



Answers**VBS**

MYSTERY ISLAND

Tracking Down the One True God

HELPER

HANDBOOK

Limited license to copy issued to Calvary Baptist Church, Denton, MD

HELPER

HANDBOOK

1:1 **Answers**
IN GENESIS®

Limited license to copy:

A limited license is available to make copies of this book. You may make copies of portions of the book if 1) you are the purchaser; 2) the copies are used exclusively for non-commercial purposes within your church or organization (an entire denomination is not considered a “church” or “organization” under this license); and 3) you follow the instructions provided in the book.

Helper Handbook

Copyright © 2020 Answers in Genesis. Limited license to copy.

For more information, write:

Answers in Genesis

PO Box 510, Hebron, KY 41048

Project Coordinator: Stacia McKeever

Writers: Randy & Barb Witt

Editor: Karin Viet

Interior Layout: Diane King

Cover Design: Jon Seest

Illustrations: Paul Agner

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Printed in China.

Contents

Fun in the Sun	4
Frequently Asked Questions	5
Terms to Know	6
Staff Devotions	
Devotion 1 God Is Great	7
Devotion 2 God Is Almighty	8
Devotion 3 God Is Ruler	9
Devotion 4 God Is Emmanuel	11
Devotion 5 God Is Trustworthy	12
Top 20 Tips When Working with Children	14
Age-Level Characteristics	16
Tips for Managing a Group of Kids	22
Child Safety Precautions	25
Leading a Child to Christ	26
Day 1 Overview	28
Day 2 Overview	29
Day 3 Overview	30
Day 4 Overview	31
Day 5 Overview	32
Memory Verses	
ESV Memory Verses	33
KJV Memory Verses	34
WOW! Treasure Hunts and Cool Contests	35
Terrific Trivia Tidbits	36
Lakeshore Laughs	38
Two-Minute Tips	40

Fun in the Sun

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

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

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

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

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

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

Day 5: God is TRUSTWORTHY!—With the account of David, we'll learn that God is great, God is good, and God is

perfect in all things, so we can trust him with our lives. He is our rock.

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

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

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

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

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

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

adventure, and humor occur, and valuable lessons are learned.

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

Our Goal

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

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

Children are loved by their Creator. Jesus said to let them come to him

(Luke 18:16). We want children to come to Christ and not be hindered in any way from doing so. To that end, we combine a biblically rich VBS with off-the-chart, irresistible fun. In a day and age when content sometimes suffers, it's critically important to us not to sacrifice rich teaching. But it's also crucial that the most exciting book in the world not come across as boring or irrelevant. We want to reflect our creative, inspiring, joy-giving God who made laughter and fun!

So why do we do it? We want kids around the world to hear about and personally meet our awesome God and to understand how they can receive eternal life through repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. We believe VBS is a great way to introduce them to God, as it is one of the biggest outreaches of the year for most churches.

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

Frequently Asked Questions

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

Terms to Know

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

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

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

Lighthouse Keepers: Teachers at the Lighthouse Lesson time.

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

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

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

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

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

Treasured Verses: Daily memory verses.

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

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

Toddlers: 2–4 year olds.

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

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

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

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

Staff Devotions

Devotion 1 God Is Great

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

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

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

Think about it.

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

If, as others suggest, our universe is ruled by a god who is not eternal (Mormonism, *History of the Church*,

vol. 6, ch. 14, p. 305–6) or who is deceptive (Islam, *Koran* 3:54, 8:30), how could we be sure that what we know is true today will still be true tomorrow?

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

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

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

Glorious God,
I bless thee that I know thee.
I once lived in the world, but was
ignorant of its Creator,

was partaker of thy providences, but
 knew not the Provider,
 was blind while enjoying the
 sunlight,
 was deaf to all things spiritual, with
 voices all around me,
 understood many things, but had
 no knowledge of thy ways,
 saw the world, but did not see Jesus
 only.
 O happy day, when in thy love's
 sovereignty

thou didst look on me, and call me
 by grace.
 Grant that I may always weep to the
 praise of mercy found,
 and tell to others as long as I live,
 that thou art a sin-pardoning God,
 taking up the blasphemer and the
 ungodly,
 and washing them from their
 deepest stain.
 —(Excerpt from "The Great Discovery"
 in *The Valley of Vision*)

Devotion 2

God Is Almighty

Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end. Psalm 102:25–27

Almighty (Genesis 35:11); Beautiful (Psalm 27:4); Comforter (Isaiah 66:13); Defender (Psalm 68:5); Everywhere (omnipresent, Psalm 139:7–12); Father (Matthew 6:9); Great (Psalm 48:1); Healer (Malachi 4:2); Incomprehensible (Romans 11:33); Just (Deuteronomy 32:4); Kind (Ephesians 2:7); Love (1 John 4:8); Mighty (Psalm 50:1); Never-ending (Isaiah 9:6); Omnipotent (all-powerful, Jeremiah 32:27); Provider (Genesis 22:9–14); Quiet (1 Kings 19:11–13); Righteous (Psalm 7:17); Sovereign (Psalm 97); Trinity (Matthew 3:16–17); Unparalleled (Jeremiah 10:7); Victor (1 Chronicles 29:11); Wonderful (Isaiah 9:6); Excellent (Psalm 150:2); Yes (2 Corinthians 1:20); Zealous (Isaiah 9:7).

The Great I AM.

These are just a few of the many attributes of our one true God. In fact, someone once said that because God is

infinite, his attributes are infinite. Imagine spending all of eternity discovering more and more about our amazing Creator, only to find out you still haven't uncovered everything about him and need the rest of eternity to find out even more reasons to love him!

Today, you have the great privilege of imparting a deeper understanding of the one true God to your students, focusing on his omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. As with every other aspect of the one true God, Satan twists these into lies. One we're all familiar with is the lie of "Mother Nature."

Think about it.

The one true God is omnipresent—he is present everywhere in the universe all the time (Psalm 139:7–12). He is not part of his creation; but he sees it all, all the time (Deuteronomy

4:39). How easy is it to morph this into the idea that god is in all and all of creation is god? An episode of *Sesame Street* (watched by many children) featured a survival guy who discussed all the ways “Nature” gives us what we need—food, water, clothing, shelter. Even Christians carelessly use the term “Mother Nature” in such ways as, “Boy, Mother Nature really packed a wallop with that storm!” When we do this, we point others to a false view of God and encourage them to worship and serve created things rather than the Creator (Romans 1:22–25).

Let’s make sure we consistently point our children to the one true God and talk about his attributes in real, true ways that help us make sense of the world around us. The one true God is the almighty Creator of the universe—not us and not the creation itself. May we expand our vision of God’s sovereignty and power over all with this prayer:

King of glory, Divine Majesty,

every perfection adorns thy nature
and sustains thy throne;
The heavens and earth are thine,
The world is thine and its fullness.
Thy power created the universe from
nothing;
Thy wisdom has managed all its
multiple concerns,
presiding over nations, families,
individuals.
Thy goodness is boundless;
all creatures wait on thee
are supplied by thee,
are satisfied in thee.
How precious are the thoughts of thy
mercy and grace!
How excellent thy lovingkindness that
draws men to thee!
We are weary, give us rest,
knowing that thou hast said,
‘I will never leave thee nor forsake
thee.’
Blessed be thy name!
—(Excerpt from “Fourth Day Evening:
God All-Sufficient” from *The Valley
of Vision*)

Devotion 3

God Is Ruler

For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. Psalm 95:3

Throughout the Old Testament, the revealed God of the Bible is contrasted to the gods worshipped in the ancient Near East. The point of these passages is to reveal the sovereignty of our God over all creation and to discredit the gods of other peoples as impotent and worthless and to direct mankind to the one true God.

Think about it.

What separates the God of the Bible from the gods of this world? After God delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians at the Red Sea, Moses wrote, “Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?” (Exodus 15:11).

The emphasis of accounts like these is that when we compare other

so-called gods (e.g., their creative acts, motives, and eternity) to the Lord, we find they are bankrupt in majesty and power. In addition, the morality of the false gods is vastly different from the one true God, as our Bible account about Isaiah shows.

In the myths, gods are depicted as selfish, arrogant, sadistic, lustful, drunken, vain, or hateful. In other words, they mirror humanity. These gods are just powerful mortals with the same desires, character flaws, sins, and objectives as their lesser-powered creations.

For example, in the Egyptian mythologies, which Isaiah would have been familiar with, there was war between Seth and Osiris. Seth slew and dismembered his older brother Osiris and ruled Egypt in his stead. When Osiris' son Horus claimed the throne, Seth fought with him as well. Eventually a tribunal of gods decided the dispute over who should rule Egypt. After much politicking and quarreling, Horus was granted the throne and Seth was given the position of thunder god.

Unlike these wicked gods, the one true God has no sin in him (Habakkuk 1:13; James 1:17). He is perfect, holy, and righteous. He never changes or reneges on his promises. In this context, we can think of Isaiah's description: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" We see this refrain echoed throughout the New Testament, as well. Jesus Christ is holy and without sin (Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Revelation 3:7).

In fact, it is precisely because of the holy nature of the biblical God that

we have a basis for morality. He is the ultimate lawgiver and has given us standards by which we are to live. Apart from the good God of the Bible, we have no logical basis upon which to claim, for example, that murder is wrong, while helping others is right. Take a look again at the character and nature of the gods mentioned above—are any of them capable of dispensing a logical system of morality, where good is defined by their very nature? Their followers, acting consistently with their belief in their gods, show that their moral code left something to be desired—human sacrifice, murder, adultery, continual war, lying, scheming, and the like were all the norm, rather than sinful behavior to be punished.

What we do not see in Scripture is an ultra-powerful mortal bully. We see a transcendent God who is infinitely wiser and higher than man, yet visits us in order that we might know him (Psalm 8:3–4).

The God of the Bible is not merely one of a plethora of gods from which we may pick and choose to worship; nor is he to be put on par with other supposed deities. He is the omnipotent Creator and Redeemer of mankind. Truly we worship a great God, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and a great King above all gods.

In the end, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father. Today, let's point our kids to the one true God, holy and sovereign over all, and their Savior.

Devotion 4

God Is Emmanuel

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2 Corinthians 13:14

From the beginning, the enemy of our souls has known there is only one true God. Even his henchmen believe in the one true God—and shudder (James 2:19). And over the years, he has used his knowledge to distort and deny this truth and draw people away from the one true God.

One of the more insidious lies he has told—and that even some Christians believe—is that all monotheistic religions believe in the same God; he just goes by different names. The god of Islam (Allah), Mormonism, and Jehovah's Witnesses (Jehovah) is the same as the one true God of the Bible, right?

The doctrine of the Trinity helps us separate the one true God from the fakes. The one true God exists in three persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), the Holy Spirit. Each is fully God and manifests all the attributes of the one true God. For example, in the Bible, each is called the Creator (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1–3; Job 33:4); each is unchanging and eternal (Psalm 90:2; Hebrews 13:8; Hebrews 9:14); and each is called God (Philippians 2:11; Titus 2:13; Acts 5:3–4).

If a religion denies that any member of the Trinity is God, then its “god” is a fake and is based on a lie from the devil himself. It's that simple.

Islam teaches that Jesus was a man, not God nor the Son of God. Mormonism teaches that Jesus is a created being who became a god. Those in the Jehovah's Witness cult also believe that

Jesus was created and thus is not infinite or eternal.

Think about it.

According to the Bible, Jesus suffered the punishment of death that human beings deserve as a result of their sin against a holy God. Because God is infinite, his punishment of sin is infinite. Can a created being—one that is not infinite—endure the infinite punishment from an eternal God and satisfy—eternally—God's wrath on our sin? Of course not. This is why the blood of bulls and goats could never take away all sin (Hebrews 9:13–15).

In order to spend eternity in the presence of the holy and righteous God, we need a perfect infinite sacrifice to take the punishment we deserve. Those religions that deny that Jesus is God (and thus, that he is eternal) offer a limited sacrifice for sin that does nothing to satisfy the infinite wrath of God and is no better than a sheep.

The Jesus described in the Bible is infinite and is God. The infinite Son, in his death on the cross, suffered the infinite punishment that we deserve from the infinite Father and infinitely satisfied the wrath of God on sin. A “created Jesus” could never do such a thing.

As you teach that God is Emmanuel to the children today, think about the vital importance—with infinite ramifications—of embracing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as the triune God, the one true God of the Bible.

May we rejoice, as the Puritans did,
in the way each member of the Trinity
works to bring about our salvation.

THREE IN ONE, ONE IN THREE,
GOD OF MY SALVATION,
Heavenly Father, blessed Son, eternal
Spirit,

I adore thee as one Being, one
Essence,
one God in three distinct Persons,
for bringing sinners to thy
knowledge and to thy kingdom.

○ Father, thou hast loved me and sent
Jesus to redeem me;

○ Jesus, thou hast loved me and
assumed my nature,
shed thine own blood to wash away
my sins,
wrought righteousness to cover my
unworthiness;

○ Holy Spirit, thou hast loved me and
entered my
heart, implanted there eternal life,
revealed to me the glories of Jesus.

Three Persons and one God, I bless
and praise thee,
for love so unmerited, so
unspeakable, so wondrous,
so mighty to save the lost and raise
them to glory.

○ Triune God, who commandeth the
universe,
thou hast commanded me to ask for
those things
that concern thy kingdom and my
soul.

Let me live and pray as one baptized
into the threefold Name.

—(Excerpt from “The Trinity” in *The
Valley of Vision*)

Devotion 5

God Is Trustworthy

*And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O
LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you. Psalm 9:10*

Today, as we examine the account of David and Goliath, consider that David was likely in his late teens when he went against the giant. Not too much older than some of the kids in your classes. Perhaps the age of the teen volunteers on your crew. Yet, even by that age, David had learned so much about the one true God that his trust in his God was firm. He knew that God was living and active (1 Samuel 17:26), he was the ruler over all (v. 45), and he was mighty to save (vv. 46–47). He had experienced God’s massive power

throughout his life (v. 37), and he was confident enough to confront those who didn’t believe (vv. 26–30).

Throughout the rest of his life, David would write of his trust in God based on what he knew to be true about his Creator. Consider all the attributes of God that David included in just one psalm (25): God is deliverer, truth, salvation, merciful, loving, good, eternal, upright, faithful, a friend, gracious, forgiving, the Redeemer. He proclaims, “O my God, in you I trust” (Psalm 25:2). Take a glance through David’s psalms,

and notice how often he rehearses God's attributes to himself and how often he reminds himself to trust in God, no matter his circumstances. In times of trouble or times of ease, David trusted God. Because he knew the Word of God, he knew who God is and trusted him because of it.

Think about it.

How well do you know the one true God? Do you know enough about him and his attributes to trust him completely with your life? Do you rehearse God's attributes to yourself (and your family and the children in your care)?

Consider what we've studied about God this week: he is great, almighty, ruler, Emmanuel, and trustworthy. How does embracing and clinging to these attributes change your perspective on your job, your relationships, your bank account, your home, your family, your life? What fears keep you from trusting God more fully? Is there one attribute that you need to meditate on to help you overcome those fears? Are there other attributes you need to remind yourself of or uncover through Bible study?

Today, let's make sure our hearts are firmly trusting in the one true God as we encourage the children toward trusting God. May we pray with the Puritans:

Thou art all my good in times of peace,
my only support in days of trouble,
my one sufficiency when life shall end.

Help me to see how good thy will is in all,

and even when it crosses mine
teach me to be pleased with it.

Grant me to feel thee in fire, and food
and every providence,
and to see that thy many gifts and creatures
are but thy hands and fingers taking hold of me.

Thou bottomless fountain of all good,
I give myself to thee out of love,
for all I have or own is thine,
my goods, family, church, self,
to do with as thou wilt,
to honour thyself by me, and by all mine.

If it be consistent with thy eternal counsels,
the purpose of thy grace,
and the great ends of thy glory,
then bestow upon me the blessings of thy comforts;

If not, let me resign myself to thy wiser determinations.

(Excerpt from "The All-Good" from
The Valley of Vision)

Top 20 Tips When Working with Children

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

1. **Show love.** All children, regardless of age or appearance, need to be loved. Greet them warmly each day, and always be ready with smiles, giggles, encouraging words, and appropriate hugs. (Be aware of your church's appropriate touching policies.)
2. **Learn names.** It makes children feel important and loved to be called by their names. Make sure a visible name tag is always on each child.
3. **Keep it moving.** Children have short attention spans.
4. **Use active learning.** The more children can actively be involved in the learning process, the more they will retain.
5. **Be all there!** During VBS, determine to leave behind whatever is currently going on in your life and focus your attention on the children under your care. Listen to them and care for them.
6. **Eliminate downtime.** Find activities to do when you have a few free minutes so all time is being used in a fun and productive way. Practice memory verses, share Terrific Trivia Tidbits and Lakeshore Laughs, play impromptu review games, or ask fun conversation starters. Check the Two-Minute Tips page at the back of this guide for specific ideas.
7. **Think safety.** Read the Child Safety Precautions page. Ensure there are always at least two unrelated adults with the children at all times.
8. **Be thematic.** Children love costumes, fun cheers, songs, and anything that goes with the theme. Participate in the daily contests. Get the children enthused and excited about participating in the other aspects of the daily contests as well.
9. **Walk worthy.** Be an example in both word and deed. Children need to see authentic Christianity, so make sure you are walking the walk and not just talking the talk.
10. **Notice the good.** Children want attention and will sometimes act up in an effort to receive attention, even if it is negative attention. Be proactive by noticing and praising the things they do right. Be an encourager.
11. **Be aware of age-level characteristics.** With younger children, activities need to be hands-on, concrete, short, and simple. Older children love to talk and are processing and questioning information. Be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in you.
12. **Challenge them.** Children generally rise to the level expected of them, so challenge them to learn

their memory verses and song lyrics. At the same time, encourage in them a true love for the Lord and his Word.

13. **Pray.** Before, during, and after VBS, be a faithful prayer warrior for the children in your care.
14. **Be organized.** Read through all training information, ask questions, and faithfully prepare any materials for which you are responsible.
15. **Be a team player.** Children do not need to hear negative words from their leaders. If you are frustrated or upset, take it to the Lord, but do not complain or get angry in front of the children.
16. **Remember to take bathroom breaks.** The younger the children, the more important this is!
17. **Maintain order.** Children like order! Think through potential trouble spots in your day and decide on a firm, loving discipline strategy. Ask for help from experienced individuals.
18. **Build team spirit.** Work as a team rather than allowing cliques to develop. Everyone should be an important member of the team.
19. **Use guided conversation.** Be alert and ready to turn conversations to spiritual matters. Build upon what the children are learning throughout the VBS day.
20. **Be prepared to lead a child to Christ.** Attend the Gospel Workshop to be equipped should God give you the awesome opportunity to talk with a child about Christ.

Age-Level Characteristics

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

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

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

Common Characteristics

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

Toddlers (2–4 years old)

Physical Characteristics

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

Takeaways for Us

- Keep toddlers moving. Engage them actively as much as possible. Have

them do motions to songs and actions to Bible accounts.

- Supervise them carefully.
- Provide chunky, nontoxic supplies.
- Intersperse periods of sitting with something active.

Emotional/Social Characteristics

Toddlers want to do things by themselves, such as picking out their clothes and dressing themselves. They like imaginative, dramatic play.

They're testing their powers and saying "no" a lot. They often want to please adults and try to mimic their behaviors. They're affectionate toward others. Toddlers are fearful of things that are loud and out of the ordinary.

Takeaways for Us

- Let toddlers be helpers. Give them simple one-step jobs to do, and have them help pick up things and straighten the room at the end of the lesson. Let them know they've done a good job.
- Be consistently present all week; establish routines and stick with them.
- Be consistent in discipline. Let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no."
- Give them opportunities to dress up and play imaginatively.
- Don't dress in elaborate costumes that may seem unfamiliar and scary.
- Be careful to walk worthy—act and speak in godly ways. Little eyes are watching and will want to imitate you!

Spiritual/Mental Characteristics

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

Takeaways for Us

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

Pre-Primaries (4–6 years old)

Physical Characteristics

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

Takeaways for Us

- Pre-Primaries like to play hard, so keep them moving with short,

simple games and activities. They may need to sit and rest for a brief time afterwards.

Emotional/Social Characteristics

Pre-Primaries are less fearful than toddlers but may still be afraid of common things like dogs or the dark. They can have emotional extremes and are testing others to see who can be controlled. They want to please adults

and want praise. They will often mimic adults' behaviors. They like imaginative play. Pre-Primaries can handle small tasks and levels of responsibility.

Takeaways for Us

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

Spiritual/Mental Characteristics

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

Takeaways for Us

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

Primaries (6–9 years old)

Physical Characteristics

Primaries love games and competitions, but it can be hard for them to

lose. They are continuing to grow and improve in hand-eye coordination and fine and gross motor skills. They need to have opportunities for movement.

Takeaways for Us

- Use games to teach! Primaries love any kind of games, whether active or learning-type games.
- Help them learn to take turns and to be good winners and good losers! Both winning and losing well are important in God's sight.
- Use boy vs. girl competitions to get them revved up! As long as you keep it light and fun, they will enjoy these times.

Emotional/Social Characteristics

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

Takeaways for Us

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

Spiritual/Mental Characteristics

Primaries like to talk and ask questions. They understand simple concepts and sentences and are concrete rather than abstract or symbolic thinkers. They're learning to read. They

need active learning. Their attention span is growing. They understand the consequences of their actions. They can tell the difference between reality and fantasy. They often have a strict sense of right and wrong.

Takeaways for Us

- Be concrete in what you say. Don't use abstract or symbolic language. For example, regarding salvation, don't ask if they have Jesus in their hearts. They will take that literally. Becoming a child of God, or being in God's family, is a more concrete way to express the same concept, as they will understand what it means to be in a family.
- Although their attention spans are growing, it's still good to vary activities and involve Primaries with movement as much as possible.
- Some children read better than others. Be careful about asking children to read out loud. Try asking for volunteers.
- Small print can be a challenge, so use larger print when possible.
- Encourage memorization.
- Use visuals.
- Show interest in each child, helping them sense your care and interest in them.
- Be careful to speak accurately and truthfully, and explain Bible words and concepts even if you think they are widely understood.
- Remember that you are a role model.
- Show care and respect for your Bible, and help them see your love for it and for the Lord.

Juniors (9–12 years old)

Physical Characteristics

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

Takeaways for Us

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

Emotional/Social Characteristics

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

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

Takeaways for Us

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

Spiritual/Mental Characteristics

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

Takeaways for Us

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

Tips for Managing a Group of Kids

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

Attention Getters

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lining Up and Walking Through the Building

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

- » “If you are wearing red, line up. Now, if you’re wearing blue, line up.”

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

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

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

Proactive Tips

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

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

listed. Occupy kids' minds and attention with good stuff!

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

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

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

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

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

Keep Them Busy—If there is any downtime, fill it with something

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

- » **Stone Face**—Have a competition to see which child can hold a frown for the longest without cracking a smile.
- » **I Spy**—Look for island things to spy out.
- » **Simon Says**—Simon can say Bible-themed things, like: Read your Bible (hands in front of you making a book), pray (praying hands), tell others (cup hands around mouth), go to church (make a church with a steeple out of your interlocked hands), etc.
- » **Quiet Mouse**—Have a competition to see who is the quietest in line.
- » **Follow the Leader**—Play the normal version or an island version. An island version uses island animals and activities, like the following:
 Fly like a macaw.
 Swim like a shark.
 Move like a jellyfish.
 Go windsurfing.
 Ride a surfboard.
 Dig for clams on the beach.

Calming Rowdiness

Don't Yell—Kids may respond at first if someone yells, but they eventually

dismiss it. Try some of these other ideas instead.

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

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

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

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

Child Safety Precautions

Keeping children safe during VBS is an important responsibility of all VBS workers that requires both prayerful and practical steps. Begin with prayer, praying before and during VBS for God's protection over each child, worker, and visitor. Also, pray for everything to run smoothly with the facility itself. Prayer is a critically important step in your safety plan, and should not be taken for granted! Then plan and execute practical steps, such as the following.

- Thoroughly check all areas for cleanliness and safety each day before VBS begins. Remove hazardous or toxic items, cover outlets, put away heavy or dangerous objects, tape down cords, and make sure everything is in good working order. Check both inside and outside the facility.
- Make sure all workers have had background checks.
- Children should be signed in and out of VBS by their caregivers, following your church's check-in/check-out procedures. Release the children only to authorized individuals.
- Always have at least two unrelated adults (eighteen and above) with children, including trips to the bathroom. Children must be well supervised at all times, and never be left alone with just one adult or teen.
- Always pair responsible teens with adults.
- Count children every time you move to a different station.
- Enlist qualified members of the church with medical experience to be at the facility during VBS hours. Outline a procedure to quickly find and alert them of any situation needing attention. Make sure an accident report is filled out after any incident.
- Be well aware of which children have which allergies, and make sure precautions are taken to protect them.
- Keep ice packs in the freezer for minor bumps.
- Keep adequate first aid kits in safe and handy spots around the facility, and make sure the VBS staffers are aware of their locations. Note: Volunteers can give out adhesive bandages or ice packs, but anything more major should be handled by trained personnel or 911 calls.
- Be aware of what the protocol is in case of emergencies.
- One test church has enlisted some additional precautions, including the following:
 - » **No men changing diapers.**
 - » No sitting in leaders' laps.
 - » No piggyback rides.
 - » No front hugs—side hugs, high fives, and fist bumps instead.
 - » No photos taken or shared on social media of others' kids.
 - » Police officer on site during VBS hours.
- Continue to brainstorm and implement precautions for your situation, asking God to keep you alert, aware, and wise regarding these issues.

Leading a Child to Christ

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Romans 1:16

VBS presents an ideal opportunity to share the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ with all attending. Every leader and team member should be ready to clearly present the gospel and counsel those wanting to learn more. Children are usually soft-hearted toward things of the Lord, and some will be interested in becoming a follower of Christ. Be ready, because eternal matters matter most!

Before

- **Pray.** Salvation is God's work, not ours. We cannot bring about salvation for anyone. We need to ask God to prepare the children and open their hearts to him.
- **Be prepared.** Learn more about presenting the gospel and counseling a child about salvation.

During

The gospel will be presented during the lesson time. Opportunities may arise, however, to share with a child one-on-one or with a small group of children. If so, keep the following in mind:

- Becoming a child of God involves repenting of one's sin and having faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Repentance involves understanding what sin is (disobeying God's commands) and desiring to turn from that sin.
- You can use the tract *How Can I Become a Child of God?* to explain the plan of salvation. Along with this,

use your Bible. Children need to see and hear God's Word, so have your Bible opened and marked ahead of time with the appropriate Scriptures.

- Avoid abstract phrases like "asking Jesus into your heart." Instead, use terminology like "becoming a child of God." Most children still think in concrete terms and need examples that are easy to understand.
- If a child indicates an interest to know more after hearing the gospel presentation, ask questions (such as one or more of the following) that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer:
 - » What do you want to talk to me about?
 - » Can you explain what sin is?
 - » Can you think of a specific sin (wrong) you have done? Are you bothered by your sin?

These questions are important.

A child who cannot verbalize a sin or does not seem to be repentant about being a sinner may not fully understand his need for a Savior. In this situation, you might list a child-oriented example of sin and ask him to discover any time he catches himself sinning over the next few days. Give him *How Can I Become a Child of God?* Pray with him, then send him on his way. Check back a day or two later, if possible.

- » Why did Jesus come to earth? Why did Jesus need to die? Why did Jesus rise again?

- » Why do you want Jesus to be your Savior?
- » Why should God let you into his family? (Make sure the child understands that salvation is not based on what he does, but is a gracious gift of God through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus.)
- Pray for discernment while listening to a child's answers.
- When a child seems to have a basic understanding of salvation (belief in Jesus' death and resurrection, admission of and repentance from sin, and a desire to follow the Lord), encourage him to talk to his parents about what it means to become a child of God (if they are followers of Christ). Encourage a child who comes from a non-Christian home to verbalize his understanding to the Lord through prayer. There is no one prayer that should be prayed. Encourage him to ask the Lord to forgive him and help him know he is a child of God.
- Let him see in your words and your face that you are excited that he wants to become a child of God! Read Luke 15:10 to him.
- Some children may not want to make decisions, but may want to learn more, be assured of salvation, or confess sin. Read Romans 10:9–10 and John 10:28–29 with children who are seeking assurance of their salvation. Encourage them to ask the Lord to help them know they are his children. If a child wants to confess sin, read 1 John 1:9 with him and encourage him to ask the Lord to help him know he is forgiven when he repents.

After

- Review what it means to be a child of God.
 - » How long does God keep his children? (Hebrews 13:5b; John 10:28–29)
 - » Can anything separate God from his children? (Romans 8:38–39)
 - » What happens when God's children sin? (1 John 1:9)
 - » What do children of God believe? (Romans 10:9)
- Explain that Jesus loves his children and wants to spend time with them. Discuss practical ways to grow as a child of God. Provide him with the tract *Growing Up in God's Family*, and share the following:
 - » Read your Bible, and obey what you read. You can start your Bible reading with the short Bible study you will receive the last day of VBS. (Make sure he has a Bible at home, and if not, provide one. Write his name, the date, and the occasion [VBS] on the presentation page.)
 - » Pray every day. Prayer is talking to God.
 - » Go to a church that believes and teaches the Bible as the Word of God.
 - » Tell others about Jesus. Tell your friends, family, and neighbors how they can become children of God.
- Fill out a Decision Card. Turn in to the VBS director.
- Stay in touch with the child through postcards, visits, or phone calls. Invite him to upcoming church events.


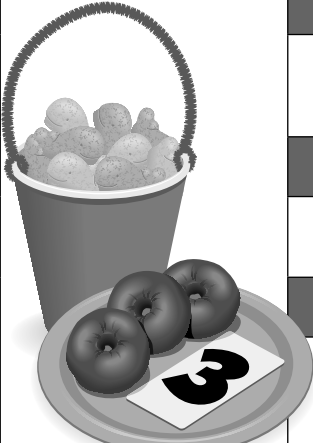
Day 1 Overview

God is ... GR+8

Bible Passage		Lesson Focus	
Paul in a City of False Gods Acts 17:16–34		God is GREAT! He is the one and only God, the awe-inspiring Creator.	
Animal Pal		Apologetics Focus	
Camo the Chameleon		There's only one God as revealed in the Bible. You can't make up a god of your own choosing.	
Crafts		Snacks	Memory Verse
<p>Tropical Tree Glass Gem Magnets</p> 		<p>One and Only Bread Seascape Snacks</p> 	Psalm 145:3
			Games
			Island Ambush Island Olympics
			Cool Contest
			Swedish Fish Guessing Game
			Experiments
			Rainbow Water Mystery Color


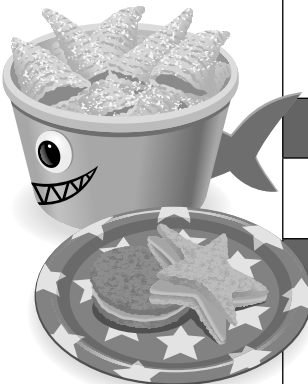
Day 2 Overview

God is ... ALL+MY+T

Bible Passages		Lesson Focus	
Jonah and God Almighty Book of Jonah; Psalm 139		God is ALMIGHTY! He is all knowing, all powerful, and all present.	
Animal Pal		Apologetics Focus	
Flip the Flapjack Octopus		Nothing is too hard for God.	
Crafts		Snacks	Memory Verse
Shell Necklace Splash Octopus		Pail of Whales Omni Os	Jeremiah 32:27
			Games
			Fish Out of Water Sharks and Minnows
			Cool Contest
			Team Cheers
			Experiments
			Can Crushing Diving Octopus

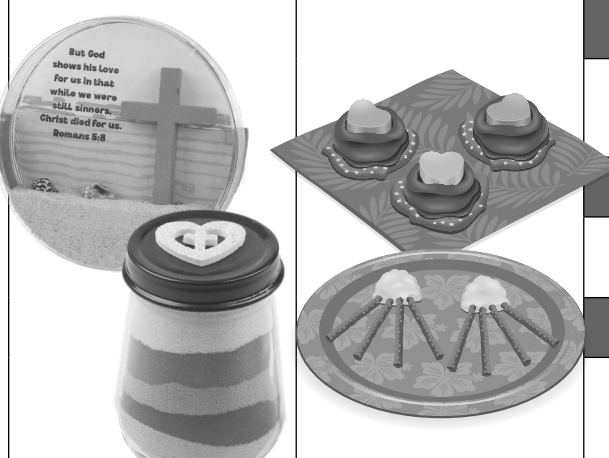
Day 3 Overview

God is . . . RUE+LEARN-N

Bible Passages		Lesson Focus	
Isaiah's Vision of God Isaiah 6:1-3 Psalm 8		God is RULER! He is the majestic king who is holy and perfect.	
Animal Pal		Apologetics Focus	
Clark the Great White Shark		God is the same in the Old Testament as he is in the New Testament. He was and is and always will be in charge.	
Crafts		Snacks	Memory Verse
Wind Chime Great White Game		Shark Teeth Moon and Star Sammies	Isaiah 6:3
			Games
			Glory Corners Tropical Relays
			Cool Contest
			Dress-Up Day
			Experiments
			Diaper Duty Shark Float

Day 4 Overview

God is . . . E+MAN+YOU+L

Bible Passages		Lesson Focus	
God Comes to Earth (Gospel Presentation) Select Scriptures		God is EMMANUEL! He is the loving and good Savior who came to earth.	
Animal Pal		Apologetics Focus	
Jam the Immortal Jellyfish		God is three-in-one—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Even though there is mystery to this, God is knowable.	
Crafts		Snacks	Memory Verse
Mini Diorama Gospel Sand Art		Heart Melts Jolly Jellyfish	Romans 5:8
			Games
			Triple Play Take Heart
			Cool Contest
			God of Wonder Challenge
			Experiments
			Lava Lamps Sea Snakes

Day 5 Overview

God is . . . TRUSTY-Y+WORD-D+THEE

Bible Passage		Lesson Focus	
David Trusts God 1 Samuel 17		God is TRUSTWORTHY! He is our rock. We should praise, thank, worship, adore, and live for him.	
Animal Pal		Apologetics Focus	
Trusty the Macaw		God is bigger and greater than our unanswered questions. We can trust him.	
Crafts		Snacks	Memory Verse
God's Attributes Treasure Chest Seek and Find Treasure 		Hidden Treasure Treats Treasure Maps 	Proverbs 3:5-6
			Games
			Buccaneer Barriers What's the Treasure?
			Cool Contest
			Mission Money Mania
			Experiments
			Salty or Fresh? Jewel Treasures

ESV Memory Verses

Junior/Primary

Theme Verse: I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Psalm 145:1

Day 1: Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. Psalm 145:3

Day 2: Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me? Jeremiah 32:27

Day 3: And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" Isaiah 6:3

Day 4: But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

Day 5: Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Proverbs 3:5–6

Pre-Primary/Toddler

Theme Verse: I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Psalm 145:1

Day 1: Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised. Psalm 145:3

Day 2: Behold, I am the LORD. . . . Is anything too hard for me? Jeremiah 32:27

Day 3: Holy, holy, holy is the LORD. Isaiah 6:3

Day 4: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

Day 5: Trust in the LORD with all your heart. Proverbs 3:5

KJV Memory Verses

Junior/Primary

Theme Verse: I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Psalm 145:1

Day 1: Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. Psalm 145:3

Day 2: Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me? Jeremiah 32:27

Day 3: And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. Isaiah 6:3

Day 4: But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

Day 5: Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Proverbs 3:5-6

Pre-Primary/Toddler

Theme Verse: I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Psalm 145:1

Day 1: Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised. Psalm 145:3

Day 2: Behold, I am the LORD. . . . Is there any thing too hard for me? Jeremiah 32:27

Day 3: Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD. Isaiah 6:3

Day 4: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

Day 5: Trust in the LORD with all thine heart. Proverbs 3:5

WOW! Treasure Hunts and Cool Contests

Get ready for great fun with an amazing set of contests the kids will love at *Mystery Island*! Customize to fit your situation, including the daily WOW! Treasure Hunts. That one is a must to give the kids a chance to hear more mind-blowing facts about our awe-inspiring God.

The possible contest categories are as follows. Check with your VBS director to see which contests your VBS is doing, and to get the specific details for your situation.

WOW! TREASURE HUNTS—Every day, throughout the day, groups will be on the lookout for treasure chests that are hidden around your facility. The treasure chests have mind-blowing God facts in them to wow the kids with our amazing, beyond-description God!

GROUP CONTESTS—Each group works together to earn points for their team. Points can be earned for attendance, learning memory verses and bonus memory verses, completing the daily Go and Do sections on the Student Guides, participating in the daily cool contests, and finding treasure chests in the WOW! Treasure Hunts.

Terrific Trivia Tidbits

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

Island Trivia

- Would you like to live on an island? About one out of ten people in the world do.
- Some islands have beaches with black or pink sand!
- There are lots of underwater volcanoes that release lava, making areas of the deep water super hot. As they get bigger, they sometimes break the surface of the water and an island is formed!
- Did you know there are three man-made islands in the world? The biggest is off the coast of Dubai and it's built in the shape of a palm tree.
- Only two out of every 100 islands have people on them.
- Which country has the most lighthouses? The US! Michigan is the state with the most.
- Each lighthouse has a unique look. They're given different colors and patterns so sailors can tell during the day where they are, and they have different flashing light patterns at night to distinguish one from another.
- A tiny island is called an islet.
- Ever heard of a desert island? That means it doesn't have any people

living on it (it's deserted), not that it is a desert.

- There are more than 25,000 islands in the Pacific area alone. Wanna go to one?
- Do you like to chew gum? If you do, don't live on the island of Singapore. It's illegal to chew gum there.
- According to the Guinness World Records, the tallest sandcastle ever made was in Germany in 2017. It was about as tall as one and a half telephone poles.
- Biggest island in the world? Depends on who you ask. Some would say Australia. Some would say Greenland. What do you think?
- Oink! Oink! There's an island called Pig Beach that has no humans on it, but lots and lots and lots of wild pigs.
- Not all islands are warm and tropical. Can you think of one that isn't? How about Greenland?
- You better like to walk if you live on Mackinac Island, because no cars are allowed.
- How do you think Cat Island got its name? There are only about 100 people who live there, but tons and tons of cats. Meow!
- Guess what Rabbit Island is filled with? Yep—rabbits!
- Do you like snakes? Venomous snakes? Well, you may like Snake Island near Brazil, which is infested with extremely poisonous snakes. But you can't go there. There are so many

snakes, it's illegal to step foot on the island.

- Vulcan Point is an island in the middle of a lake that's in the middle of a volcano that's in the middle of a bigger lake that's in the middle of a bigger island that's in a group of islands in the Pacific Ocean. Follow all that?
- Guess which island has the most churches per square mile? Jamaica
- If you went to the bottom of the ocean, the water pressure on your body would be so great, you would feel like you were trying to hold up 50 jumbo jets.
- What island animal can detach part of its tail if in danger, then grow it back? An iguana, for one.
- Have you heard of a wild beach? It sounds wild, but really, it's just a beach that doesn't have any people, houses, towns, hotels, or anything else on it.
- Guess where some of the greatest earthly treasures are? The ocean! There are more riches, artifacts, and treasures at the bottom of the sea than are found in all the museums of the world combined.
- Believe it or not, stingrays are a kind of fish.
- Did you know there are lakes and rivers under the ocean?
- The ocean is so amazingly huge that only a tiny bit of it has been explored.

Pirate/Treasure Trivia

- Pirates (sea robbers) have been around since early civilizations,

hiding among tiny islands and bays to surprise passing ships.

- Did pirates wear eye patches? Yep! Some suggest one reason for the patch was to help the pirate's covered eye quickly adjust to the dark below deck.
- Blackbeard was the most feared pirate of all time. Before a raid, he would stick smoking fuses in his hair to make himself look scary. Don't try this at home.
- Was every pirate treasure filled with gold, jewels, and silver? Nope. They often contained more down-to-earth things like food, cloth, and lumber.
- A favorite pirate food was . . . turtle! Turtles were easy to catch on beaches, and their meat and eggs were prized.
- Do you know what the famous pirate flag was nicknamed? The Jolly Roger
- Pirates were also called privateers or buccaneers. Privateers if given permission by their countries to be pirates, and buccaneers if not.
- Can you whistle? Pirates wouldn't have you on their ship if you did, because they thought whistling would cause a storm to blow up.
- Pirates figured they wouldn't wash their hair because they could just cover it with hats or handkerchiefs, and they wouldn't brush their teeth because they would fall out anyway.
- A famous pirate, Captain Kidd, is fabled to have buried treasure on an island named, of all things, Money Island!

Lakeshore Laughs

Jokes and Riddles

Day 1 Animal Pal Jokes—Chameleon

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

Day 2 Animal Pal Jokes—Octopus

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

Day 3 Animal Pal Jokes—Shark

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

Day 4 Animal Pal Jokes—Jellyfish

- What's fun to poke on a jellyfish? *Its jellybutton.*

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

Day 5 Animal Pal Jokes—Macaw

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

Miscellaneous Jokes and Riddles

- What fish is the best at duels? *A swordfish.*
- What fish are you most likely to take on a walk? *A spiny dogfish.*
- Why are fish so smart? *They stay in schools.*
- What fish has a niece and nephew? *An aunt-chovy.*
- What fish plays an instrument? *A trumpet fish.*
- What fish is the funniest? *A clownfish.*
- What island is square? *Cuba.*
- What island is the coldest? *Brrr-muda.*
- What did the island say to the ocean? *I sea you.*

- What island rodent loves dessert?
A pie-rat (pirate).
- How much does it cost a pirate to buy corn? *A buck an ear (buccaneer).*
- What's a pirate's favorite exercise?
Planks.
- What's a pirate's favorite letter? *Arrr.*
- What's a pirate's favorite football team? *The Buccaneers.*
- What's a pirate's favorite way to travel? *By carrr.*
- Who won the rodeo of the sea?
The sea horse.
- How do clams call each other?
On their shell phones.
- What's the richest sea creature?
The goldfish.
- What did the tree wear to the ocean?
Swim trunks.
- How do you know the ocean is friendly? *Because it waves.*
- What did the boy volcano say to the girl volcano? *I lava you.*

Knock Knock Jokes

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

Tongue Twisters

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

Two-Minute Tips

VBS comes only once a year, so make every minute count and use any down-time to build relationships. Try any of the following ideas if you find yourself with two minutes (or three or four!), such as when kids are waiting for VBS to begin, while they're eating snacks, or when they're waiting to be picked up.

- Practice and recite memory verses.
- Have children update their attendance charts.
- Quietly practice cheers together.
- Color or work on activity sheets.
- Share trivia or jokes found in the *Helper Handbook*.
- Get to know each other with conversation starters, such as the following:
 - » Have you ever been to the ocean? To a beach?
 - » Have you ever been to an island? What was it like?
 - » Would you rather go to Hawaii or Madagascar?
 - » Would you rather go to an island full of cats, rabbits, poisonous snakes, wild pigs, or wild horses? All such islands exist.
 - » Would you rather eat sushi or lobster? Coconut or mango?
 - » Do you like to read mysteries? Which ones are your favorites?
- Play a quick game like the following:
 - » Trip to *Mystery Island*: The first child says he's going to *Mystery Island* and he's taking a __ (fill in the blank with something that starts with A). The next says the first person's object, plus something that starts with B. Continue adding on and making your way through the alphabet.
 - » No Thumbs: Try to do an everyday task without using your thumbs, such as fastening a button, tying a shoe, or writing with a pen.
 - » Rock, Paper, Scissors: Play this fun game in pairs. Check online for directions.
 - » I Spy: Play I Spy, picking island objects around the room that are thematic.



GRAB YOUR COMPASS AND FLIP-FLOPS!

On *Mystery Island*, we will track down the one true God who is revealed in the Bible. We'll discover that God is great, almighty, the ruler of all, Emmanuel, and worthy of our complete trust. Put on your sunscreen and fill your beach bag as you prepare to discover who our amazing Creator is and the salvation he offers through Jesus!

This handbook contains what every VBS helper needs to know to make your VBS program successful: an overview of *Mystery Island*, daily devotionals, tips for working with children, memory verse reference sheets, and more!



Answers
IN GENESIS®

AnswersVBS.com