



Juneau's Puppy Playhouse Ages 3 through Pre-K!

Exploration Stations

Preschool Station Leader Manual

Group resources really work!

This Group resource incorporates our R.E.A.L. approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it's:



Relational

Person-to-person interaction enhances spiritual growth and builds Christian friendships.

Experiential

What we experience through action and discussion sticks with us up to 9 times longer than what we simply hear or read.

Applicable

The aim of ministry is to equip people to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

Lifelong

Experiences transform the heart, moving faith beyond the walls of church and into everyday life for years to come.

Exploration Stations Leader Manual

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Visit our websites:

group.com

group.com/TrueNorth

Thanks to our talented team that points the way to Jesus! Laura Baldwin-Stout, Jody Brolsma, Stephen Caine, Lyndsay Gerwing, Charity Kauffman, Micaiah Lee, Laycie McClain, Mike Porter, Joani Schultz, Elisa Snell, Rodney Stewart, and Ali Thompson

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Thanks for joining the team!

True north is a fixed point on Earth's globe. Unlike magnetic north, *true north* is unmoving, unchanging, reliable, resolute.

If you're reading this manual, chances are that *Jesus* is your true north. You've trusted him to be a faithful friend when life's journey got lonely. You've relied on his unchanging love through life's ups and downs. You've turned to Jesus' comforting words of hope when the world felt cold and dark.

And you want to share *all* of that with kids in your community!

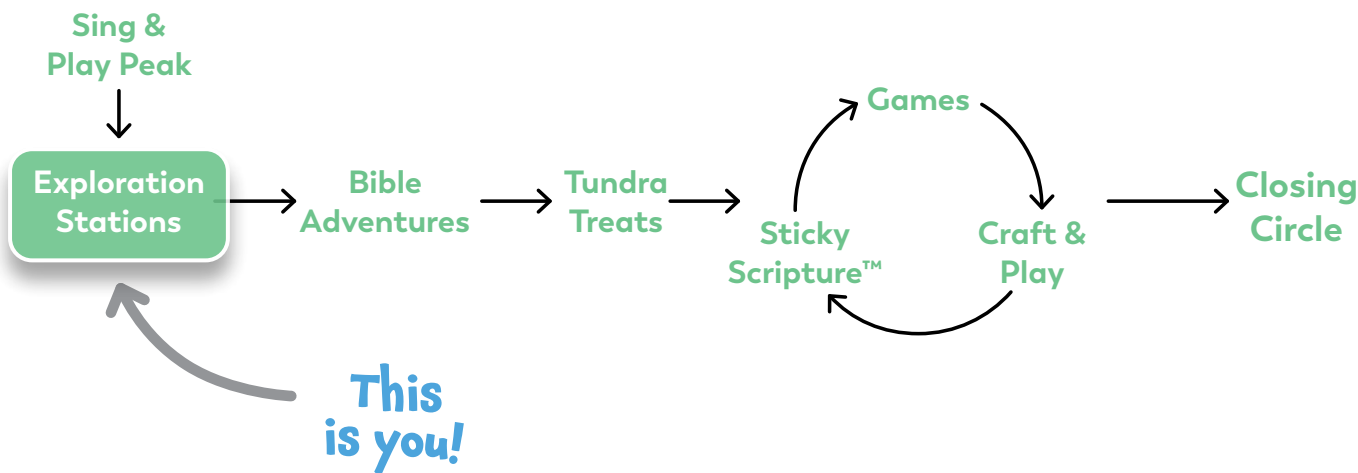
Like you, we love Jesus, and we love kids. We know that kids today may find their world untamed and wild. We understand that kids' source of truth may shift, depending on the latest news headline, trend, or social media influencer. We long for kids to boldly step out in faith, knowing that Jesus always points them in the right direction. He is *their* true north. Now...and for eternity!

That's why we're so glad you've joined this adventure! Think of our team as trail guides, going ahead to make sure the terrain is smooth and the trail is well-marked. We've tested these activities with kids, so you can make the most of every minute you have. And we're praying that God's vast love amazes and astounds you as you lead kids into the wonder of a friendship with Jesus.

It's hard to find your way in a world gone wild.

But we have Jesus—our true north!

Together, let's give kids a rock-solid foundation and point them to Jesus, their unmovable, unshakable friend forever.

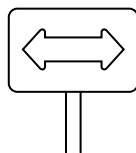


Before True North



Pray for everyone who will attend True North.

Ask God to prepare your heart and the hearts of the kids and leaders who will be part of VBS.



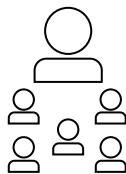
Work with the Preschool Director to select a room.

Choose a large, open room that can accommodate all your preschoolers at once.



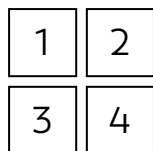
Work with the VBS Director to collect necessary supplies.

Almost all the supplies are easy to find around the church, from church members, or from Group.



Determine the number of kids you'll have.

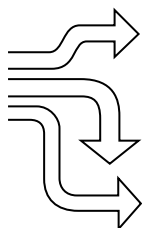
Most station activities will require a set of supplies for about every five kids.



Choose your Exploration Stations.

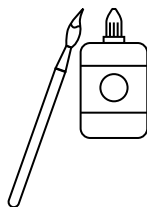
Each day features four options, including the Bible Activity Page. For a large group, duplicate stations or supplement these ideas with puzzles, a dress-up area, or a drawing station.

During True North



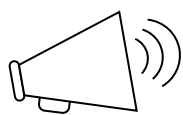
Keep it unstructured.

Preschoolers need time for unstructured discovery and a bit of free choice. Exploration Stations are an easy-prep way to ease little ones into a busy day of VBS so they get the *most* out of the time.



Keep it a free-choice time.

If children don't want to do the Bible Activity Page, don't force them. Just periodically invite preschoolers to join in the fun of doing things like painting and gluing tissue paper to the Bible picture.



Use an attention-getting signal.

Attention-getting signals let kids know when it's time to stop what they're doing and look at you. Use the Wilderness Whistle (available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier) or another signal of your choice.



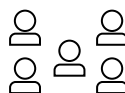
Recycle station supplies.

Several days use the same supplies, such as chenille wires, pillows, blankets, toy food, and water play. But each day suggests a fresh, new way to use the supplies!



Repeat the daily Bible Point often.

Every activity focuses on one memorable Bible truth called the Bible Point. Repeating the Bible Point helps kids remember it and apply it to their lives after VBS. Each time kids hear the day's Bible Point, they'll pretend to pull a rope with both hands and finish the point by saying, "trust Jesus!"



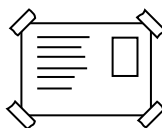
Call on team members.

Ask a Station Leader, Station helper, or volunteer to "staff" each Exploration Station. (You may want to have the Craft & Play Leader guide kids in the Bible Activity Page each day.) Keep Crew Leaders free to roam to different stations, building special connections.



Play the Sing & Play Peak Music while kids create.

Music creates a fun atmosphere and, more important, reinforces faith!



Make the Bible connection.

Photocopy Exploration Station instructions; then tape them to the table or wall near the activity. This helps volunteers know exactly how to connect experiences to the Bible Point. Meet with staff before each day, and briefly walk them through each activity.

Preschool Sample Schedule (9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.)

If your Preschool Director decides to have preschoolers rotate through age-appropriate stations, you'll use a schedule similar to this one. (Note: Unless specifically indicated, these are not the same stations that elementary kids will visit.)

TIME	GROUP A Crews: <u>1-3</u>	GROUP B Crews: <u>4-6</u>	GROUP C Crews: <u>7-9</u>
9:00–9:25	Sing & Play Peak (with elementary kids) <i>Allow 5 minutes to travel to your next station.</i>		
9:30–9:45	Exploration Stations <i>Allow 5 minutes to travel to your next station.</i>		
9:50–10:15	Bible Adventures & Missions <i>Allow 5 minutes to travel to your next station.</i>		
10:20–10:40	Tundra Treats (with elementary kids) <i>Allow 5 minutes to travel to your next station.</i>		
10:45–11:00	Sticky Scripture	Games	Craft & Play
	<i>Allow 5 minutes to travel to your next station.</i>		
11:05–11:20	Craft & Play	Sticky Scripture	Games
	<i>Allow 5 minutes to travel to your next station.</i>		
11:25–11:40	Games	Craft & Play	Sticky Scripture
	<i>Allow 5 minutes to travel to your next station.</i>		
11:45–12:00	Closing Circle		



DAY 1

When we wonder, we can trust Jesus.



Bible Story: John prepares the way and baptizes Jesus. (Matthew 3; 11:1-6)

Bible Verse: "Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise." (Matthew 7:24)

Just for Day 1, preschoolers skip Sing & Play Peak and go straight to Juneau's Puppy Playhouse to meet their Crews and Crew Leaders.



Exploration Stations

- Bible Activity Page
- Wonder Wall
- Wild Life: Explore the Campsite
- River Crossing



Sticky Scripture™

Play "Wilderness Wise" as they explore Matthew 7:24 and discover what it means to have wisdom.



Tundra Treats



A (Northern) Light Snack



Blizzard in a Cup

Craft & Play

- Northern Lights Painting
- Snowflake Sun Catcher
- Floating Otter

Bible Adventures & Missions

Share the exciting news that Jesus is coming, just as John did!



Closing Circle

Review the day, learn about God Sightings, receive a Watch for God Wristband and Juneau sticker, and wrap up with prayer and music.



Games



Wonder Where

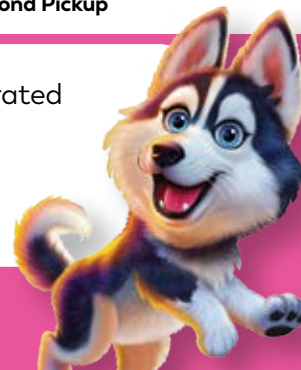


Pond Pickup



Wonder Who-la Hoop

At **True North**, the daily Bible Point is carefully integrated into each station's activities for unforgettable Bible learning. See how your station reinforces today's Bible Point.



We can Trust Jesus!

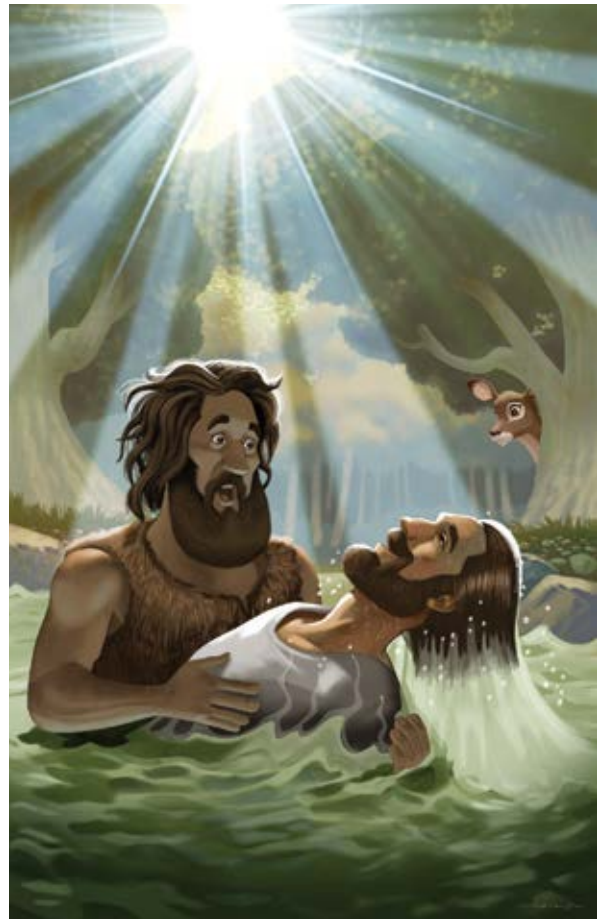
When we wonder, we can trust Jesus.

Bible Verse: “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise.” (Matthew 7:24)

Bible Story: John prepares the way and baptizes Jesus. (Matthew 3; 11:1-6)

Jesus’ cousin John came with unconventional clothes, a pauper’s diet, and a bold message: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.” Meaning? Jesus—the Messiah and fulfillment of God’s kingdom on earth—is *here*! John proclaimed Jesus’ power and authority. He resisted the very idea of baptizing Jesus, the one who would baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit! While John adamantly proclaimed Christ, even he had questions about Jesus. From prison, John sent a message to Jesus, asking, “Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?” John’s circumstances may have caused him to wonder if (and when) Jesus might take political action. Scholars ponder if John may have assumed the Messiah would be the one to rescue God’s people from Roman rule—as many Jews of the time anticipated. However, Jesus had a greater mission than anyone could comprehend. He came to save *the world* from sin. Such love and compassion go beyond anything we can understand or imagine!

Kids’ curiosity can be intimidating—and a bit wearying. They have so many questions, many of which we simply can’t answer. And when it comes to questions about Jesus, God, or the Bible, adults can *really* feel overwhelmed and underprepared. But we don’t have to have all the answers! Sometimes our wonderings can lead to true *wonder*, as we discover the mystery and marvel of God. Today, celebrate curiosity and questions. Point kids to Jesus, a trustworthy and true friend who will guide us as we seek to know and understand him better.



Pointing to Jesus

People (even John the Baptist) wondered about Jesus. This passage can encourage kids that it’s okay to ask questions about Jesus—he will always help us find the truth.

Bible Activity Page

Supplies:

- Day 1 Bible Activity Pages from Preschool Bible Pack* (1 per child)



crayons



glue sticks



small squares of green and blue tissue paper

finger paints



*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier



Give kids basic direction and ideas for adding color and texture to the page with the various craft supplies. Invite kids to wonder and use their imaginations to come up with other creative ways to use the supplies, and let them know they can ask you for more direction if needed.

SAY Today we'll hear a story from the Bible about a man named John. He taught people about God and told them God was sending an even greater teacher soon—the most important person God would ever send. It was an exciting message!



ASK When have you heard something that got you excited?

SAY Exciting news can get us wondering about when things will happen, and we might try to get ready for it. John helped people get ready for Jesus and know that when we wonder, we can... (trust Jesus!)

Be sure to write children's names on their pages. Set completed pages aside until Closing Circle, when kids will receive their pages and Day 1 Juneau stickers to take home. If kids don't choose the activity page during Exploration Stations, they'll still take one home.

Wonder Wall

Supplies:

-  tarp
-  pool noodles, in sets of 3 of the same color (if possible)
-  plastic funnels (1 per pool noodle)
-  painter's tape
-  shallow plastic bins (1 per pool noodle)
 - water
 - small disposable cups
-  paper or hand towels



Before preschoolers arrive, lay a tarp on the floor up to the wall. Attach overlapping, winding pool noodles to the wall (as shown in photo) with painter's tape. Place the top of the pool noodles at preschoolers' height. Insert a funnel in the top of each pool noodle and a plastic bin to catch water at the bottom of each. Set a bin of water nearby along with cups and towels.

Pour small cups of water into the funnels. Wonder about and explore which bin the water will flow into—what direction will it follow? Listen for the water flowing through the pool noodles and try to guess.

FIELD TEST FINDING

The area we used for our field test had limited wall space, so we attached the pool noodles to foam core with zip ties and leaned it against a table. It was a great solution for the space and can work for you, too, if needed.

ASK What did you like about guessing where the water would go?

SAY Wondering is fun! We got to look and listen for clues to follow the water's direction. When we wonder, we can... (trust Jesus!) and follow his directions.

Wild Life: Explore the Campsite



Supplies:

- blue painter's tape or Water Fabric*
- paper rocks (tutorial on group.com/vbsTools)
- paper logs (tutorial on group.com/vbsTools)
- pup tent (tutorial on group.com/vbsTools)



Electric Campfire*

toy cookware and food

backpacks

lanterns/flashlights

*available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier

Before preschoolers arrive, prepare this imaginative campsite play area you'll use all week with the suggested supplies—or any you and your church community can lend. Alongside the campsite, tape parallel, winding lines a few feet apart to make a “river” path on the floor or lay Water Fabric on the floor to simulate a stream.

Use lots of imagination and play while exploring this fun campsite that brings the great outdoors, indoors.

ASK

Tell about your favorite part of our Wild Life campsite—what exciting things did you do?

Was there anything you weren't sure what to do with?

SAY

When we're adventuring and trying new things, sometimes we don't know what to do. That's okay! That's part of adventure! When we wonder, we can... (trust Jesus!) He will explore and adventure with us!



FIELD TEST FINDING

At our field test, we decked out our space with campsite gear and fun stuffed animals. Watching kids' imaginations come to life from the moment they arrived on Day 1 was a wonderful wilderness treat! Setup didn't take long and was well worth the exploration and imaginative play that filled the campsite all week long!

COMPASS CLUE

Another area you could set up in your campsite for the whole week is a “cozy bear den” with blankets, pillows, toy food, and toy stuffed bears. This can be a low sensory area for kids to snuggle with or pretend to feed the bears as they prepare for a long winter nap. Your kids can benefit from a daily optional space where they can slow down, get cozy, feel safe, and observe the hustle and bustle until they're ready to get involved. At our field test, having a bear to snuggle made all the difference for a preschooler who needed a little help to ease into the day.

River Crossing

Supplies:



— brown felt pieces cut to look like steppingstones



— painter's tape



Before preschoolers arrive, tape “steppingstone” felt pieces on the floor from one side of the Wild Life campsite’s river to the other, spaced so preschoolers can step from stone to stone.

Step or hop along the steppingstones to get across the river.

ASK

How did you choose which stone to step on next as you crossed the river?

SAY

You got to wonder as you decided which stones and steps to take to get across the river—another *fun* way to wonder! We wonder about “what’s next” a lot, and when we wonder, we can... (trust Jesus!)

Day 1



- Bible Activity Page
- Wonder Wall
- Wild Life: Explore the Campsite
- River Crossing

Day 2



- Bible Activity Page
- Tide Pool Play
- Ice Pairing
- Wild Life: Pup Tent

Day 3



- Bible Activity Page
- Tide Pool Freeze
- Arctic Art
- Wild Life: Cone Fishin'

Day 4



- Bible Activity Page
- Can't Keep Hope Down
- Ice Rescue
- Wild Life: Snow Day

Day 5



- Bible Activity Page
- Bubbling Over
- Build Big
- Wild Life: Campfire Friends



Questions:

group.com/TrueNorth
800.447.1070

Follow Group VBS on:



group.com/vbs



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VBS Programming



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