



# Youth Discipleship Planning Christmas for Kids VBS

## A SIMPLE WAY TO ACCOMPLISH MULTIPLE GOALS

*Christmas for Kids* one-day Vacation Bible School (VBS) programs have become quite common among our WELS congregations, for two reasons.

The first is that they are very simple to put on. You are dealing with a familiar story with easy applications, and it lasts only one 3-hour session. It can take four months to prepare for a week long VBS. You can prepare a *Christmas for Kids* program in four weeks.

The second reason *Christmas for Kids* are becoming more popular is that congregations are realizing how the program accomplishes multiple goals.

- *Christmas for Kids* gives you another opportunity to share the Gospel with your member children. More than that, if you train your children to invite their unchurched friends to your *Christmas for Kids*, it allows them to practice sharing their faith in a simple way. Thus, it accomplishes goals of youth discipleship.
- *Christmas for Kids* allows you to tell the true meaning of Christmas to unchurched children. If they bring home materials, it allows you to share a simple Gospel message with their parents as well. Thus, it accomplishes the goal of evangelism.
- *Christmas for Kids* enables you to serve your community. You advertise it as a chance for parents to go Christmas shopping while their children are cared for in a safe, loving environment. By building that bridge to your community, it accomplishes the goal of outreach.
- *Christmas for Kids* can serve as a way to connect unchurched families to Sunday morning activities. Churches might do this in different ways. Some might have the VBS children sing a song they learned in a subsequent worship service. Other churches might simply encourage unchurched children to continue learning about Jesus by coming back to Sunday school. When a child starts asking his parents to bring him or her to your church, you have a great opportunity!



Therefore, the C13 program encourages you, if you have never done so, to consider trying a *Christmas for Kids* VBS this year. No, it is not too late to put one together. We will show you how.

## PUTTING TOGETHER A *CHRISTMAS FOR KIDS* PROGRAM

There are five things you need to do to run a *Christmas for Kids*. Some of these (steps 1 through 3) can be done concurrently.

### Step 1 – Set your date.

We recommend a Saturday morning or Sunday afternoon.

December 7 or 8 is about as early as you want to go.

December 14 or 15 would work well. It then gives you time after the VBS to aggressively follow up on the parents in an effort to get them to join you on Christmas Eve.

December 21 or 22 is not too late at all. Many of the children will now be on vacation. Therefore, parents will be looking for things for their children to do. Plus, the proximity to Christmas Eve makes it likely that your prospect parents would view the two – *Christmas for Kids* and Christmas Eve worship – as a package.

### Step 2 – Plan your program.

A *Christmas for Kids* VBS program could consist of five things.

- 1) **Bible story time** – Obviously, sharing the “good news of great joy” is job one of any Christmas VBS. There are many ways you can do this.
  - Use the lesson plan from your Sunday school materials. *Christ Light* has fabulous lesson plans about the Christmas story. There are many different ones geared toward a variety of ages. There is no concern about repeating them in Sunday school as well. Children are happy to talk about the story of Jesus’ birth.
  - Present the nativity as a play for the children, or put on a nativity-themed skit. You could ask your teen group to act it out.
  - Set up the nativity. If you have access to a nativity set (the bigger the better!) set it up piece by piece, having different people telling the story of each character. Have each person ask questions when their portion of the story is done.
  - Write your own lesson plan. It could be as simple as you (or someone who is a gifted reader and/or storyteller) walking through Luke 2 and using props to illustrate the story. Then have some discussion questions for the kids.
- 2) **Music time** – You will want the children to spend some time in song. Pick Christmas hymns that are well-known to your congregation’s children so that they might serve as leaders in the singing: *Heark the Herald Angels Sing, Away in the Manger, etc.*
- 3) **Craft time** – If you simply google “children’s Christmas crafts” you will find countless ideas of age-appropriate projects the children could do.
- 4) **Game time** – Again, google “children’s Christmas games.” You will have many options.

- 5) **Snack time** – Over the course of three hours, the children will probably need a snack. This too could be turned into an activity. For example, children could decorate Christmas cookies and take some home to give to their parents.

With those five different things in play, you can see how easy it would be to fill 3 hours.

A mistake that churches can make is in “overdoing” this. Your Bible lesson need not be an elaborate play with great production value! Your craft need not be something expensive and complicated. You will easily fill the time even with simple activities. So just keep it simple, share the Gospel, and let your children have some fun.

### **Step 3 – Promote & register.**

There are many ways you can promote your *Christmas for Kids* VBS.

- The C13 outreach planning module suggested you try using doorhanger bags in your community. A promotional flyer about your VBS could be one of the things you insert into the bags.
- We have stressed FRAN outreach throughout C13, i.e. teaching your members to think about unchurched *friends, relatives, associates* and *neighbors* as prospects. Have your congregation’s parents mention your *Christmas to Kids* to the parents in the neighborhood. You could provide promotional material.
- Temporary signage is a great way to promote VBS. You can order a 4’ by 8’ full color banner from USPress.com for less than \$100. Put it in front of your church for the two weeks before the VBS.
- Radio stations and even TV stations will often promote children’s activities for free. The fact that “for kids” is in your title might give you free airtime. Have someone in your church call up all the stations in your area and inquire about that.

You will want to have a registration form where parents can provide you not only with the names of their children, but also emergency contact information as well as information about potential food allergies. You could put this form online as a PDF file so that people could print it from your website. Or you could set up an e-mail address just for registration and ask people to provide the information you need that way.

### **Step 4 – Recruit and staff.**

Undoubtedly, when you planned your VBS, you had some people in mind who were going to be running it: teachers, teen helpers, skit performers, a piano player, etc. As registrations come in, determine if you are right sized. If you have 20 kids sign up, you can easily handle the group with three or four people. If you have 60, you will need more.

If you get a large registration, you might consider structuring your staff in a way that you have “stations.” Rather than have *all* the kids do the same thing at the same time, divide them into groups, by age, and have them rotate from station to station: the story station, the craft station, the music station, etc.

### **Step 5 – Rejoice and follow up!**

So your VBS is over. Rejoice that you have had the opportunity to serve those children with the Gospel. However, you are not quite done yet. You want to follow up in two ways.

First, follow up by sending a thank-you to every parent for putting the child in your VBS. It could be a simple thank you card with a hand-written note. However, the best way to thank the parents,

time permitting, is to actually visit face-to-face. Hopefully your church has a worship visitor follow-up package of some sort. It would contain information about your church (and school or preschool if applicable) and probably a small gift. Those would work fine.

Secondly, follow up by having other events that children and their parents might come to. Christmas Eve is the natural. But might there be others? What about a family movie night at church with pizza and popcorn? Or perhaps a Saturday evening VBS around Valentine's Day that let's parents go out on a date? Or simply tell them about *Easter for Kids*, held in a few months. The point is you want to let the parents and children know you hope their visit was not a one-time thing.

## WANT TO MAKE THIS EXTRA EASY?

Again, nothing described here is overly difficult. However, if you want to make this extra easy, you can purchase the *Christmas for Kids* resources from Northeastern Publishing House. [You can order it HERE.](#) It is titled *Jesus the Savior is Born*, which dovetails nicely with the C13 Christmas Eve worship them *Born to Save Us*. It is geared towards ages 3 through 10. It is an excellent resource, because it is so thorough. It contains:

- Student lessons in English and Spanish
- Craft templates
- Recipes for snack time
- Game ideas
- A devotion
- A CD which contains six songs, both as tracks and as accompaniment only
- Promotional templates for doorhangers, a poster, etc.
- Registration templates
- Graphics to use
- Color lessons to send home with the kids



It not only contains everything you need, it lays out how to use them step by step. You could use this kit year-after-year. It is worth the investment, if you want to make *Christmas for Kids* as easy as possible.

Blessings on your *Christmas for Kids* efforts!