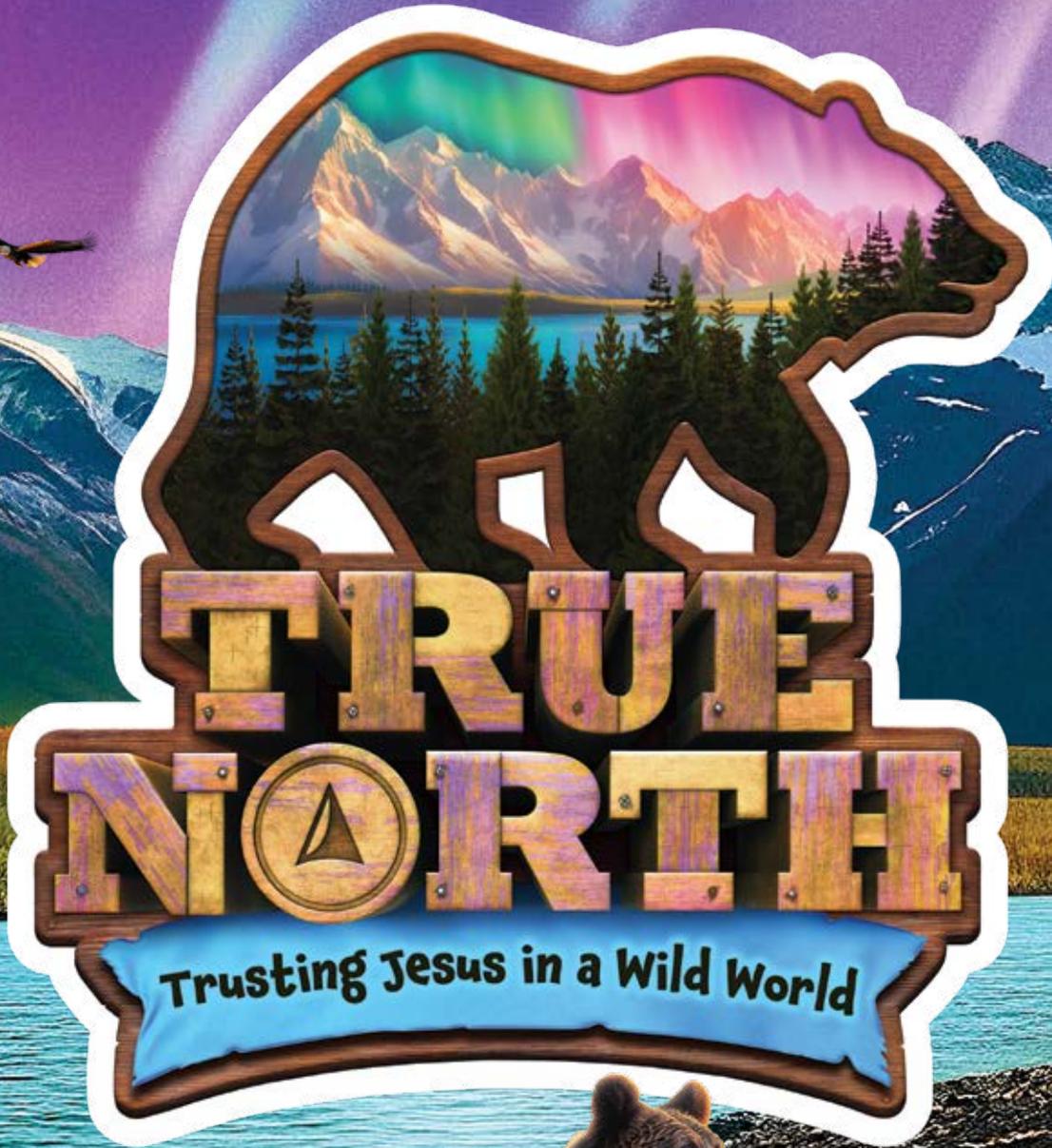


Ultimate Director Go-To Guide®





# True North

Ultimate Director Go-To Guide<sup>®</sup>

Loveland, Colorado  
[group.com/vbs](http://group.com/vbs)

**Group**

## 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.

## True North Ultimate Director Go-To Guide®

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Visit our websites:

[group.com](http://group.com)

[group.com/TrueNorth](http://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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*Note: The Director Evaluation Form is online at [group.com/TrueNorth](http://group.com/TrueNorth).*

# First-Time Directors



# Welcome to True North!

Get ready for the summer event that points kids to Jesus, a faithful friend we can always trust! Here kids explore how easy it is to lose sight of what's true in our wild world today and learn that Jesus is our true north. You can expect a week full of faith discoveries, memorable music, and epic adventures that help kids grow in friendship with Jesus!

If this is your first time using Group's Easy VBS, you probably have a few questions. That's why we've made it extra easy to get started, giving you a snapshot of stuff you need to know right up front.

This Ultimate Director Go-To Guide contains everything you need to plan a successful program, recruit and train volunteers, publicize your program, and follow up with families after the big event. Be sure to join our Facebook "family" at [facebook.com/groupvbs](https://facebook.com/groupvbs). There you'll find support, ideas, encouragement, and a team of experts ready to answer your questions right away.

It's our prayer that True North will help *everyone* trust Jesus in our wild world.

## Group's VBS Team

# How It Works

## Experiencing God's Word

If your church has never done a Group VBS program, get ready for something that's unlike anything your kids have experienced. As they're surrounded by God's Word, the reality of God's love gains new meaning and relevance to their everyday lives. Plus, they'll have an amazing time trying out new games, songs, awesome science experiments, and more!

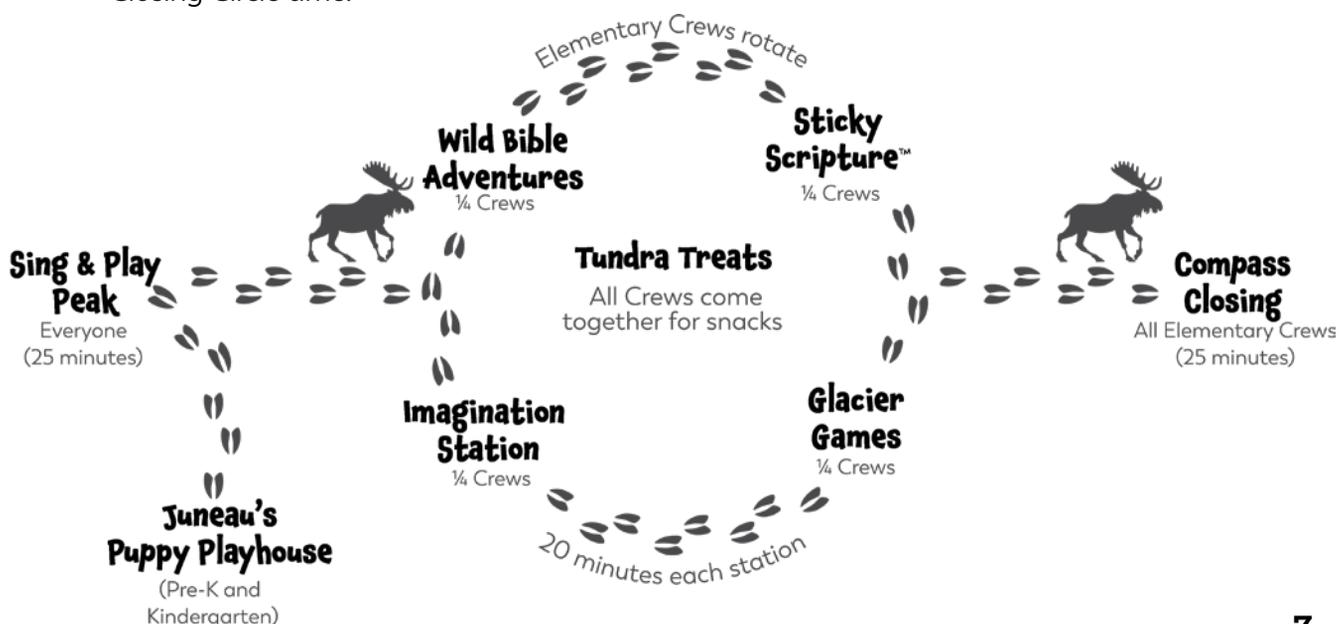
## Forming Crews

You'll assign kids into Crews—small mixed-age groups of up to five kids plus a Crew Leader. Crews travel together for each day's adventure. Please don't be afraid to try the mixed-age method—it really does work! Older children enjoy “cool kid” status and take pride in helping younger children with more difficult tasks. Younger children feel accepted and looked out for. Discipline problems practically disappear because peers aren't showing off for each other or vying for attention. It's a wonderful way to make kids feel at home, and you'll be amazed at the warm relationships that form among Crew members.

## Station Rotations

Groups of Crews rotate through stations together—worshipping and singing at Sing & Play Peak, digging into the day's Wild Bible Adventures, experiencing God's creation through science at Imagination Station, and playing games that reinforce the day's Bible Point. Kids also explore God's Word firsthand through an innovative, immersive daily video that explores—and cements—Scripture like never before! Even snacks at Tundra Treats connect to each day's Bible truth! Each station reinforces the daily Bible Point, and the rotations give everyone a chance to visit them all. Elementary Crews all gather to celebrate the day at Compass Closing, where they sing, watch a fun slideshow reviewing the day, and wrap up the day's Bible learning.

Each day except Day 1, preschoolers join the elementary kids for the Sing & Play Peak opening and then rotate through their own stations at Juneau's Puppy Playhouse for age-appropriate fun and learning. They have their own wrap-up at Closing Circle time.





# Operation Kid-to-Kid™

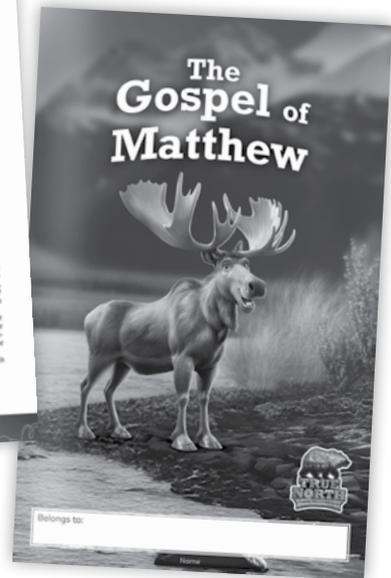
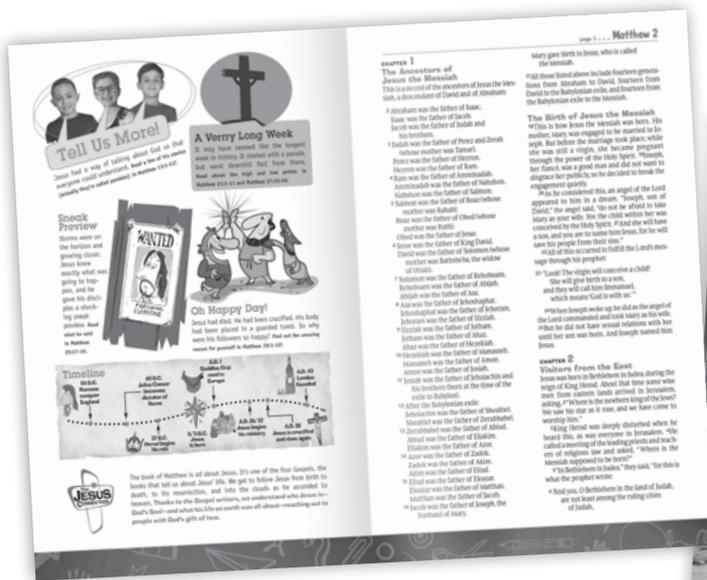
Each day, kids learn about a special mission project called Operation Kid-to-Kid. This year participants at True North will collect money to provide warm clothes and blankets for families in North America. This partnership between Group Publishing and World Vision engages kids in meaningful service. Visit the Operation Kid-to-Kid section for all the important details!

## COMPASS CLUE

Preschoolers have their own age-appropriate preschool pages. See page 27 for more info on the Preschool Bible Pack.

# Gospel of Matthew

Many kids who come to VBS may not have Bibles at home, and kids who *do* have Scripture may not be comfortable using such a big, grown-up-looking book. That's why this kid-size bite of the Bible is *perfect!* During Sticky Scripture, kids learn practical Bible skills, looking up and marking passages in their very own kid-friendly Gospel of Matthew. Then they'll take home their Bible books at the end of the week to continue their learning at home! The Gospel of Matthew is taken from the kid-favorite *Hands-On Bible*, which is filled with fun, memorable activities kids and families can do together. **You'll want to purchase a Gospel of Matthew for each elementary child at your VBS.** Kids will love having their very own Bible book to explore long after the True North journey ends!



# True North Must-Know Info

## Program and Format

- **Our VBS is small; do I need a different teacher for each of the seven stations?**

Nope! If you have fewer than 25 children at your VBS, have all the Crews rotate through stations together. That way, each Station Leader teaches just once or can handle several stations.

- **Our VBS is huge; will True North work for us?**

Yup! For up to 100 kids, you can use the program just as written. More than 100 kids? Just duplicate the stations as much as needed. See pages 43-44 for more information.

- **Do I have to use multi-age Crews?**

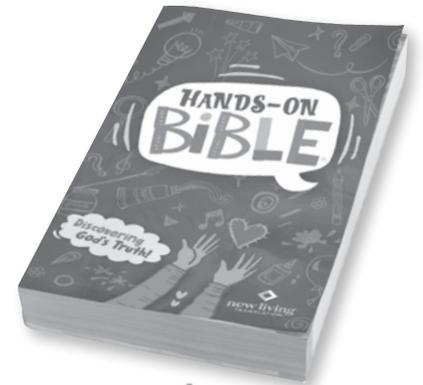
We sure do recommend it! It works—we've tested this thousands of times. Children help each other, and discipline problems all but disappear. Still unsure? Visit [facebook.com/groupvbs](https://www.facebook.com/groupvbs) and ask other VBS directors.

- **Can I use the program in something other than a five-day format?**

You bet! You'll find format options outlined in the Planning section of this Director Go-To Guide. Included are suggestions for weekday mornings, weekday evenings, midweek clubs, Sunday mornings, or a weekend retreat! Several of the options allow for the whole family to be involved.

- **What Bible translation does True North use?**

We use the New Living Translation (NLT) because it's kid-friendly and easy to understand. Check out Group's *Hands-On Bible*®, specially created to involve kids in Bible learning with cool hands-on Bible activities, Bible hero biographies, key verse activities, book introductions, and Jesus connections.



## Products

- **Do I really need the Bible Memory Buddies?**

We *highly* recommend Bible Memory Buddies. Each Buddy carries the day's Bible Point and Bible verse—making Bible memorization fun! The Buddies are cool, free-standing figurines that kids carry in a special pouch. These Bible Memory Buddies are great year-long reminders of True North...and kids will love showing them to friends.

- **If I order packaged items I don't use, can I return them?**

We receive materials prepackaged from our vendors, so we can't process returns of opened or partially used packages. If you have a few extras, use them as special gift surprises for Sunday school, for siblings of students, or for those who couldn't attend True North.



- **Why do I have to pay for each music CD or streaming card? Why can't I just make copies?**

- When you purchase a True North kit, music CD, or music DVD, Group grants you permission to use the audio recordings, music videos, and lyrics included to conduct an in-person event/program for your church or organization.

**Group's VBS media cannot be used online except under certain specific conditions.**

The music video and audio recordings can be used as part of a full church service that is livestreamed and related to VBS (like a VBS kickoff or wrap-up service). A CCLI Streaming or Streaming Plus license is required.

- Group's audio or video recordings cannot be livestreamed or posted online as standalone media.
- Group's audio or video recordings cannot be used to create an online VBS program.
- Unauthorized copying, public performance, and online use of the songs/videos/lyrics is prohibited by law. It is also unlawful to upload the songs/videos/lyrics, or your own recording of the song/video/lyrics, to public facing websites such as YouTube, Facebook, Vimeo, etc.
- Making your own copies of the songs/videos—even to use at your church—is against the law, which is a fact many people don't know.
- More information is available in the VBS Permissions document at <https://grouppermissions.zendesk.com/>

Thanks for demonstrating integrity to the people you serve in how you use this ministry resource.

## VBS Support

- **What happens at Group's Funshops?**

Regional True North VBS trainings will be coming to select cities in 2025! Join us for a LIVE hands-on training where you'll learn how to plan, coordinate, and pull off the most amazing summer event! You'll learn how to make every second count at your program, as you experience a day at True North. Practical pointers on volunteer recruiting, budgeting, decorating, and follow-up will have you ready to hit the trail for your own epic adventure. Check out [group.com/vbsfunshop](http://group.com/vbsfunshop) for more information.

- **How can I connect with other VBS directors?**

Visit our Facebook fan page at [facebook.com/groupvbs](https://facebook.com/groupvbs), and you'll find thousands of other VBS directors from all over the world. Or see if a regional True North Funshop is within driving distance for you and your team.

- **Where do I find resources and tools?** You'll find tons of tools for True North conveniently at your fingertips at [group.com/vbsTools](http://group.com/vbsTools)! Bookmark this site—you'll use it a lot!

- **If I have a technical question, who do I call?**

Please call Group's friendly, helpful Product Support team at 1-800-975-4006.



**VBS Tools**  
Vacation Bible School

# Basics



# Overview Chart

Here's what's happening at True North! At True North, the daily Bible Point is carefully integrated into each station's activities to reinforce Bible learning. Each activity is an important part of kids' overall learning experience—kind of like the pieces of a puzzle.

		Sing & Play Peak	Wild Bible Adventures	Glacier Games
 <p><b>Day 1</b></p> <p><b>Ponder</b></p>	<p><b>Bible Point:</b> When we wonder, we can... <i>(trust Jesus!)</i></p> <p><b>Bible Story:</b> John prepares the way and baptizes Jesus. (Matthew 3; 11:1-6)</p> <p><b>Bible Verse:</b> "Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise." (Matthew 7:24)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn the Day 1 Bible Point and verse, and meet Bible Memory Buddy Ponder.</li> <li>Sing True North songs.</li> <li>Meet Scout Rivers, an explorer who has lots of questions about the wilderness.</li> </ul>	<p>Consider people's wonderings about Jesus, then act out the surprising thing that happened when John baptized Jesus!</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goals for Good</li> <li>Water Way</li> <li>Fish, Wolf, Bear</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Day 2</b></p> <p><b>Clawdia</b></p>	<p><b>Bible Point:</b> When we feel alone, we can... <i>(trust Jesus!)</i></p> <p><b>Bible Story:</b> Jesus teaches about God's love for us. (Matthew 6:25-33; 18:12-14)</p> <p><b>Bible Verse:</b> "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn the Day 2 Bible Point and verse, and meet Bible Memory Buddy Clawdia.</li> <li>Share God Sightings and add trees to the God Sightings Celebration Spot.</li> <li>Sing True North songs.</li> <li>Listen to Scout's surprising tale about preparing s'mores for Jesus.</li> </ul>	<p>Pretend to be lost and lonely sheep, experience a personal blessing, then pray and give worries to Jesus.</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pool Noodle Pals</li> <li>Find a Buddy</li> <li>Sharing Shelters</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Day 3</b></p> <p><b>Kody</b></p>	<p><b>Bible Point:</b> When we feel powerless, we can... <i>(trust Jesus!)</i></p> <p><b>Bible Story:</b> A Roman officer trusts Jesus. (Matthew 8:5-13)</p> <p><b>Bible Verse:</b> "'Don't be afraid,' he said, 'Take courage. I am here!'" (Matthew 14:27)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn the Day 3 Bible Point and verse, and meet Bible Memory Buddy Kody.</li> <li>Share God Sightings and add trees to the God Sightings Celebration Spot.</li> <li>Sing True North songs.</li> <li>Help Scout use the right tools to survive in the wild.</li> </ul>	<p>Meet a powerful Roman soldier who takes the "troops" through strength training before sharing about his unforgettable interaction with Jesus.</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Melt in Minutes</li> <li>Power Ball</li> <li>River Run</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Day 4</b></p> <p><b>Earnest</b></p>	<p><b>Bible Point:</b> When we need hope, we can... <i>(trust Jesus!)</i></p> <p><b>Bible Story:</b> Jesus dies and comes back to life. (Matthew 26:47-28:8)</p> <p><b>Bible Verse:</b> "And his name will be the hope of all the world." (Matthew 12:21)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn the Day 4 Bible Point and verse, and meet Bible Memory Buddy Earnest.</li> <li>Share God Sightings and add trees to the God Sightings Celebration Spot.</li> <li>Sing True North songs.</li> <li>Give Scout hope...and new, dry supplies!</li> </ul>	<p>Use ice to experience some discomfort as they hear of Jesus' crucifixion. Then give icy "sins" to Jesus and watch them melt with his forgiving, mighty love.</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Off the Grid</li> <li>Hope Rises</li> <li>Wilderness Course</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Day 5</b></p> <p><b>Bruce</b></p>	<p><b>Bible Point:</b> When we need help, we can... <i>(trust Jesus!)</i></p> <p><b>Bible Story:</b> Jesus gives the Great Commission, and the Holy Spirit comes. (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 2:1-12)</p> <p><b>Bible Verse:</b> "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn the Day 5 Bible Point and verse, and meet Bible Memory Buddy Bruce.</li> <li>Share God Sightings and add trees to the God Sightings Celebration Spot.</li> <li>Sing True North songs.</li> <li>Lend a hand with Scout's heavy backpack.</li> </ul>	<p>Live through the wild wind and fiery flames of Pentecost to see how the Holy Spirit came to be a helper for us—even today!</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helping Herd</li> <li>Happy Campers</li> <li>Freeze and Thaw Tag</li> </ul>

## Tundra Treats



A (Northern) Light Snack



Blizzard in a Cup



S'mores on a Stick



Mini Mountains



Bear Foot Feast



Bear Bites



Snowball Snacks



Snowy Treats



Moose Munchies



Log Cabin Crunchers

## Sticky Scripture



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

Find Matthew 11:28 in the Bible, then "Find a King Crab" in a bucket! Investigate what it means to come to Jesus and find a forever friend.



Play "The Trail Is Lava" as they practice taking courage during scary times just as Jesus commanded in Matthew 14:27.

Hope to "Spot the Match!" as they explore Matthew 12:21 and investigate how Jesus is the hope of the world.



Explore Matthew 28:20 and are guided step by step as they learn how to draw a moose.

## Imagination Station

Investigate with magnets, then craft a compass to discover what it means to trust Jesus—he always points us in the right direction!



Create crystals in a flurry of fun about snow formation, connecting God's cool creations with the way we are each uniquely made.



Discover the secrets of majestic mountains and Mighty Wires as they explore the surprising power we have in Jesus.



Examine God's luminous light show—the northern lights—and glow about having hope in dark times.



Study God's grand glaciers, bursting with life-giving water! These frosty formations are a huge help in cooling the earth by reflecting light!



## Compass Closing

See how we can trust Jesus to stand strong, even when people try to "poke holes" in our faith.

Use Cool Cubes that seem to disappear to remember that Jesus is always with us—even when we feel invisible.

Watch what happens when we put our worries in Jesus' powerful hands.

Participate in a dramatic reminder that Jesus' death and resurrection brought eternal hope and light to each of us.

Take part in an egg-citing experiment to remember how we can help others trust Jesus in our wild world.

## Your Starter Kit



### COMPASS CLUE

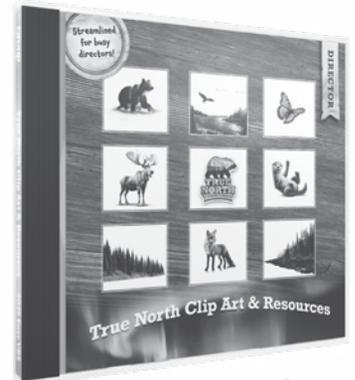
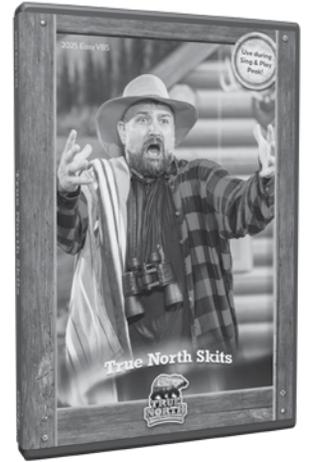
Because many of the churches that use Group's VBS programs have the same person lead the opening station and the closing station, we've combined the material for both stations in one easy-to-use leader manual. The pages are perforated, so if you have a different leader for each station, just tear out the Compass Closing section for each day and hand it off to that volunteer.



- **True North Ultimate Director Go-To Guide®**—Here's all you need to hit the trail for an amazing adventure! It's easier than ever to stay organized.
- **Ultimate Director Go-To Training DVD**—You'll go to this DVD for help with recruiting, planning, training, and more. It's packed with footage of True North fun in action, super-simple tips, and a commercial that makes it easy to publicize your event.
- **7 Station Leader Manuals**—Leaders will have mountains of fun with these colorful, easy-to-use resources:
  - Sing & Play Peak and Compass Closing
  - Wild Bible Adventures
  - Imagination Station
  - Tundra Treats
  - Glacier Games
  - Spotlight VBS™
  - Sticky Scripture™
- **Juneau's Puppy Playhouse Director Manual**—Plan, recruit, and set up a top-notch VBS preschool program.
- **6 Preschool Station Leader Manuals**—Leading preschool activities is a breeze with the eye-catching step-by-step instructions in these stations for your littlest learners:
  - Exploration Stations
  - Bible Adventures & Missions
  - Games
  - Preschool Sticky Scripture™
  - Craft & Play
  - Closing Circle
- **Sing & Play Peak Music Leader Version 2-CD Set**—The set includes songs with and without vocals on Disc 1. Disc 2 contains PowerPoint slideshows of all the song lyrics.
- **Sing & Play Peak Music DVD**—In addition to music videos with kids showing the motions to all the True North songs, this DVD includes the introductions of the True North Bible Memory Buddies to show each day during Sing & Play Peak.
- **Sticky Scripture™: Trusting Jesus in a Wild World DVD**—You'll use this DVD at the Sticky Scripture station. This innovative, interactive, immersive video gets kids up and exploring God's Word like never before!



- **Gospel of Matthew**—A kid-size bite of the Bible made *just* for kids! What an engaging way to get kids' hands on God's Word! Plus, the kid-friendly Bible book helps kids share Scripture with their families!
- **Preschool Bible Pack sample**—This preschool resource features five large, easy-to-hand-out sheets with the colorful Bible story art on one side and a daily Bible activity section—plus stickers. This is a fun way to introduce the day's Bible story and let preschoolers connect with it in a multisensory way.
- **Imagination Station Sciency-Fun Gizmos™ Sample Pack**—All the gizmos Crews need to experience spectacular sciency wows...and make lasting faith connections!
- **Bible Memory Buddies®**—Kids can play and interact with these five faith-building Bible Buddies. Use the set in your Starter Kit along with the Buddy Pack as a sample to show kids and Crew Leaders all the fun friends they'll collect during the week!
- **Student Materials Sample Pack**—Don't miss all these fun and useful resources!
- **True North Clip Art & Resources CD**—You'll go to this resource again and again for publicity helps, customizable forms, parent newsletters, and the Crew Leader Guides—and, of course, the amazing True North clip art!
- **Digital access to Decorating Places videos**—You really *can* create a jaw-dropping set with these great ideas from Group's design team! Decorating has never been easier—with eye-popping impact!



## Where Do I Find...?

Looking for the Master Supply List? Want to know where to find valuable station resources? Just go to [group.com/vbsTools](http://group.com/vbsTools) and look in the True North Resources section.

**VBS Tools**  
Vacation Bible School



## How True North Is Different

It may seem that all VBS programs are alike—crafts, games, and Bible stories with a slightly different theme. But the team at Group develops VBS from the inside out, intentionally building a program that allows you to make the most of every second you spend with kids. It's our desire that kids leave your program with a deeper, more meaningful relationship with Jesus! Check out what makes this program different:

### Easy-to-Learn Bible Truths

At True North, kids learn one important Bible Point each day. Instead of trying to teach kids more than they can remember or apply, True North focuses on one key biblical concept. The Bible Point is reinforced daily through Bible adventures, key Bible verses, songs, snacks, and hands-on activities that help kids explore what it means to trust Jesus in everyday life. Kids who attend your church regularly will enjoy experiencing important truths in fresh new ways. And neighborhood kids who come to True North will get a rock-solid foundation of Scripture truth.

God Sightings® are also a special part of True North. On Day 1, kids discover that they really *can* see evidence of God all around them in everyday life! It's a concept that continues throughout the week and beyond with rich life application. See page 26 for more information about God Sightings.

### Different Learning Styles

Not all kids learn the same way, so this program offers seven daily stations to meet the needs of all kinds of learners. Children will come away from True North each day remembering the Bible Point, because each child will pick it up in a way that matches his or her own learning style.

- **Sing & Play Peak** songs and motions will teach the Bible Point to your **musical learners**. It's where kids worship God with gusto!
- **Glacier Games, Wild Bible Adventures, and Imagination Station** allow **kinesthetic (physical) learners** to wiggle and move as they explore the Bible Point in active ways.
- **Sticky Scripture** lets **visual learners** discover the Bible Point through watching and interacting with the Sticky Scripture DVD. Kids also have a chance to open and explore God's Word every day! Plus, kids will receive their engaging Bible Memory Buddies with the day's key Bible verse!
- **Tundra Treats** allows **interpersonal learners** the opportunity to explore the day's Bible Point as they enjoy a snack and get to know each other better in a relaxed, befriending time while they eat. Plus, food naturally engages the senses and helps learning stick!

- **Compass Closing** includes dramatic and interactive programs to help **linguistic learners** remember each day's Bible Point and Bible verse.
- **Leaders at every station** ask *meaningful*, thought-provoking questions that encourage **logical learners** and **introspective learners** to think about and apply the Bible Point.

## Different Teaching Strengths

Just like kids learn differently, not all teachers think alike. Because teachers will likely be responsible for only one station, True North provides opportunities for you to place a variety of teachers in the roles that best suit them. Have a great drama leader in your congregation? Recruit that person to lead Wild Bible Adventures. Have a person who is active in sports or recreation? Ask that person to lead Glacier Games. And volunteers who are intimidated by the idea of teaching a large group can join your staff as Crew Leaders.

## Interconnected Lessons

At True North, *no activity stands alone*. Instead of leading independent, isolated classes, Station Leaders see all the kids each day. (This also fosters relationships between kids and caring Christian leaders!) Sing & Play Peak songs play in the background during other activities. Kids join in memorable Bible-learning experiments during Imagination Station. At Sticky Scripture, kids explore God's Word, applying Scripture to their daily lives. Bible Memory Buddies appear in Sing & Play Peak and Sticky Scripture. The Glacier Games Leader serves as an assistant Spotlight VBS Leader. Each member of your team provides a unique and important part of kids' total VBS experience. With everyone working together, your staff will be surprised (and sad) when the week is over.

## The Secret Sauce of True North

Throughout the True North manuals you'll see informative, often funny, tips called Field Test Findings. Like chefs in a test kitchen, we've tested our VBS recipe with real kids to make sure all the pieces—or ingredients—come together just right, resulting in practical life-application centered in Jesus' love and God's Word, Bible learning that sticks, and genuine relationships.

Teamwork is  
otterly amazing!  
You'll have a team  
of friends swimming  
by your side!



We talk with and listen to VBS directors all over the world and know that each church or ministry is unique when it comes to resources, facilities, denominational core values, and so much more. There are a few things in the program we *highly* recommend you keep as they've been written because of their importance to the recipe. However, you'll still find plenty of flexibility built in so you can adapt the program to make it fit *your* program.

## The 5 Key Ingredients for VBS Success

- **Bible Points** are the foundation of each day's overall focus. They *point* every activity to one cohesive, understandable, and applicable spiritual connection. If you change these, much of the VBS program may not make sense.
- **Mixed-Age Crews** simply work—*really*, they do! When you bring together a group of kids of various ages, the older kids are looked up to by the younger ones; the younger ones get to feel more like a “big kid” and might try new things they wouldn't otherwise; discipline problems virtually disappear as competition to be the best, funniest, loudest, or coolest naturally dissolves; and genuine relationships sprout with ease. This approach is worth it and so important!
- **Small Crews** ensure that every participant gets to have a voice—and one that matters. Groups of no more than six people (one Crew Leader and five kids) create a comfortable circle where introverted or socially unsure kids will be *far more* likely to actively participate with others. Plus, smaller groups encourage deeper conversations that lead to important life application. Small Crews are also easier for the Crew Leaders to manage, and they'll love you for it (and probably be back to help next year)!
- **Guiding questions for small-group discussion** are included in each station. We've intentionally created questions that lead Crews in exploring the day's focus from different angles. Strategic, open-ended questions lead kids in personal discovery of the *real life* meaning in each day's Bible Point. When kids think about and discuss these questions, they engage their brains in powerful ways. (These aren't questions with “right” or “wrong” answers, so *everyone* has something to share!)
- **An age-appropriate preschool program** gives littler learners their own space to explore and discover. We've designed the program for kids who are 3 years old to kids who haven't yet completed kindergarten. Preschool experts write and test the preschool activities to serve your youngest learners' unique developmental stages and learning styles—bringing each day's Bible Point into contexts they can wrap their young hearts, heads, and hands around.



## Adding Your Own “Flavor”

Now that you know the things that are *crucial* to the True North recipe, here’s where we’ve loaded the program with options and flexibility for you to personalize and pick your favorites. With these flexible pieces, you can be sure to maintain the core message while having some fun making the program your own. Be sure to think ahead and adjust the time for your stations as you make changes.

- **Sing & Play Peak and Compass Closing**

Songs are written in so they’ll make the most sense with each day’s Bible Point, but they’re still swappable—or you can put more or fewer songs in each day.

Using the super-fun skits in Sing & Play Peak is completely up to you (the kids love these at our field tests!). Each day’s skit is a memorable, laughter-inducing way to help kids grasp the Point.

- **Glacier Games**

Each day you’ll have three game options to choose from—a low energy, a medium energy, and a high energy. You’ll most likely be able to get through only two games per station rotation, so you can take your pick!

You’ll find suggestions for ways to alter games to fit your needs, such as options for incorporating water, tweaks for small Crews or an uneven number of participants, and supply options.

- **Tundra Treats**

Each day you’ll find one option for an easy-to-find, easy-to-distribute prepackaged snack that accommodates the most common food allergies. Plus, we’ve included a second option if you have people who like to go the extra mile and make more elaborate snacks.

You can change snacks altogether if you’d like (we know food values vary *widely* and that’s okay!), but be sure to keep them connected to the day’s Bible Point. Food naturally engages the senses, which has been scientifically proven to cement learning!

- **Wild Bible Adventures**

You’ll find supply options for setting up your room’s important, imaginative atmosphere, as well as activity supply options.

- **Juneau’s Puppy Playhouse**

Because preschoolers need options and freedom to exercise their independence and naturally shorter attention spans, you’ll find tons of options for the activities and supplies in Juneau’s Puppy Playhouse. Pick your favorites for each day.

- **Spotlight VBS**

This is a completely optional way to not only review the day’s Bible story during Compass Closing but also let your kids feel like superstars as they see themselves on a big-screen slideshow. It’s also a great way for parents and other family members to hear the day’s Bible story when they arrive to pick up their kids!

- **Scheduling**  
In this Director Guide, you'll find loads of ideas for how to customize the program to fit into *your* schedule.
- **Professional theme art**  
In your Starter Kit you'll find the True North Clip Art & Resources CD that's swimming with awesome art you can use to build customized promotional or take-home materials for your church.
- **Operation Kid-to-Kid mission project**  
We know that when you get kids' passionate hearts working together on a project, *big* things can happen! We've supplied an option for a great mission project where the kids at your church can join efforts with thousands of other kids from around the country (even the world), but you're more than welcome to choose a mission project that's more personal to your church community.

## Cooperation, Not Competition

At True North, you'll have highly competitive kids and kids who hate competing, athletic kids and sedentary kids, kids who are used to winning and kids who have never once crossed the finish line first. That means you'll have to help your kids break the "competition habit." Whether it's games, singing, devotions, or mission offerings, your goal is for kids to work *with* one another, not *against* one another. It's a new concept for some of your kids. These quick tips will help.

- **Remember, relationships first.** The purpose of True North is to help kids grow in their faith and to encourage healthy relationships. Ten years from now, nobody will remember who won the relay race or who brought more kids to VBS, but friendships made at VBS can continue to be a blessing.
- **Create an environment that pulls the focus away from competition.** Competition likely won't have the outcome you're looking for. You may be used to having kids earn prizes for Bible memory, but consider how a visitor might feel if he or she is new to church and the Bible.
- **Don't allow put-downs.** Set this as a clear expectation, and enforce it. Your kids will grow in their faith as they see that cooperation, not competition, creates a servant heart.
- **Applaud effort.** Encourage constantly. Be lavish with applause. Make it fun for kids to try new things even if they fail. Build kids up!
- **Check your own "competition meter."** Do you get caught up in competition or love winning at all costs? If so, realize that you must model cooperation if you expect kids to do it. The cooperative spirit of your VBS begins with you.
- **Pray, pray, pray.** Pray that God will use True North to draw kids and their leaders closer to him and to one another.

### COMPASS CLUE

Never underestimate what your methodology is *really* teaching. One staff member sent his kids to a neighborhood VBS. He later asked what they had learned during the week. All the kids remembered were the rules and that next year they wanted to win a bike for bringing more friends. God's Word was lost in the discipline and competition. How sad!

### COMPASS CLUE

Where is competition creeping into your programming? Churches frequently turn worship (who can sing the loudest), missions (who can bring in the most money), outreach (who can bring the most visitors), and even God's Word (who can learn the most Bible verses) into a competition. We urge you to think *carefully* before assuming that competition is the best motivator. How did Jesus motivate his followers? How can we fashion our ministry after that of Jesus?

## Learning Together

At True North, everyone works together. Because elementary kids travel in combined-age Crews, big kids and little kids learn to cooperate with each other. Think of Crews as families in which kids naturally learn with—and from—one another. Social skills improve, self-esteem rises, cooperation climbs, and discipline problems diminish. It works! You can even use combined-age Crews to teach kids about being part of the body of Christ!

Each Crew also has an adult or teenage Crew Leader. Crew Leaders aren't teachers; they're simply part of Crew families—like older brothers or sisters in a family. Crew Leaders participate in all the activities and encourage kids to talk about and apply what they're learning. Crew Leaders put God's love into action!

## Crew Roles

During Sing & Play Peak on Day 1, kids choose Crew jobs. They can keep the same jobs all week or choose new roles each day. Leader manuals suggest ways for Station Leaders to give every role a chance to participate. If Crews have fewer than five kids, some kids may have more than one job. You can expect each of the following jobs to be represented in each Crew:

- Guide—chooses action ideas for traveling through True North.
- Kit Carrier—distributes and collects supplies and helps carry the Crew's bag.
- Prayer Person—leads or opens prayer times.
- Schedule Supervisor—helps monitor the daily schedule to let the Crew know what's coming next.
- Thank You-er—leads the Crew in thanking Station Leaders each day.

*Kids are excited about having special jobs!* Each year, Crew Leaders who participate in our field tests say they're surprised what a big deal these jobs are for kids. Be sure to touch base with the Sing & Play Peak Leader to remind him or her to allow time for children to choose their roles each day. Although this process is written into the Sing & Play Peak Leader instructions, it's good to double-check and be sure the leader understands the importance of the Crew roles.

### COMPASS CLUE

On the back of each name badge, each Crew role is listed, with a box for kids to mark which job they have for each day. The Crew roles are also described in the printable Crew Leader Guide, found on the clip art CD.



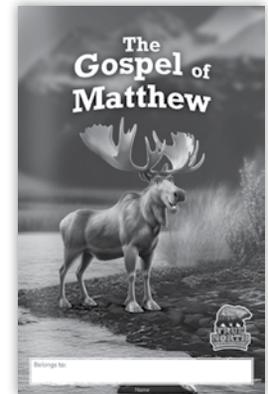
# Bible Basics

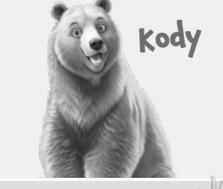
Each day, kids will learn a Bible Point that corresponds to a Bible story and key Bible verse. The chart below shows the Bible content kids will cover each day. Here you'll also see the Bible verses kids explore in Sticky Scripture. At each station, kids will be carefully listening for the Bible Point. They respond to the Bible Point by saying, "Trust Jesus!" as they pretend to pull a rope with both hands. What a cool way to celebrate Jesus and remember that he's always with us!

You'll notice that each day's verse comes from the book of Matthew. That's so kids can practice finding, reading, and marking the passage in their very own Gospel of Matthew Bible book! They'll do this during Sticky Scripture, helping kids develop practical, hands-on Bible skills!



"Thanks, God!"



		Bible Point	Bible Story	Bible Verse
Day 1	 Ponder	<b>When we wonder, we can trust Jesus.</b>	John prepares the way and baptizes Jesus. (Matthew 3; 11:1-6)	"Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise." (Matthew 7:24)
Day 2	 Clawdia	<b>When we feel alone, we can trust Jesus.</b>	Jesus teaches about God's love for us. (Matthew 6:25-33; 18:12-14)	"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)
Day 3	 Kody	<b>When we feel powerless, we can trust Jesus.</b>	A Roman officer trusts Jesus. (Matthew 8:5-13)	"Don't be afraid," he said, "Take courage. I am here!" (Matthew 14:27)
Day 4	 Earnest	<b>When we need hope, we can trust Jesus.</b>	Jesus dies and comes back to life. (Matthew 26:47-28:8)	"And his name will be the hope of all the world." (Matthew 12:21)
Day 5	 Bruce	<b>When we need help, we can trust Jesus.</b>	Jesus gives the Great Commission, and the Holy Spirit comes. (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 2:1-12)	"I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

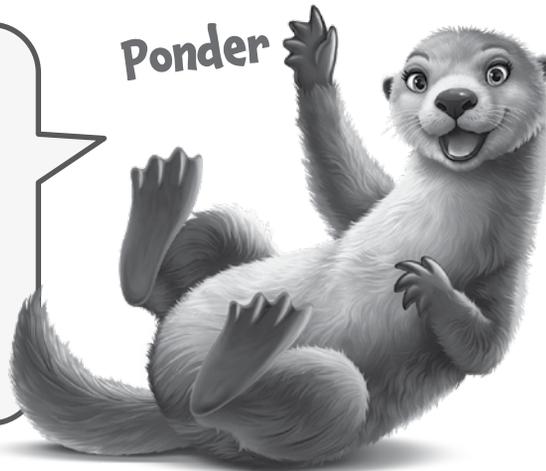
# Bible Memory Buddies®

Kids meet each day's Bible Memory Buddy during Sing & Play Peak. Fun video clips on the Sing & Play Peak Music DVD make introductions easy! The Bible Memory Buddies remind kids of the day's Bible Point, and each features the day's key Bible verse printed on the bottom. Kids get each day's Bible Memory Buddy at Sticky Scripture (a station that takes Bible memory to a new level) and can take the Bible Buddies with them everywhere in a handy Buddy Pack!

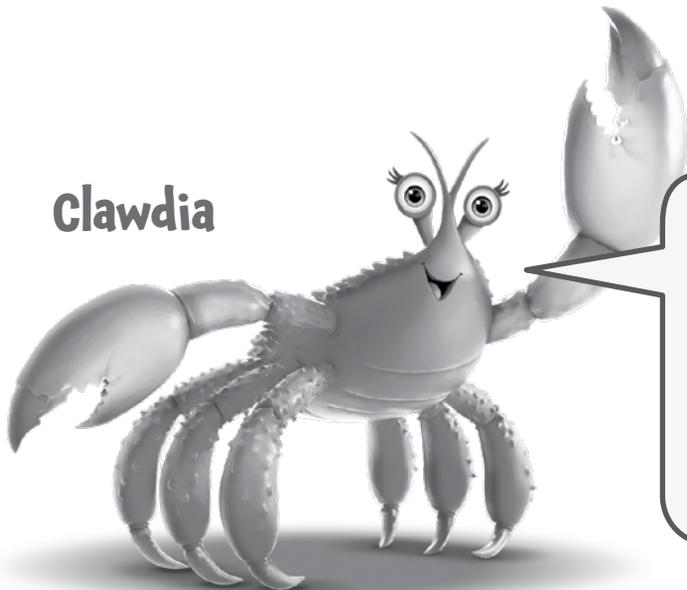


**My playful nature can remind you all about wonder! Sometimes you play to explore the world around you and find out about the things you wonder about. But even when you can't find the answers, you can trust Jesus!**

**Ponder**



**Clawdia**



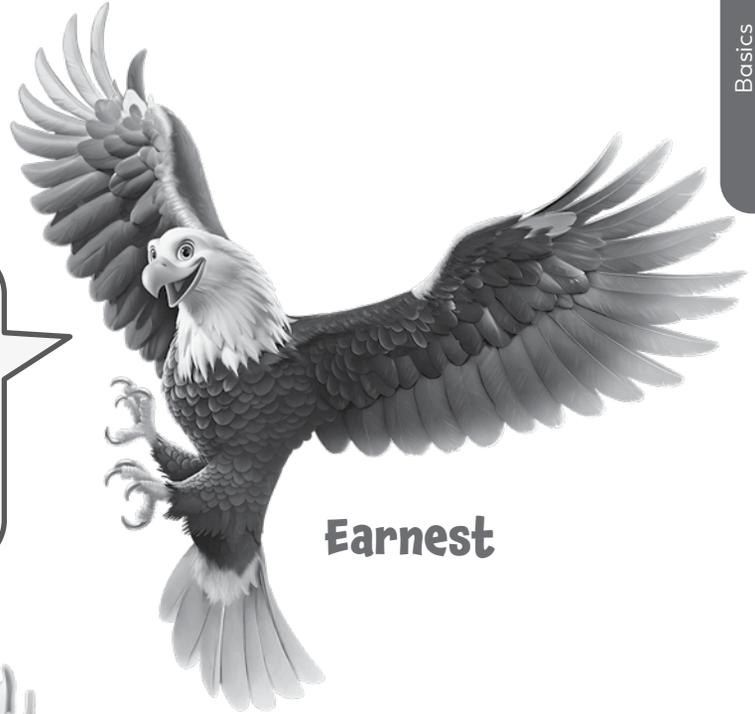
**Some of us crabs live in big groups called casts. But some kinds of crabs live all alone. Maybe you feel like a crab that's all alone. Cheer up! Jesus is always with you! When you feel alone, you can trust Jesus!**

**Kody**



You might like to have a big, powerful bear like me on your side when you feel powerless. But Jesus is even more powerful! When you feel powerless, you can trust Jesus!

When I soar high on the air currents, I can remind you that hope is like an air current that can carry you through the hard times. When you need hope, you can trust Jesus!



**Earnest**



**Bruce**

God gave me antlers, hooves, and hollow hair that help me survive in the cold Alaskan winters. And Jesus gives you all the help you need to follow him! When you need help, you can trust Jesus!

# God Sightings®

## FIELD TEST FINDING

We're always tickled to watch kids "get" God Sightings. The first day, they really have to think about things they've seen that show God's love or power. But by the end of the week, kids are overflowing with God Sightings they can't wait to share! What a great lifelong skill for everyone to learn.



God hasn't retired, you know. He's as busy now as he's ever been. But until you see that with your own eyes, it's tough to have a vibrant faith. God can seem distant or impersonal. God is active in our everyday lives—and we can learn to look. We can make it a habit to keep an eye out for the daily overwhelming evidence that God is doing great things all around us.

At True North, you'll encourage kids and adults to look for God Sightings—everyday clues that God is present, passionate, and powerful. A God Sighting is simply an acknowledgment that God has done something. It's giving God credit where credit is due. It's developing a God-focused view and a grateful heart. Kids and adults will discover that they can see God in things like Scripture, people, circumstances, and nature.

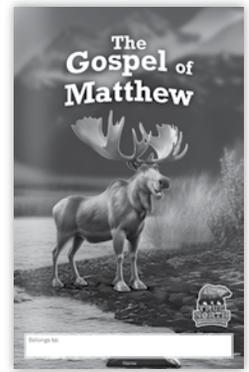
As participants—even preschoolers—make God Sightings part of everyday life, their faith will grow. Why? Because they'll actually see God at work—not because he's suddenly shown up but because they finally have eyes to see...and at last, they're looking. Here's how you'll make God Sightings part of VBS.

- **Sharing God Sightings.** Kids learn about God Sightings at Compass Closing on Day 1. Then beginning on Day 2 at Sing & Play Peak, Crews will huddle together to share ways they've seen God at work. As kids share about amazing things they've seen in nature or ways they've felt or experienced God's love, they'll leave each day with very real ways God showed up at True North.
- **Recording God Sightings.** Every day, provide each Crew with a special God Sightings Tree and a permanent marker. Crew Leaders write a word or even a simple drawing to record each Crew member's God Sighting on the tree.
- **Celebrating God Sightings.** After Crews share their God Sightings, Crew Leaders come to an area you've designated as the God Sightings Celebration Spot in the Sing & Play Peak area. This special spot is easy to set up, featuring a poster of Psalm 96:12-13. As everyone sings "This Is the Day (Psalm 118:24)," Crew Leaders take their paper trees to the God Sightings Celebration Spot and add them to the display. By the end of the week, you'll have a fun way to see what God is doing today!
- **Watch for God.** During Compass Closing, kids will receive Watch for God Wristbands that they'll wear all week. These wristbands remind kids to keep their eyes open for things God is doing all around them.

# Student Resources

## Gospel of Matthew Bible Books

Each elementary child gets to take home an incredible kid-size bite of the Bible—their very own Gospel of Matthew. Kids dive into these, learning practical Bible study skills, during Sticky Scripture. They can take them home at the end of the week to continue learning and exploring God’s Word! The book includes plenty of activities, insights, and kid-friendly tips that make Scripture accessible.



## Preschool Bible Pack

These preschool student pages are easy for you and your team *and* eye-catching for preschoolers! The Preschool Bible Pack includes five large, easy-to-hand-out sheets. (Each package of Bible Packs comes with enough sheets for 10 preschoolers as well as stickers featuring the preschool Bible Buddy, Juneau the husky puppy.) During Exploration Stations, preschoolers will use the Bible activity section of that day’s sheet, adding tactile items such as gold glitter glue. This is a fun way to introduce the day’s Bible story and let children connect with it in a multisensory way. Later, the Closing Circle Leader will show kids the large, colorful Bible story poster on the other side of the page and point out an art element that preschoolers can show their parents as a way to share the day’s Bible story and Bible Point at home.



Every day, preschoolers will take that day’s page home, giving parents a simple way to explore what their children have learned at True North. Each day’s Bible Pack sheet includes information for parents, such as ways to incorporate God Sightings at home.



Bible Activity Pages

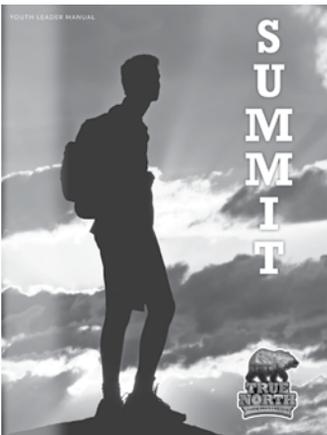


Daily Bible Point Stickers

# Elementary Stations

## COMPASS CLUE

Don't overlook the impact this program can have on teenagers and adults. Learners of all ages benefit from the active, fresh Bible adventure presentations at True North. We've heard from youth and adults who said their hearts were touched, lives were changed, and faith was renewed after experiencing these Bible truths in such new ways! Be sure to check out Summit, the program designed specifically for youth!



## COMPASS CLUE

You'll need to be available just before Sing & Play Peak begins. The Sing & Play Peak Leader will gather Crew Leaders at the front of the room for a huddle and a prayer—a brief time of prayer with you. (Read more about that on page 60 of the Planning section.) You might also want to come forward at the end of Sing & Play Peak to make announcements.

## Crew Rotations

At True North, elementary kids visit seven stations each day. Each station is staffed by an adult leader and features a different activity that reinforces what kids are learning about God. All participants attend Sing & Play Peak, Tundra Treats, and Compass Closing at the same time. Kids rotate through the other stations with their Crews. Elementary-age kids visit the following stations each day.

## Sing & Play Peak

- The Sing & Play Peak Leader introduces the Bible Point, key Bible verse, and Bible Memory Buddy each day.
- Each day, kids sing the theme song, “Let’s Trust in Jesus.” In addition to fun praise songs, kids sing at least one song each day that specifically ties to that day’s Bible Point.
- Each day, Crew members discuss their God Sightings as a reminder that God is at work *every day!*

## Wild Bible Adventures

- The Wild Bible Adventures Leader repeats the Bible Point each day.
- Kids *experience* the daily Bible story in a way that engages them physically *and* emotionally.
- Crew Leaders guide small-group discussions where kids connect their unforgettable Bible experiences to real life.

## Tundra Treats

- Each day’s snack experience connects to the Bible Point.
- While Crews eat, they can use the fun activities on their daily schedules to help everyone get to know each other better. It’s time meant for making friends and gives kids some relaxed space to really download all they’re learning each day.

## Imagination Station

- The Imagination Station Leader repeats the Bible Point each day.
- Kids *do* (not just watch) exciting experiments that connect to the day's Bible story and Point.
- Everyone uses Sciency-Fun Gizmos to let kids take part in cool science experiments that point to Jesus.

## Sticky Scripture™

- The Sticky Scripture Leader repeats the Bible Point each day.
- The daily Bible verse is reinforced as children watch and interact with the immersive video.
- Crews practice finding, reading, and marking each day's key Bible verse in the Gospel of Matthew.

## Glacier Games

- The games leader repeats the Bible Point each day and offers an introduction to the Operation Kid-to-Kid project on Day 1.
- Kids play games that connect with the daily Bible Point. Each day there are three fun game options to choose from. Days 2 through 5 each include a game that connects to Operation Kid-to-Kid.
- Each day, Crews at one of the Glacier Games rotations participate in a photo shoot with the Spotlight VBS photographer for the Spotlight VBS slideshow.
- Kids listen to Sing & Play Peak songs as they play games.

## Compass Closing

- The Compass Closing Leader repeats the Bible Point each day.
- Kids watch the special daily Spotlight VBS slideshow—featuring photographs of the kids at *your* VBS taken during Glacier Games—that reminds them of the daily Bible story and Point.
- Kids sing the Sing & Play Peak songs they've learned that day.
- The Compass Closing Leader uses drama experiences and engaging object lessons to help kids apply what they've learned throughout the day.

# Preschool Stations

## FIELD TEST FINDING

On Day 1 only, preschoolers skip Sing & Play Peak and go straight to Juneau's Puppy Playhouse. This allows little ones to meet their Preschool Director, Crew Leaders, and Crew members.

## FIELD TEST FINDING

You may be tempted to have little ones rotate through the elementary-age stations. Before you choose this option, please remember that early-childhood-education experts designed the activities in Juneau's Puppy Playhouse just for preschoolers! The activities in the elementary stations were designed for elementary-age kids. Be sure to provide an age-appropriate program for children who have not yet finished kindergarten. Remember, when you put preschoolers into elementary Crews, little ones struggle unnecessarily and your Crew Leaders have to work harder, too.

Preschoolers (all 3- to 5-year-olds who haven't finished kindergarten) have a special True North program of their own! Little ones gather with the older kids for Sing & Play Peak each day (except Day 1) to sing the amazing songs; learn the Bible Point, Bible verse, and Bible story; and see the daily Buddy intro videos.

After Sing & Play Peak, preschoolers move to their own special **Juneau's Puppy Playhouse** area. We've worked with preschool experts to design a format that gives preschoolers a little less structure and more free-choice play, resulting in smoother transitions and a simpler learning environment. The Juneau's Puppy Playhouse Preschool Director Manual contains complete instructions for setting up, organizing, and running the preschool-age program, and the preschool station leader manuals include supply lists and instructions for all these fun, age-appropriate preschool activities.

- Your little learners ease into their day by choosing from a variety of hands-on **Exploration Stations** that reinforce the Bible Point.
- Then preschoolers join together for big, interactive **Bible Adventures & Missions**.
- Preschoolers join elementary-age kids to enjoy **Tundra Treats** snacks each day.
- Kids get a chance to get messy with irresistible **Craft & Play** activities.
- Little learners have their own way to explore God's Word in **Sticky Scripture**.
- Preschoolers head to **Games** for high-energy play that's guaranteed to wear out their wiggles.
- Finally, preschool Crews come together for a quick review and interactive prayer experience at **Closing Circle** before parents arrive to take them home.



# Imagination Station

We heard from so many VBS directors who told us that kids just weren't interested in "doing crafts" anymore. Especially those older boys! They asked us to provide something to spark kids' imaginations. And we did! Even we were surprised at how much kids—and leaders—love it! Using surprising and affordable Imagination Station items (available from group.com or your Group VBS supplier), everyone gets in on the hands-on discoveries!

- **Each Imagination Station experiment connects with the Bible Point.** These amazing experiments aren't just jaw-dropping—they reinforce important *Bible* truths.
- **The experiments are child-tested and irresistible.** No need for your kids to be guinea pigs for what you *think* they will like. We've tested these sciency-fun wows with kids of various ages—and if anything flopped, we modified it, retested it, and made sure it's a keeper. We asked kids what they liked, listened to kids' exclamations and laughter as they made fun discoveries. Watch kids engage in surprising faith connections.
- **Imagination Station activities are downright fun!** Kids are active, so Imagination Station activities should be, too! Kids will definitely be wild for *these* sciency experiments that take kids on a discovery adventure they won't soon forget.
- **Imagination Station activities are "doable."** Since groups of *real* kids have tested these experiences, we know that these projects won't frustrate or bore kids.
- **Imagination Station activities allow for lots of creativity.** We've seen what kids can do with these experiments. Prepare to be dazzled by kids' curiosity and creativity!
- **Imagination Station activities are exclusive.** The specific items we used and tested are available through Group. Be aware that items that are only similar to the ones we tested and offer might not work quite the same and might not have passed the same safety standards.
- **Imagination Station activities are cost-effective.** The items in each day's pack are enough for one Crew of kids to do the experiments for that day.

Turn the page  
to check out the  
Imagination Station  
sciency fun!



### Day 1



True North Compass Kit

### Day 2



Let It Snow Kit

### Day 3



Mighty Wire Pack

### Day 4



Glow Show Kit

### Day 5



Polar Pencils

# Sticky Scripture™

At Sticky Scripture, fresh and meaningful experiences help words in the Bible stick—to kids’ hearts and minds and lives!

Trust us, kids won’t just zone out and watch a video—no way! Instead, they’ll connect to each day’s Bible verse with their bodies, their heads, and their hearts. Led by a Bible Memory Buddy friend, kids move, laugh, and play as they explore what each verse means to their lives in practical, applicable ways.

**Day 1**, kids play “Wilderness Wise” as they explore Matthew 7:24 and discover what it means to have wisdom.

**Day 2**, kids find Matthew 11:28 in the Bible, then “Find a King Crab” in a bucket! They’ll investigate what it means to come to Jesus and find a forever friend.

**Day 3**, kids play “The Trail Is Lava” as they practice taking courage during scary times, just as Jesus commanded in Matthew 14:27.

**Day 4**, kids hope to “Spot the Match!” as they explore Matthew 12:21 and investigate how Jesus is the hope of the world.

**Day 5**, kids explore Matthew 28:20 and are guided step by step as they learn how to draw a moose.

After interacting with the Bible verse *virtually*, elementary kids open God’s Word, find verses, and read words from Jesus found in the Gospel of Matthew. Kids will receive and use their very own Gospel of Matthew, an excerpt from the kid-friendly, eye-catching *Hands-On Bible*. After they find and mark each day’s verse, kids receive a cool collectible Bible Memory Buddy—with the verse printed right on it!



Basics





## VBS Tools

Vacation Bible School

# Spotlight VBS™

With Spotlight VBS, every child at True North can be a star. Here's how it works: Each day a different group of kids will arrive at Glacier Games to discover that a photographer (the Spotlight VBS Leader) is there to capture fun photos of them for a slideshow. The daily schedules in the Spotlight VBS Leader Manual explain which group is featured each day.

The Spotlight VBS Leader Manual includes a script outlining the specific shots to get, and the Spotlight slideshow includes audio narration that ties the daily show to that day's Bible story. The complete Spotlight files (available in PowerPoint and ProPresenter format) and instructions for creating the daily slideshows are available at [group.com/vbsTools](http://group.com/vbsTools).

The Glacier Games Leader energizes kids and helps get them into the poses that fit the script, allowing the photographer to focus on getting amazing shots. When the "photo session" is finished (it takes only about five minutes), the kids head off with the Glacier Games Leader for a game or two.

Then the Spotlight VBS Leader has until Compass Closing to insert the photos into the special slideshow. Kids are tickled to see themselves on the big screen, and parents who attend Compass Closing are impressed that someone could create such a high-quality show in such a short amount of time. Try it!

# Working With Mixed-Age Crews

## Elementary and Preschool Crews

As you set up True North, you'll assign kids to Crews. Elementary Crews are for kids who have *completed* kindergarten through the fifth grade. Preschool Crews are for kids from ages 3 through 5 (or have not yet completed kindergarten).

Crews consist of three to five children and an adult or teenage Crew Leader. If possible, each Crew should have one child from each age. See the Registration section for details. "The Crew Family" (p. 37) highlights the unique contribution children from each age level can make to a Crew. (See the Preschool Director Manual for the preschool Crew family.) Try to structure your Crews so they contain no more than five kids. Through field-testing and customer feedback, we've discovered that larger Crews can get unmanageable and become a frustration for Crew Leaders—and kids. Smaller Crews maximize learning opportunities and important relationship-building time.

On Day 1, elementary kids report to their Crews at Sing & Play Peak right away to start getting acquainted. Preschoolers first meet their Crews at Juneau's Puppy Playhouse on the first day. Having small Crews encourages kids to make new friends because Crew members work closely with one another all week at True North. They also provide an organizational structure that helps kids progress from station to station in an orderly manner.

### FIELD TEST FINDING

"The older kids at my church like being with their friends. They'll complain if they have to be with the 'little' kids." Some people are hesitant to try combined-age groups because they're afraid kids will balk at something new. You can let kids partner with same-age friends if they're really reluctant. But year after year at our field tests, we discover that kids enjoy being in combined-age Crews. Sure, it's a little different at first, but as kids warm up to their crewmates, you'll see them working together, helping one another, and forming unique friendships. There are few complaints, and discipline problems are almost nonexistent.



**COMPASS CLUE** 

“Can’t I just create Crews of first and second graders, third and fourth graders, and so on?” Well, you could—but many years of experience has shown our team that while this approach might feel more familiar, it’s not best. This program is designed to succeed with kids of all ages working together. It’s an amazing experience for kids—and adults! By forming age-graded Crews, you create problems and rob kids of a uniquely memorable experience.

**COMPASS CLUE** 

Studies show that children learn as much—or more—when they’re linked with kids of different ages. In fact, one study observed that children naturally chose to play with other children their own age only 6 percent of the time. They played with children at least one year older or one year younger 55 percent of the time!

## Advantages of Mixed-Age Crews

You may be skeptical about placing kids in mixed-age groups. After all, that’s probably not how your other children’s ministry functions are structured. And the school system is set up to be age-graded too. So why should you shake things up and try combining ages? Here’s why!

- **Combined-age Crews encourage teamwork rather than competition.** When kids are grouped in age-graded classes, there’s more emphasis on comparison (“I can do it better!”) and competition (“I can do it faster!”). However, by placing children in mixed-age Crews, you nearly eliminate the unspoken desire for kids to compare or compete. Instead, older kids help younger ones with challenging tasks. Younger kids seek to emulate the older, “cool” kids in their Crews.
- **Combined-age Crews reduce discipline problems.** Now, we love kids of all ages, but there’s something intimidating about that group of all fifth-grade boys! But when you split up that daunting bunch of preteen kids, they suddenly lose their “audience” (that is, one another), and your discipline problems nearly vanish. You’ll get the same delightful effect when you split up middle-elementary cliques, some siblings, and other “troublesome twosomes.” It works!
- **Combined-age Crews encourage relationship-building.** By mixing ages to form small groups, you provide a rare opportunity for kids of all ages to get to know one another. Most same-age kids in your community are with one another during school, sports, and other children’s ministry functions. Multi-age Crews give kids the chance to interact and build meaningful relationships with new friends.
- **Combined-age Crews are easier to work with.** Your Crew Leaders will love how easy it is to work with kids of mixed ages. Rather than trying to assist a group of 6-year-olds with reading, a Crew Leader can give one-on-one attention to one 6-year-old. And (believe it or not) older kids will relish their helping roles as they lead with their strengths.

There are countless reasons mixed-age Crews truly are more effective than age-graded Crews. It really works! But don’t just take our word for it—log on to the Facebook fan page at [facebook.com/groupvbs](https://facebook.com/groupvbs) and ask other directors who have tried this method and succeeded.

## The Crew Family

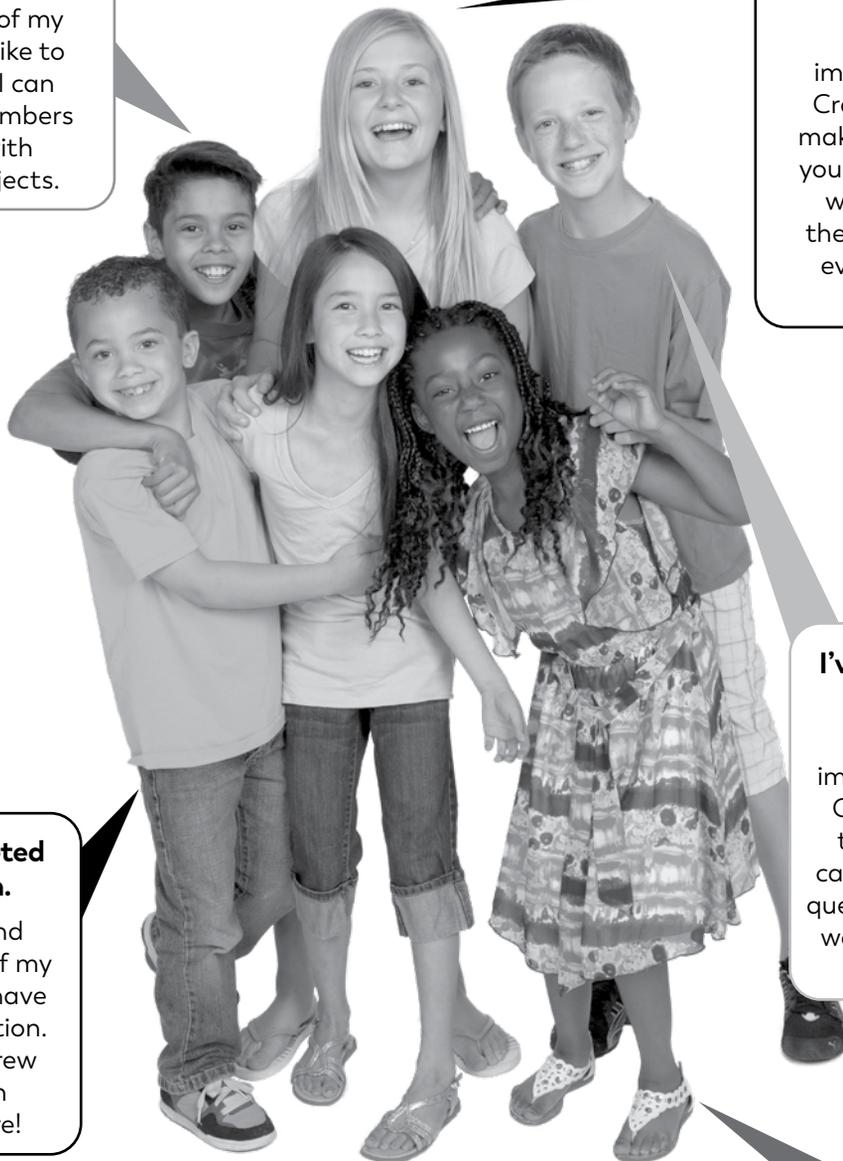
Every member of your mixed-age Crew adds something to every activity!

### I've just completed third grade.

I'm a unique and important part of my Crew because I like to be challenged. I can help younger members of my Crew with challenging projects.

### I've just completed fifth grade.

I'm a unique and important part of my Crew because I like to make choices. I can help younger Crew members with tasks and help the Crew Leader guide everyone in showing Jesus' love.



### I've just completed kindergarten.

I'm a unique and important part of my Crew because I have a great imagination. I can help my Crew dive into each Bible adventure!

### I've just completed fourth grade.

I'm a unique and important part of my Crew because I like to ask questions. I can help my Crew ask questions to make sure we understand what we're learning.

### I've just completed first grade.

I'm a unique and important part of my Crew because I like to be the best. I can help encourage my Crew to be the best it can be.

### I've just completed second grade.

I'm a unique and important part of my Crew because I want everything to be fair. I can help make sure we all take turns and treat one another fairly.

## Preteens and Upper Elementary Kids

Want to know the secret to reaching preteens? Involve them in True North! Preteens are the “in-between” kids, ages 10, 11, and 12, who haven’t started middle school. Some churches feel like their preteen kids are “too cool” for VBS...but that’s not the case with *this* program. What’s so different about True North?

- **True North gives preteens responsibility.** Crew roles allow each preteen to have a special job every day at VBS. That sense of responsibility fits with your preteen kids’ increasing desire for control and independence...within the safe relationship of a Crew.
- **True North keeps preteens moving.** Since kids are moving from station to station about every 20 minutes, there’s no time for kids (of any age) to get bored.
- **True North allows preteens to discuss and think.** Instead of answering closed-ended questions based mostly in fact recollection (“What’s the name of the river where John the Baptist baptized Jesus?”), kids at True North respond to open-ended, thought-provoking questions that invite life application and personal reflection (“What questions would you ask Jesus?”) Preteens who like to think outside the box will love pondering, sharing, and digging deeper into Bible truths.
- **True North lets preteens shine.** Crew “families” give your preteens a moment to shine as the older, cooler kids that younger kids emulate. And year after year, we watch preteens glow in that role! Whether tying shoelaces for a first grader or helping a third grader with an experiment, preteens *love* getting to help out and thrive in their abilities.
- **True North gives preteens the chance to be kids.** Face it, kids are getting older younger. Any opportunity you can give preteens to act like kids (which they are) is a good one. Give them the chance to play games, imagine, create, and learn alongside younger kids. Those opportunities will be quickly vanishing, so make this VBS count.

If you create a program just for preteens, chances are they’ll miss out on these unique experiences. We’ve watched kids at field tests, and we’ve heard so many stories from VBS directors like you. Preteens thrive in the mixed-age Crews. Try it—it really works!

# Middle Schoolers

Many churches are unsure how to handle middle-school kids; they seem too old for some children's ministry programs and too young for youth group. At True North, middle-school kids can fill a number of roles. (In fact, middle schoolers at our field tests reported that they loved helping because it gave them the chance to be adults *and* kids.) Check out the following options to find the perfect fit for your middle schoolers.

- **Have them join Crews as assistant Crew Leaders.** Many middle schoolers are ready for simple leadership roles, but they still enjoy participating in activities such as games, snack time, science experiments, and biblical dramas. As assistant Crew Leaders, they can help their Crew Leaders by keeping kids together, working with younger children during Imagination Station, or helping younger kids find a Bible verse during Sticky Scripture.
- **They can become assistant Station Leaders.** Your middle schoolers are developing their gifts and talents and are discovering the things they excel at and enjoy. Being an assistant Station Leader is a great way to encourage kids toward this discovery. Do you know an older child who's developing a love for drama? Use him or her as an assistant to the Compass Closing Leader or an assistant Wild Bible Adventures Leader. What about a child who enjoys sports and other athletic activities? Ask him or her to be an assistant Glacier Games Leader. Your Station Leaders will appreciate the extra help, and older kids will enjoy the added responsibility.
- **Let them help with Juneau's Puppy Playhouse registration.** Some middle schoolers are nurturing and caring—great qualities for helping preschoolers find their way at True North. For the first day or two, have a few middle schoolers available to act as guides, helping preschoolers find their Crew Leaders, showing preschoolers the restrooms, or playing with shy children to get them accustomed to the Juneau's Puppy Playhouse area.
- **Create a sing-along crew.** Older children will enjoy teaching song motions and leading younger children in Sing & Play Peak. Ask a group of middle-school kids to work with the Sing & Play Peak Leader to learn the words and motions to all the True North songs. The sing-along crew will add visual excitement and energy to your singing time.

Middle schoolers have so much to offer (and gain from) your program! The more these kids are involved in your program, the more opportunities you have to touch their lives.

## FIELD TEST FINDING

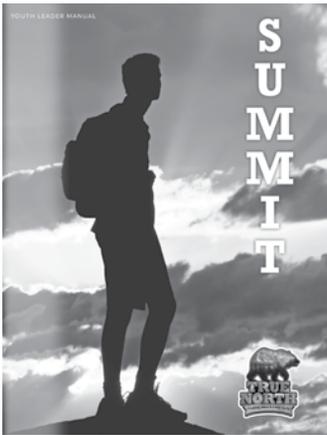
It's important that middle-school kids understand the specifics of their jobs. Over the years, we've found it's not a great idea to have middle schoolers just hanging around as "helpers." When we gave them specific roles, such as assistant chef or assistant Imagination Station Leader, they did super jobs to help us out!

## COMPASS CLUE

A director shared this great "technology tact" tip with us! Each morning before VBS starts, she has all her teen helpers mark resealable plastic bags with their names and seal their cellphones in the bags. All the protected and labeled phones then go in a bucket or bin kept safely in an office until after VBS. This helps middle schoolers and teens stay plugged into their role and not plugged into their phones.

# Teenagers

Teenagers have an important role in making this event a True North success! Use the following suggestions to involve teenagers (or college students) in your program.



## COMPASS CLUE

If you're used to offering a class for youth (and have all the volunteers you need), now there's a resource to help you out! The Summit Youth Leader Manual allows middle schoolers and high schoolers to participate in Sing & Play Peak and then attend their own special class. Teenagers come back for Compass Closing, so everyone can get in on the fun. The Summit Youth Leader Manual is available from Group Publishing or your Group VBS supplier.

- **Involve them as Crew Leaders.** Many young adults have younger siblings or babysit frequently and are comfortable working with children. Young adults will have a great time leading their Crews—and will love how easy it is. (Teenagers will actually get as much out of the Bible stories and discussions as the children will!)
- **Enlist them to help in Sing & Play Peak and Compass Closing.** The opening and closing stations require helpers to assist the leader with activities, dramas, and props. The leader will love having enthusiastic teenagers to work with, and kids will love seeing the older kids taking part in the fun.
- **Let teenagers and young adults help with registration.** Many young people have excellent organizational skills. These young people enjoy forming Crews, greeting children, and helping kids find their Crew Leaders. (These helpers make a great first impression for adults as well as kids.) After the first day, your registration helpers can register newcomers, count the daily attendance and report the number to the Tundra Treats Leader, and fill in for Crew Leaders who are absent.
- **Have qualified teenagers run your sound system or act as Spotlight VBS photographers.** Some high school drama programs train young people to run sound, lighting, and video equipment. These teenagers make excellent VBS technical staff members!
- **If your church's youth group has a choir or worship band, let them help with Sing & Play Peak and Compass Closing.** Kids at True North love singing with the "big kids," and young adults will never have a more receptive and friendly audience. Your Station Leaders will enjoy the extra backup and enthusiasm. You'll see teenagers learn and grow right along with the children!

There are countless ways to involve youth in VBS. Remember to give teenagers plenty of direction and input, since they may not be as experienced as some of your adult staff. Just let teenagers find roles where their gifts, talents, or interests lead them. You'll be surprised at how committed and enthusiastic these young volunteers are.

# Great for Churches of All Sizes

## Small VBS

If you have 25 or fewer children, they can all explore the stations together. This means your Station Leaders will teach their activities only one time. (Station Leaders may find this so easy that they will volunteer to teach more than one station, so you'll have fewer leaders to recruit!)

Your daily schedule might look as simple as this:

### All Crews

**Sing & Play Peak** (8:30–8:55)

*Allow 5 minutes to travel to your next station.*

**Glacier Games** (9:00–9:20)

*Allow 5 minutes to travel to your next station.*

**Imagination Station** (9:25–9:45)

*Allow 5 minutes to travel to your next station.*

**Tundra Treats** (9:50–10:10)

*Allow 5 minutes to travel to your next station.*

**Wild Bible Adventures** (10:15–10:35)

*Allow 5 minutes to travel to your next station.*

**Sticky Scripture™** (10:40–11:00)

*Allow 5 minutes to travel to your next station.*

**Compass Closing** (11:05–11:30)

#### COMPASS CLUE

We've heard from VBS directors who use this program and are delighted at how simple it is for smaller churches. Their leaders enjoy teaching only one or two rotations, and it's easy to find leaders who will teach more than one. Your job has never been easier!

## Medium VBS

If you have between 26 and 100 kids at your program, divide your total number of elementary-age Crews by four to form four large groups. These groups will travel to each station following a schedule that looks like this:

Time	GROUP A Crews <b>1-3</b>	GROUP B Crews <b>4-6</b>	GROUP C Crews <b>7-9</b>	GROUP D Crews <b>10-12</b>	Preschool
9:00–9:25	Sing & Play Peak				Juneau's Puppy Playhouse
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
9:30–9:50	Wild Bible Adventures	Imagination Station	Glacier Games	Sticky Scripture	Juneau's Puppy Playhouse
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
9:55–10:15	Imagination Station	Glacier Games	Sticky Scripture	Wild Bible Adventures	Juneau's Puppy Playhouse
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
10:20–10:40	Tundra Treats				
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
10:45–11:05	Glacier Games	Sticky Scripture	Wild Bible Adventures	Imagination Station	Juneau's Puppy Playhouse
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
11:10–11:30	Sticky Scripture	Wild Bible Adventures	Imagination Station	Glacier Games	Juneau's Puppy Playhouse
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
11:35–12:00	Compass Closing				Juneau's Puppy Playhouse

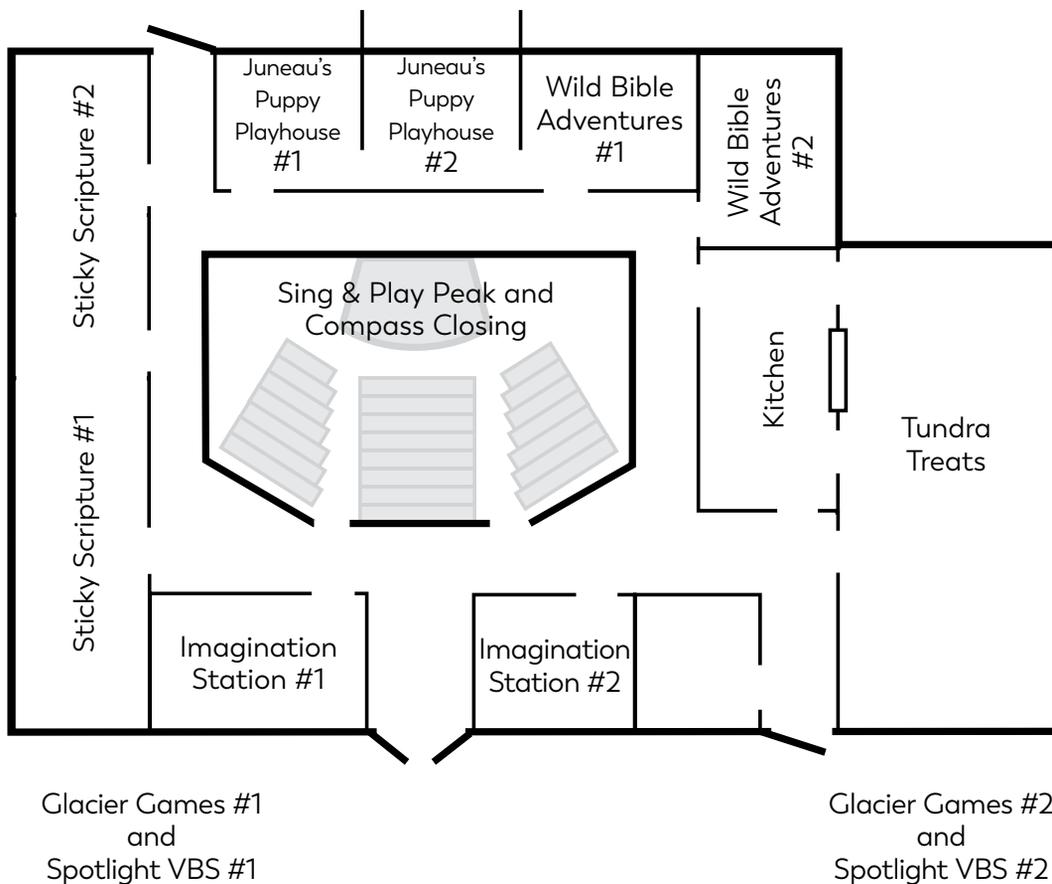
## Large VBS

Ideally, you don't want more than five Crews in each station at a time. Station Leaders will have a more successful time working with 25 kids rather than a room crammed with 30-40 wiggly bodies.

If you have more than 100 kids, setting up duplicate stations is the best option—it's easy and really works. If at all possible, place the duplicate stations next to each other. Divide your total number of elementary-age Crews by eight to form eight large groups. Then when Crews arrive at the stations, Station Leaders can simply direct half of them into each station. (See the sample schedules on page 44.)

For another large-group option, run a morning and evening program. Simply have participants sign up for the daytime or evening program; then decorate once and run two "shifts" each day.

For duplicate stations, your church might be set up like this:



### COMPASS CLUE

We hear from friends in ministry who have up to 4,000 kids at their programs... and they love the small-group Crews and station-based format! Every child gets special attention from a loving Crew Leader.

Time	GROUP A Crews <b>1-4</b>	GROUP B Crews <b>5-8</b>	GROUP C Crews <b>9-12</b>	GROUP D Crews <b>13-16</b>	Preschool <b>Group 1</b>
8:30– 8:55	Sing & Play Peak				
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
9:00– 9:20	Wild Bible Adventures #1	Imagination Station #1	Glacier Games #1	Sticky Scripture #1	Juneau's Puppy Playhouse #1
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
9:25– 9:45	Imagination Station #1	Glacier Games #1	Sticky Scripture #1	Wild Bible Adventures #1	Juneau's Puppy Playhouse #1
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
9:50– 10:10	Tundra Treats				
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
10:15– 10:35	Glacier Games #1	Sticky Scripture #1	Wild Bible Adventures #1	Imagination Station #1	Juneau's Puppy Playhouse #1
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
10:40– 11:00	Sticky Scripture #1	Wild Bible Adventures #1	Imagination Station #1	Glacier Games #1	Juneau's Puppy Playhouse #1
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
11:05– 11:30	Compass Closing				Juneau's Puppy Playhouse #1

Time	GROUP E Crews <b>17-20</b>	GROUP F Crews <b>21-24</b>	GROUP G Crews <b>25-28</b>	GROUP H Crews <b>29-32</b>	Preschool <b>Group 2</b>
8:30– 8:55	Sing & Play Peak				
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
9:00– 9:20	Wild Bible Adventures #2	Imagination Station #2	Glacier Games #2	Sticky Scripture #2	Juneau's Puppy Playhouse #2
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
9:25– 9:45	Imagination Station #2	Glacier Games #2	Sticky Scripture #2	Wild Bible Adventures #2	Juneau's Puppy Playhouse #2
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
9:50– 10:10	Tundra Treats				
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
10:15– 10:35	Glacier Games #2	Sticky Scripture #2	Wild Bible Adventures #2	Imagination Station #2	Juneau's Puppy Playhouse #2
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
10:40– 11:00	Sticky Scripture #2	Wild Bible Adventures #2	Imagination Station #2	Glacier Games #2	Juneau's Puppy Playhouse #2
<i>Allow 5 minutes to move to your next station.</i>					
11:05– 11:30	Compass Closing				Juneau's Puppy Playhouse #2

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# Digital Tools



Clip Art & Resources:	VBS Tools
Clip Art (Bible Memory Buddies, borders, logos, letterhead, and more)	Staff devotions
Forms (registration forms, rosters, evaluations, Allergy Alert form)	How-to videos for Compass Closing “wow” experiments
Program Resources (editable parent newsletters, editable daily schedules, elementary Crew Leader Guide, Games Wrap-Up Questions, and preschool Crew Leader Guide)	Decorating helps
Publicity Items (bulletin inserts, news release, parent invitation)	Downloadable photos and sound effects used in Sing & Play Peak
	Snack cards
	Spotlight VBS files

# Ultimate Director Go-To Guide®

The Easy VBS®



Get ready for an unbearably great time!

This Ultimate Director Go-To Guide contains everything you need to plan a successful VBS program. From recruiting volunteers to promoting your program, you'll find the know-how and tools right here! First time directing VBS? Go to the "First-Time Directors" section for a quick jump-start!



In Wild Bible Adventures, kids explore God's Word like never before—engaging all their senses in experiences that point them to Jesus, our true north!



Imagination Station is the sciency spot for creativity, discovery, and surprising faith connections!



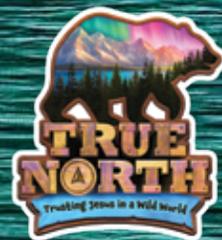
Sticky Scripture™ makes Bible memory something kids can't wait for! Use video in a fresh way, fixing God's Word in kids' heads and hearts.



Glacier Games combines wild fun with meaningful learning about each day's Bible Point!



Tundra Treats provides kid-approved treats that everyone will want to get their paws on!



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