security, game honesty, and proximity discipline.   + Helpers can help with decorations and help set up and take down each day’s event.   + Look for helpers who are willing and excited even if they can only commit to one or two days.   + Be very clear and upfront about what is expected of them and have them be upfront and honest with you about what they are able to do. * Train everyone. Be sure to share your God-given vision with the entire recreation staff and help everyone understand that recreation is about fun AND about sharing the gospel with children. We want to impact His kingdom, and everyone needs to be committed to that goal. Don’t be afraid to very gently reassign any helper who creates distractions or proves to be a hinderance to the activities and to the message God has in store each session.  1. Be Prepared!  * Arrive early. Give yourself plenty of time to set up and be ready, excited, rested, and confident when children arrive. * Be sure to have all the supplies you need ready, organized, easily obtained, and ensure that all recreation staff know their roles and responsibilities well and that everyone is well rehearsed in order to create smooth transitions and avoid any down time. * Know the lesson, motto, memory verse, and games well. We can’t expect the children to know them if we don’t take the time and make it a priority. * Know how many children to expect.   + This is important for knowing how much space you need, how many courses you will need to set up, how many sets of supplies you will need, etc. * Have a back-up plan for weather if needed. * Have a back-up plan for staff. What happens if a helper suddenly can’t attend? * Be genuinely excited to see children as soon as they arrive! Smile HUGE, cheer, clap, whatever you feel that will let children know that you want them there and are excited to lead them.  1. “Keep it Simple, Saint!”    * Keep Rules Simple and Short.    * Too many rules take valuable learning time to go over, and children will have trouble remembering them.    * Be sure to enforce the rules for all children to keep it fair and organized.    * Encourage children to play fairly and encourage each other.    * Use consequences when it is needed but explain to children that playing games is a privilege and when everyone follows the rules, everyone will get the chance to participate. Help them to understand that the rules help to keep them safe and to keep games fair.    * Use positive reinforcement and proximity discipling (staying close to any child who struggles to behave appropriately) as much as possible.    * Address any behavior or discipline issues privately. Pull the child off to the side or out of the room to correct them gently and positively. Correcting them publicly in front of their peers may either embarrass them and keep them from returning or provide them the negative attention that they may be accustomed to and desire encouraging the behavior and distracting from the lesson.    * Seek help from your children’s minister or pastor if difficult situations arise.    * Use simple language in giving instructions and talking about biblical truths. Children don’t always understand words like salvation, redeemed, saved, born again, temptation, gospel, etc. Be very conscious of the words you use in giving game instructions as well. If you tell them to “stagger” the line, they may not understand what you want them to do. 2. Designate a “Cool Down” area (Not “Time Out”).    * If more than a quick redirection is needed, designate a “Cool Down Spot” where the child can go for a few minutes to calm themselves.    * This should be a safe place where children can go when they are feeling frustrated, angry, embarrassed, overwhelmed, anxious, etc., and need a little time and space to calm themselves down and regroup if necessary.    * Do NOT use this as a punishment. Its purpose is to provide a way for children to calm themselves and regain their composure.    * It doesn’t need to be a very large space. It just needs to give the child enough space to move around a little if they need to “walk it off” and sit comfortably if they need to do so.    * It can be inside your room/gym. It doesn’t have to be in a separate area unless you need to do so to keep other children from creating distractions by watching, pointing, etc.    * You may want to consider adding a rug, bean bag chair, or any other comfortable place for the child to sit. You may include fidget or sensory items (Lava lamp, fuzzy rug, stress ball, stuffed animals, sensory bottles, kinetic sand, music with headphones, play dough, crayons, and paper, etc.) to aid children in the calming process.    * If possible, have a volunteer assigned and willing to serve in this area so that you don’t have to pull a volunteer who may be very much needed from the game.    * Volunteers can help children by remaining calm, gentle, loving, and exercising patience. Help them calm themselves with breathing techniques. 3. Balancing Act    * Be sure to balance the lesson with the games.    * Talking too much and too long about the lesson will cause children to lose interest in playing the games. This can lead to discipline issues. Not talking about the lesson at all will lead children to believe that recreation is just time to goof off and play.    * Pray for God’s guidance on how to effectively incorporate the lesson each day.    * Transition times can be great times to ask review questions, recite the memory verse, chant the motto. Make it fun! Chant in silly voices. Have competitions: which side/group is the loudest? Say the motto or memory verse in slow motion (33 speed record voice), fast forward voices, military chant style (Seek Truth! Clap, Clap. Find Jesus! Clap, Clap, Seek Truth! Find Jesus! Seek Truth! Find Jesus. You can even add in the memory verse with this style.) 4. Recreation is a time of fun AND a tool to reinforce the Bible application.    * Don’t make it a P.E. class. Remember that not all children are great athletes. Those who can’t run for 20 minutes straight or keep up with game will feel inferior. Remember that the goal is to lead children to Jesus, not to make them physically fit. Be sure all games fit within the appropriate age abilities. Simplify games if needed for younger children.    * Don’t be Pushy! Don’t insist on participation.      + Our goal is to share the gospel and help children to trust and follow Jesus. We want all children to participate in recreation and have fun while they are with us. However, there is often a child who is reluctant to participate for various reasons.      + Be empathic!      + Rather than insisting that they join in, spend some time one-on-one with them and encourage them to participate.      + Ask them to help you play the game. Let them know that you really want them to play and invite them to join when they feel ready.      + Pair them with another outgoing, considerate, empathetic child who will make the effort to include them.    * Do not get frustrated with the child if he or she chooses not to participate, but don’t give up on him or her either. Keep encouraging! Keep building a relationship! Keep showing them Jesus! Be his or her biggest cheerleader! 5. Build Relationships by Participating    * Interact with the children! They love it when their leaders participate in games with them. Play the games with them. Don’t be afraid to be silly with them.    * Get down on the floor or run down the line with them cheering them on if necessary.    * Don’t be merely a spectator standing to the side watching.    * Be careful though not to be overly competitive with them and remind your helpers of this as well. They will become discouraged and lose interest in participating in other games as well as in the lesson. 6. Avoid Dead Time.    * Down time is where the unorganized chaos begins. Be ready to begin as soon as children enter your area. Use what they have learned as transitions.      + Motto Chant: Chant/Cheer the motto. Use a military cadence.        - You: Seek Truth        - Kids: Find Jesus        - Use different voices (Baby, Deep Voice, sheep, etc.)        - Create teams as they sit down or just before leaving. Have Team A say, “Seek Truth”   And Team B says, “Find Jesus”. Make it a competition. Loudest team wins.   * + - Memory Verse: “Repeat after Me” style as they come in or leave.     - Theme Song: Have them sing the theme song and do the motions as they enter. Music can be a wonderful transition tool.     - Ask questions to review the lesson or the gospel.     - Share your testimony.  1. Don’t Be Afraid to Share the Gospel.    * Recreation is a great time to share the gospel. You don’t have to go into a full gospel presentation. Look for ways to work it into your time.      + Share your testimony.      + Share John 3:16 and remind them how much God loves them.      + Share/Teach one of the God’s Plan for Me icons each day. (Crown – God Rules, X – We Sin, Cross – God Provided, Gift – Jesus Gave, Raised Hands – We Respond)      + Be prepared to talk with a child about salvation if they ask. You may be the person he or she feels the most comfortable talking with about it and praying with. Feel free to pray with them, but never instead of them. Be sure to have another adult present. Never be in a room alone with a child. If I feel that it is appropriate, the child is comfortable and feels safe, and if it is possible, I try to include the parents in this important decision. What a blessing that can be.        - If they need help praying for salvation, prompt them with questions like:          1. What do you need to admit to God?          2. What do you believe about Jesus?          3. What do you want to commit to doing?    * Never ask “yes” or “no” questions.    * If they cannot answer these questions, don’t understand what sin is, show no remorse for their sins, or do not believe or understand what Jesus did for them, they are NOT ready to receive salvation. 2. Pray    * Pray for God’s guidance in      + Recruiting volunteers/helpers. Ask God to send volunteers who will be enthusiastic, passionate about Jesus and children, and patient.      + Preparing for the games and lessons. Ask God to reveal the biblical truths to you so that you will clearly and effectively share them with the children and helpers.      + Connecting the games with the biblical truths.    * Pray for the children      + Ask God to send children who don’t know him already as well as children who do.      + Ask God to open their hearts and minds to receive the message He has for them each day.    * Pray for yourself and your staff      + Ask God to open your hearts and minds to be receptive to the message and lessons He may have for you.      + Ask Him for wisdom, guidance, and an abundant supply for the fruit of the Spirit.      + Pray that He will cause His love to exceedingly and abundantly overflow out of you and into the children He sends.      + Ask Him for eyes that see children and their families the way He does, and ears to hear what is not spoken by them.    * Pray with, for, and in front of the children.      + Be a model. Children need to see and hear you pray.        - Let them hear you pray for them, their families, and for others.        - Let them hear your thankfulness.        - Let them hear you pray for needs.    * Give children the opportunity to pray if they volunteer.      + You may need to help them if they pause for a long period, get long-winded, etc.      + Don’t put a child on the spot to pray.      + Avoid round robin prayer.   *Above all, LOVE! Let God’s love pour out of you like Niagara Falls for everyone involved, your staff, all VBS volunteers, children, and their families. Remember that our goal is to lead children and families to trust and follow Jesus! Everything we do and say should work to accomplish that goal. VBS is a powerful tool in sharing the gospel. It is very likely that you will have children who will come to VBS who have never heard the gospel, never been to church, and may not attend another gospel-centered event for the next 51 weeks. God can and will use you to impact the lives of the children and families He sends during this week for His kingdom. Be a willing, loving, and obedient servant and watch what He does! May God bless you, your staff, your church, and your community as you serve Him!* |
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| Recreation is so much more than just “play time” at VBS! It is a wonderful chance to build relationships with children and to reinforce the lesson and help to make it “stick” with them. It is also a wonderful way to engage your youth, college students, and every member of your church. So, let’s look at 10 tips you can use.  1.) Staff Prayerfully   * Recreation leaders should be passionate about leading recreation and should want to lead as much for the Biblical application and eternal impact as for the fun. * Recruit dependable helpers.   + Recruit helpers who are willing and excited even if they can only commit to one or two days.   + Be upfront about what is expected of them and have them be upfront with you about what they are able to do. * Train everyone. Be sure to share your God-given vision with the entire recreation staff and help everyone understand that recreation is about fun AND about sharing the gospel with children.   2.) Be Prepared!   * Arrive early. * Be sure to have all the supplies you need ready, organized, easily obtained, and ensure that all recreation staff know their roles and responsibilities well and that everyone is well rehearsed in order to create smooth transitions and avoid any down time. * Know the lesson, motto, memory verse, and games well. * Know how many children to expect. * Have a back-up plan for weather if needed. * Have a back-up plan for staff. * Be genuinely excited to see children as soon as they arrive.   3.) Keep it Simple!   * + Keep rules simple and short. Too many rules will take valuable time and will be difficult for children to remember.   + Enforce the rules for all children to keep it fair and organized.   + Encourage children to play fairly and encourage each other.   + Use reasonable consequences when it is needed. Help them to understand that the rules help to keep them safe and to keep everything fair.   + Use positive reinforcement and proximity discipline (staying close to any child who struggles to behave appropriately) as much as possible.   + Address any behavior or discipline issues privately. Children who feel embarrassed or scared will not want to return.   + Seek help from your children’s minister or pastor if difficult situations arise.   + Use simple language in giving instructions and talking about biblical truths.   4.) Designate a “Cool Down” area (Not “Time Out”).   * + This should be a safe place where children can go when they are feeling frustrated, angry, anxious, overwhelmed, scared, etc., and need a little time and space to calm themselves down and regroup if necessary.   + Do NOT use it as a punishment. Its purpose is to provide a way for children to calm themselves and regain their composure.   + It doesn’t need to be a very large space.   + You may want to consider adding things like a rug, bean bag chair, or any other comfortable place for the child to sit. You may include fidget or sensory items to aid children in the calming process.   + If possible, have a volunteer assigned and willing to serve in this area.   + Help children calm themselves with breathing techniques. (Ex.: Breathe in and pretend your belly is a balloon you are inflating. Breathe out to deflate the “balloon”.)   5.) Balance is Key   * + Be sure to balance the lesson with the games.   + Pray for God’s guidance on how to effectively incorporate the lesson each day.   + Transition times can be great times to     - Ask review questions,     - Recite the memory verse,     - Chant the motto.       * Make it fun!         1. Chant in silly voices.         2. Have competitions: which side/group is the loudest? Say the motto or memory verse in slow motion (33 speed record voice), fast forward voices, military chant style, etc.  1. Recreation is a great time to reinforce the Bible application.    1. Remember that the goal is to lead children to Jesus, not to make them physically fit.    2. Be sure all games fit within the appropriate age abilities.    3. Don’t be Pushy!       1. Don’t insist on participation.       2. Our goal is to share the gospel and help children to trust and follow Jesus.    4. Do not get frustrated with the child if he or she chooses not to participate, but don’t give up on him or her either. Keep encouraging! Keep building a relationship! Keep showing them Jesus! Be his or her biggest cheerleader! 2. Build Relationships!    1. Interact with the children! Play games with them.    2. Don’t be merely a spectator watching from the sidelines.    3. Have individual conversations with each child. Take a genuine interest in them.    4. Be careful though not to be overly competitive with them and remind your helpers of this as well. 3. Avoid Dead Time.    1. Use what they have learned during transition times.       1. Motto Chant: Chant/Cheer the motto. Use a military cadence.       2. Memory Verse: “Repeat after Me” style as they come in or leave.       3. Theme Song: Have them sing the theme song and do the motions as they enter. Music can be a wonderful transition tool.       4. Ask questions to review the lesson or the gospel.       5. Share your testimony.    2. Use the clap game while traveling from one rotation to another. (Give them a number and have them clap that number of times. Occasionally, say the word “Clap” and instruct them NOT to clap on the word “Clap”. If they clap on the word, have a fun consequence that can be performed while walking. For example, they must raise their jazz hands over their head or pat their head while rubbing their tummy, etc.) 4. How Do I Modify Games?    1. Depending on your church’s COVID policies and procedures, you may need to look for ways to avoid touching each other and other items. Consider using paddles, spoons, paint sticks, etc. to avoid hand-to-hand/object contact.    2. Determine what Biblical point you want them to take away from each night and what games do you know that teach that concept. (Ex.: Following God’s Plan – Any game where there is a plan they must follow to win and failure to follow the plan results in a loss or a mess will work.)    3. Consult with P.E. teachers on ways that you can alter games to suit COVID policies or them more engaging.    4. Think about the Bible story and what it teaches and create a game that is similar. (Ex.: Jesus heals the blind man. Consider an obstacle course where players are blindfolded and led through the course with verbal instructions. Players must trust the “voice” just as the blind man trusted Jesus to heal him. Jesus wants us to trust Him completely. Most blindfold games will work here.)    5. Smaller groups/churches may need to race against a time limit instead of another team.    6. Larger groups may need to create more teams, courses, play areas, etc. Create tournaments/brackets.    7. Younger kids may need simple paths, fewer obstacles, longer time frames.    8. Older kids may need more obstacles, twist and turns, time limits to complete tasks, etc. to make play more challenging and fun.   10.) Share the Gospel.   * 1. Recreation is a great time to share the gospel.      1. Share your testimony.      2. Share John 3:16 and remind them how much God loves them.      3. Share/Teach one of the God’s Plan for Me icons each day. (Crown – God Rules, X – We Sinned, Cross – God Provided, Gift – Jesus Gives, Raised Hands – We Respond)      4. Be prepared to talk with a child about salvation. You may be the person he or she feels the most comfortable talking with about it and praying with.      5. Feel free to pray with them, but never instead of them.   11.) Pray   * 1. Pray for God’s guidance and wisdom as you prepare.   2. Pray for the children.   3. Pray for yourself and your staff.   4. Pray with, for, and in front of the children.      1. Be a model. Children need to see and hear you pray.   5. Give children the opportunity to pray if they volunteer.   *Above all, LOVE! Let God’s love pour out of you like Niagara Falls for everyone involved, your staff, all VBS volunteers, children, and their families. Remember that our goal is to lead children and families to trust and follow Jesus! Everything we do and say should work to accomplish that goal. VBS is a powerful tool in sharing the gospel. It is very likely that you will have children who will come to VBS who have never heard the gospel, never been to church, and may not attend another gospel-centered event for the next 51 weeks. 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