

E 20

EVANGELISM

Easter for Kids One Day VBS

A SIMPLE WAY TO ACCOMPLISH MULTIPLE GOALS

Easter for Kids one-day Vacation Bible School (VBS) programs have become quite common among our WELS congregations, for multiple reasons.

First, an *Easter for Kids* VBS is very simple to operate. A traditional VBS can run for an entire week. A *Easter for Kids* VBS typically runs over a few hours on one Saturday. That makes it easier to recruit volunteers. It can take four months to prepare for a week long VBS. You can prepare a *Easter for Kids* program in four weeks.

Second, *Easter for Kids* VBS allows you to help your member children focus on the true meaning of Easter.

Each year, the secularization of Easter pushes the celebration earlier and earlier. An *Easter for Kids* can be a great way of helping our children to focus on Christ.

Third, *Easter for Kids* VBS lets us train our children to do outreach. We want outreach to become a part of WELS culture, where members are constantly looking for opportunities to invite unchurched friends and neighbors to church events. Start that training when they're young! By encouraging your children to invite their unchurched friends to

your *Easter for Kids*, it allows them to practice sharing their faith in a simple way.

Fourth, *Easter for Kids* VBS allows you to tell the true meaning of Easter to unchurched children. You can help them learn about the best Gift one can get at Easter. You can send materials home with the children so their parents hear the Easter gospel as well.

Fifth, *Easter for Kids* VBS can serve as a way to connect unchurched families to Sunday

morning activities. If you hold the VBS on a Saturday, have the children sing a song they learned in worship the next day. Palm Sunday would be a great opportunity. Or invite the unchurched children to continue learning about Jesus by coming back to Sunday school. When a child starts asking his

parents to bring him or her to your church, you have a great opportunity!

If your congregation has never conducted an *Easter for Kids* VBS, why not try one this year? It is easy, costs very little, and can accomplish multiple good things, as illustrated above.

PUTTING TOGETHER AN EASTER FOR KIDS PROGRAM

Here are five steps you need to take to run a successful *Easter for Kids* VBS. Some of these (steps 1 through 3) can be done concurrently.



Step 1 – Set your date.

We recommend a Saturday morning or Sunday afternoon. Either work well. However, a Saturday VBS has the added benefit of letting you teach the children a song they can sing in next Sunday's worship service.

The ideal time is the Saturday before Easter which is the day before Palm Sunday. Some churches have had their VBS kids sing a song on Palm Sunday.

Step 2 – Plan your program.

An *Easter for Kids* VBS program typically consists of five things.

1) **Bible story time** – Sharing the “victorious news of the empty tomb” is job one of any Easter VBS. There are many ways you can do this.

- Use the lesson plan from your Sunday school materials. *Christ Light* has fabulous lessons plans about the Easter story. There are different ones geared toward a variety of ages. There is no concern about repeating them in Sunday school as well. The Resurrection is one of the most important truths about Jesus that kids will ever have the opportunity to hear and share.
- Holy Week is observed as the last week of Lent and begins with the celebration of Palm Sunday one week before Easter Sunday. Teach kids about Jesus' humble and triumphant entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey by using object lessons and storytelling activities connected to Holy Week Scripture readings.
- Since Easter Sunday is all about celebrating the Resurrection, you can include an empty tomb somewhere in the program. This is a fun Easter idea that lets you have some fun with decorating and teaching. First, set up a tent and drape it over with gray sheets to make it look more like a cave, or a tomb. Inside the “tomb”, place several small strips of white cloth in the tent to symbolize the burial linens left behind.

After talking about the death and resurrection of Jesus, have each child talk about what they see inside the makeshift tomb. The disciples found the tomb empty because Jesus was no longer there. He is alive! Let each child take one strip of cloth to bring home to use in sharing the great news!

- Write your own lesson plan. It could be as simple as you (or someone who is a gifted reader and/or storyteller) walking through Matthew 28:1-8 “Jesus Rises From the Grave” or John 20:1-10 “The Empty Tomb” using props to illustrate the story. Then have some discussion questions for the kids.
- 2) **Music time** – You will want the children to spend some time in song. Pick Easter hymns that are well-known to your congregation's children so that they might serve as leaders in the singing: Jesus Christ is Risen Today, I Know That My Redeemer Lives, God Loved the World So That He Gave, etc.
 - 3) **Craft time** – Simply google “children's Easter crafts,” and you will find countless ideas of age-appropriate projects the children could do.
 - 4) **Game time** – Have an Easter Egg Hunt with plastic eggs filled with candy. Google “children's Easter games.” You will have many options.
 - 5) **Snack time** – Over the course of three hours, the children will probably need a snack. This too could be turned into an activity. For example, children could decorate Easter cookies and take some home to give to their parents.

With those five different things in play, you can see how easy it would be to fill 3 hours.

A mistake that churches can make is in “overdoing” this. Your bible lesson need not be an elaborate play with great production value! Your craft need not be something expensive and complicated. You will easily fill the time even with simple activities. So just keep it simple, share the gospel, and let your children have some fun.

Step 3 – Promote & register.

There are many ways to promote your *Easter for Kids* VBS.

- Another *E20* post talks about doing doorhanger canvassing in your community. A promotional flyer about your VBS could be one of the things you insert into the bags.
- Have your congregation’s parents mention your *Easter for Kids* VBS to the parents in the neighborhood. You could provide promotional material.
- Temporary signage is a great way to promote VBS. You can order a 4’ by 8’ full color banner from USPress.com for less than \$100. Put it in front of your church for the two weeks before the VBS.
- Radio stations and even TV stations will often promote children’s activities for free. The fact that “for kids” is in your title might give you free airtime. Have someone in your church call up all the stations in your area and inquire about that.

You will want to have a registration form where parents can provide you not only with the names of their children, but also emergency contact information as well as information about potential food allergies. You could put this form online as a PDF file so that people could print it from your website. Or you could set up an e-mail address just for registration and ask people to provide the information you need that way. If you have someone tech savvy in your congregation (talk to your teens) you could have someone set up a Google Forms VBS registration.

Step 4 – Recruit and staff.

Undoubtedly, when you planned your VBS, you had some people in mind to run it: teachers, teen helpers, skit performers, a piano player, etc. As registrations come in, determine if you have enough. If you have 20 kids sign up, you can easily handle the group with three or four people. If you have 60, you will need more.

If you have a large registration, you might consider structuring your staff in a way to have “stations.” Rather than have all the kids do the same thing at the same time, divide them into groups, by age, and have them rotate from station to station: the story station, the craft station, the music station, etc.

Step 5 – Rejoice and follow up!

So your VBS is over. Rejoice that you have had the opportunity to serve those children with the gospel. However, you are not quite done yet. You want to follow up in three ways.

First, follow up by sending a thank-you to every parent for putting their child in your VBS. It could be a simple thank you card with a handwritten note. Time permitting, a member of your congregational evangelism team could also follow up, face-to-face, and drop off the same gift your congregation shares with worship visitors.

Secondly, follow up by having other events that children and their parents might come to. Easter Sunday and Christmas is a natural choice. Might there be others? What about a family movie night at church with pizza and popcorn? Or perhaps a VBS during the summer months. The point is you want to let the parents and children know you hope their visit was not a one-time thing.

Thirdly, there needs to be a leader—some key player—who thanks the VBS volunteers personally. They volunteered to serve Jesus, not to receive thanks. Thank them anyway!

MAKE THIS EXTRA EASY WITH AN EASTER FOR KIDS RESOURCE PACK FROM NORTHWESTERN PUBLISHING HOUSE

Nothing described here is overly difficult. However, if you want to make this extra easy, you can purchase a *Easter for Kids* resource pack from Northwestern Publishing House. They sell three different versions. [You can find them HERE.](#)

These resource packs are geared towards ages 3 through 10. They are *very* thorough, containing things like:

- three levels of student lessons in PDF
- full-color Bible story pictures in JPG and PDF
- simple directions to plan and conduct the program.
- complete instructions for teaching at the various stations
- advertising pieces and clip art
- craft ideas, patterns, and photos
- snack and game suggestions
- an opening devotion
- a Bible story skit.
- a song CD includes Easter hymns and songs

Most materials come in both English and Spanish.

The *Easter for Kids* resource pack not only contains everything you need, it lays out how to use them step by step. It contains enough materials to give you *Easter for Kids* ideas for multiple years.

If you have any questions or want to order by phone, call Northwestern Publishing House at 800-662-6022.

Blessings on your *Easter for Kids* VBS efforts!

