

From Above

Higher Things - Vacation Bible School

Suggestions for Using with Preschoolers

With the proper adult-to-preschooler ratio, many of the crafts, snacks and games provided in the From Above VBS program can work well for the 3- and 4-year-old crowd, as long as appropriate modifications are made. Some specific modifications and alternatives are provided below.

General Helpful Hints

- Children at this age level respond well to patterns and parameters. Providing a regular daily schedule and a dedicated preschool space will structure the day and give more opportunity for free play.
- For reasons of size and social development, it is usually safer and more effective for learning to keep preschoolers in a group separate from the K-5 children – even if the other participants are in mixed-age groups.
- Preschool programs are often billed as “Mommy and Me” programs, requiring one parent in attendance at all times. If this option is available to you, it is a good way to keep participants safe and happy, as well as recruit more parent volunteers.
- Children at this age level are usually learning to play with one another for the first time. Some of them will play next to one another, but not with one another. Many of them will be just learning to share.
- Often, preschoolers are not accustomed to three hours of constant learning. As such, they may need some additional free play during the day. If no play space is available, find grass, shade, and a plastic pool and fill it with sand or water and toys.
- Consider limiting the music selection to two or three of the week’s hymns, perhaps just one verse.
- The children will better remember the words of the hymns if there are accompanying motions to occupy their hands and remind them what comes next. Get creative!
- The preschoolers will be exposed to catechetical elements throughout the week that they may not understand, but learning the catechism material is not beyond their current abilities.
- A simple retelling of the Bible story will familiarize the preschoolers with the lesson. You can use a children’s Bible or Arch Books (see suggested titles below). If you have them available, the story can be retold with hand puppets, a felt board or other visual aids.
- Repetition is key. If you have the opportunity to read the story in two different ways take it! If you have the opportunity to send the story home with each preschooler – take that as well.

The following Arch Books are available from Concordia Publishing House:

Day 1: *The Tower of Babel*

Day 2: *Moses and the Bronze Snake*

Day 3: *Jailhouse Rock*

Day 4: *The Coming of the Holy Spirit*

Day 5: *Zacchaeus*

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Alternative Crafts

Build-a-Box Workshop: Collect shoeboxes and/or produce containers that the children can decorate with crayons, markers or stickers. When the boxes are finished, the preschool classmates can use them to build their class's Tower of Babel.

Sin Snake Alternative: Glue the construction paper strips from the day two craft directly to a piece of paper. Take the pieces of paper and tape them to a wall in the shape of the cross reminding the children that like their "snakes," all of our sins went with Christ to the cross.

Alternative Activities

Don't forget to use the VBS coloring pages!

Help the children retell the day's Bible lesson with sidewalk chalk.

Who are the people in your neighborhood? Use the hats from Day 5 games to play dress-up, exploring each child's vocational possibilities.

Washing sins away: Use foam soap, a large mirror and a sponge cut into a cross. Let the children cover their reflection with the soap. Explain that each of us are covered up by sin. Use the cross-shaped sponge to wipe the sin away.

Potluck Soup: Have each child bring in a stuffed animal or teddy bear one day. Using their imagination, they should work together to hunt down ingredients (sticks, toys, pebbles, etc.) to make "soup" for their stuffed friends. The preschoolers can work to serve their community by making their first potluck dinner – they are, after all, Lutheran.

Alternative Games

Babel Bowling: Use a small ball and boxes to bowl over and rebuild the Tower of Babel.

Redemption Rainbow: Take approximately 25 pieces of construction paper and lay them in serpentine a path, secured to the floor, and place a large printout of the Baptism poster at the end of the path. Take one page of each color on the floor and cut it into small pieces and put the pieces into a hat. The children take turns drawing a color from the hat, and moving to that space on the path – like a life-size Baptism version of Candyland.

Bible Bunches: Tape 8" x 11" printouts of the art images from the week to the floor with ample space (3-4 feet) between them. Play music. When the music stops, call out one of the names on the clipart (Zacchaeus) and have the children put one foot on that sheet of paper. Repeat.