

Ready for VBS? 12 Ways to Pray for VBS

Bob Smietana (*Facts and Trends*) writes:

Back in the 1890s, a pair of Sunday school teachers—D.T. Miles of Hopedale, Illinois, and Virginia Hawes of New York City—both had the same idea. School kids were off for the summer. Why not invite them to church to study the Bible? And maybe sing a few songs and have some fun along the way? The idea was a hit. Today, Vacation Bible School—better known as VBS—remains one of the most popular church programs in America. Six in 10 Americans say they went to VBS growing up. Two-thirds of American parents say they plan to send kids to VBS this summer—even if they skip church themselves. And almost everyone involved had a great time, according to a recent survey from Nashville-based LifeWay Research. “Each week of the summer, there are thousands of VBS programs going on around America,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. “It’s one of the things that people love about church.”

Vacation Bible Schools will be packed again this summer, according to findings of a massive study by [LifeWay Research](#). Seventy percent of parents say they will encourage their children to attend VBS if a friend invites them. This includes unchurched parents and parents from other faith traditions ... not just Christian parents. *Personally* invite them, and they will come! Every year, boys and girls, students, and adults are introduced to Jesus in churches, backyards, and playgrounds all over America.

In family rooms, garages, church basements, and wherever we can find space, VBS'ers are building sets and collecting decorations in preparation. Much time, energy, and money are dedicated to creating just the right look for auditoriums and classrooms, backyards and playgrounds to help communicate the gospel. We'll participate in community parades, block parties, and festivals to invite everyone to an exciting week. Enlistment strategies are underway in churches that take VBS seriously, aimed at getting *everyone* involved. Investment in the gospel reaps huge rewards.

How much time
and energy will
your church
spend
strategically
praying for VBS?

Melita Thomas (LifeWay VBS) asks: *“Is this century-old strategy still effective?”* VBS reaches more than 1.6 million people yearly. Last year, more than 65,000 salvation decisions were reported as a direct result of VBS. Talk about impact! When viewed through the lens of the gospel, VBS is more than fun and games... and snacks. Every day of VBS provides opportunities for age-appropriate evangelism.

lifeway.com/en/articles/what-is-so-important-about-vbs)

VBS consistently accounts for roughly 25 percent of baptisms in Southern Baptist churches. Think about that for just a second. One-quarter of all people reached by any given church are reached through VBS. — Melita Thomas (LifeWay)

"Spending time onsite praying throughout VBS has been an amazing experience. I have seen team members healed, prayer requests submitted by teachers and parents, and the number of children accepting Jesus as their savior increase each year. God's work is visible through this ministry."

How much time and energy will your church spend on strategic prayer for VBS? Sharing the gospel is a battle. We are reminded, *"our struggle is not against flesh and blood"* and *"the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh."* (Ephesians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 10:4). The enemy is *"prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour."* (1 Peter 5:8) **Here's the challenge: match the efforts spent in preparing and promoting VBS with praying for VBS.**

Here are some ideas for your VBS prayer strategy.

- 1. Enlist a prayer team** – You have folks in your church that, for many reasons, cannot be directly involved in VBS, but they can pray. Perhaps a Sunday School class or small group would take the challenge to pray. Make sure they have a list of workers and other prayer concerns. And don't forget to share the results with them!
- 2. Prayer walking** – Prayer walk your community, praying *on-site for insight*. Prayer walk your auditorium and classrooms before the battle begins. Create a prayer-walking brochure for those who have not experienced it.
- 3. Around-the-clock praying** – Twenty-four hours before the launch of VBS, recruit prayer warriors to lift to the Father every aspect of VBS.
- 4. Prayer chains** – Existing prayer chains must be alerted to VBS prayer concerns and updated as new concerns surface.
- 5. On-site real-time praying** – Enlist prayer warriors to be in the prayer room of your church during VBS. Give them an outline of the gospel presentation for that night so they can pray specifically. A list of workers, and even students, if available, will allow them to pray by name for each person on campus or in backyards around your community.
- 6. Thirty days of prayer (and fasting)** – Challenge the church to spend time in prayer and fasting during the 30 (or 40... 10... 7... 3 – whatever works) days before VBS. There is a 30-day prayer calendar in the *VBS Administrative Guide*.
- 7. Prayer/Commissioning Service** – The Sunday before VBS, have all those working in VBS stand. Ask others to gather around them, lay hands on them, and pray. Have each worker prepare 3-5 specific prayer requests on 3x5 cards to share with those who commit to praying for them.
- 8. Use social media** – Encourage prayer for VBS on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. Make the request specific so people can pray specifically. Share answered prayer. (Be very cautious about using names, only with permission, and then sparingly.)

9. **Church communications** – Bulletins, newsletters, email blasts, telephone trees, every means of communication needs a reminder to pray for VBS. Create prayer cards to distribute.
10. **Lead a study on prayer for VBS** – Use a Sunday sermon, Wednesday evening study, Sunday School/small group discussion guide, etc. Wherever you have an opportunity, encourage and equip the church to engage in prayer for VBS.
11. **Get creative: Balloons!** – Place prayer requests in balloons, have the kids and students in Sunday School the week before VBS, capture a balloon, pop it, and read the request to the class and pray for that request. If you're bold enough, try it in the worship center with the adults!
12. **Decorate and prepare prayer jars** – Have children and students decorate a jar, fill it with prayer requests, and deliver it to church shut-ins for prayer. (Make sure to take the kids with you to make the delivery and brighten the day for that saint!) Also, deliver prayer jars to all the adult Sunday School/small groups; each group member can take out a request and pray. (Pinterest has some great ideas.)

What ideas would you add to the list?

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