Following Jesus

STEP BY STEP WITH JESUS

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL · GADSDEN CHURCH OF CHRIST · GADSDEN (SOUTHSIDE), ALABAMA

Teacher Handbook

A 5-day VBS for every age, from the nursery through high school

> Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."
>
> **Matthew 4:19 (NKJV)**

Dates: [PLACEHOLDER: VBS dates] Times: [PLACEHOLDER: start and end time] VBS Director: [PLACEHOLDER: name and phone]

Welcome, teachers and helpers

Thank you for giving your time to teach God's word to children and young people. This week we will walk step by step with Jesus: hearing His call, learning His teaching, following His example of love, standing amazed at His cross and empty tomb, and going out to tell others. Everything in this package comes from Scripture and from lessons already written for The Preacher's Pen, especially the "31 Days with Jesus" devotional course (preacherspen.org/courses/31-days-with-jesus/) and outlines from the Preaching Library.

Each day has one Bible story, one memory verse (New King James Version), and one takeaway. Every class, from the nursery to high school, studies the same story at its own level, so families can talk about it together at home.

The week at a glance

Day	Theme	Bible story	Memory verse	Takeaway
Day 1	Jesus Calls Me: Follow Me!	Jesus Calls the Fishermen (Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 4:18-22; John 1:43-51)	Matthew 4:19	Jesus calls me by name to follow Him, and I can say yes and trust Him.
Day 2	Jesus Teaches Me: Hear and Do!	The Sermon on the Mount and the Wise and Foolish Builders (Matthew 5:1-16; 6:9-13, 33; 7:12, 24-29)	Matthew 7:24	Following Jesus means listening to His words and doing what He says.
Day 3	Jesus Shows Me How to Love: Serve Like Jesus!	Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet (John 13:1-17, 34-35; Luke 22:24-27)	John 13:15	Following Jesus means loving and serving others the way He loved and served us.
Day 4	Jesus Saves Me: He Is Risen!	The Cross and the Empty Tomb (Matthew 27:27-28:10; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:30)	Matthew 28:6	Jesus died for my sins, was buried, and rose again, so I can be saved and live with Him.
Day 5				

	Jesus Sends Me: Go and Tell!	The Great Commission, the Ascension, and the Day of Pentecost (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:3-11; Acts 2:22-41)	Mark 16:15-16	Jesus sends His followers to tell the good news, and everyone who hears can obey it the way people did in Acts 2.

Daily call and response (use in assemblies and classes)

Day	Leader says	Children answer
Day 1	“Jesus said”	“Follow Me!”
Day 2	“Hear”	“And do!”
Day 3	“Serve”	“Like Jesus!”
Day 4	“He is not here”	“He is risen!”
Day 5	“Go”	“And tell!”

Memory verses for the week (NKJV)

Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”
Day 1: Matthew 4:19 (NKJV)

Short version for Nursery and Pre-K: “Follow Me” (Matthew 4:19)

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.”
Day 2: Matthew 7:24 (NKJV)

Short version for Nursery and Pre-K: “Whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them” (Matthew 7:24)

“For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.”
Day 3: John 13:15 (NKJV)

Short version for Nursery and Pre-K: “I have given you an example” (John 13:15)

“He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”
Day 4: Matthew 28:6 (NKJV)

Short version for Nursery and Pre-K: “He is not here; for He is risen” (Matthew 28:6)

And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”
Day 5: Mark 16:15-16 (NKJV)

Short version for Nursery and Pre-K: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel” (Mark 16:15)

The five lessons

Day 1: Jesus Calls Me (Follow Me!)

Story: Jesus Calls the Fishermen (Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 4:18-22; John 1:43-51). **Memory verse:** Matthew 4:19. **Takeaway:** Jesus calls me by name to follow Him, and I can say yes and trust Him.

The Sea of Galilee (also called the Lake of Gennesaret) was full of fishing boats. Fishermen worked at night, threw large nets into the water, and in the morning washed and mended their nets. It was hard, ordinary work. One morning a crowd pressed around Jesus to hear the word of God (Luke 5:1). Jesus stepped into Simon Peter's boat, asked him to push out a little, and taught from the boat like it was a pulpit on the water.

- Jesus calls ordinary people, like fishermen, to follow Him (Matthew 4:18-22).
- Following Jesus means trusting Him even when we do not understand (Luke 5:5).
- Jesus knows each of us by name (John 1:47-48; John 10:27).
- Following Jesus means leaving behind anything that keeps us from Him (Luke 5:11).

Drawn from 31 Days with Jesus: Day 11: Calling the Disciples (Answering the Call); Day 16: The Great Catch (Trusting Jesus with Your Future). Preaching Library: Why Do You Follow Jesus? (Matthew 7:28-29); Who Is Jesus? (John 20:30-31).

Day 2: Jesus Teaches Me (Hear and Do!)

Story: The Sermon on the Mount and the Wise and Foolish Builders (Matthew 5:1-16; 6:9-13, 33; 7:12, 24-29). **Memory verse:** Matthew 7:24. **Takeaway:** Following Jesus means listening to His words and doing what He says.

Jesus was the greatest teacher who ever lived. When the crowds gathered, He went up on a mountain, sat down the way teachers did in that day, and taught His disciples (Matthew 5:1-2). Matthew 5, 6, and 7 record this lesson, the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus began with the Beatitudes, blessings for the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers (Matthew 5:3-12). God's blessing looks different from what the world expects. Jesus called His followers salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16). Salt makes a difference and light shows the way.

- Jesus is the greatest Teacher. He taught "as one having authority" (Matthew 7:29).
- Jesus teaches us how to live: be salt and light, love others, pray, and seek God first (Matthew 5-7).
- Hearing is not enough. The wise person hears Jesus and does what He says (Matthew 7:24; James 1:22).
- A life built on Jesus' words stands strong when storms come (Matthew 7:25).

Drawn from 31 Days with Jesus: Day 14: The Sermon on the Mount (Embracing Jesus' Blueprint for Faith); Day 18: The Parables of Jesus (Lessons for Life); Day 20: Jesus Teaches on Prayer. Preaching Library: Why Do You Follow Jesus? (walk-through of Matthew 5-7); Jesus the Teacher (Matthew 7:28-29).

Day 3: Jesus Shows Me How to Love (Serve Like Jesus!)

Story: Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet (John 13:1-17, 34-35; Luke 22:24-27). **Memory verse:** John 13:15. **Takeaway:** Following Jesus means loving and serving others the way He loved and served us.

Roads in Israel were dusty, and people wore open sandals. Washing a guest's feet was good manners, and it was usually done by the lowest servant in the house (compare 1 Samuel 25:41; Luke 7:44). On the night before His death, Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples in an upper room. Jesus knew "that His hour had come" and He "loved them to the end" (John 13:1). Yet the disciples argued about who would be the greatest (Luke 22:24). One of them, Judas, had already decided to betray Jesus (John 13:2).

- Jesus loved His disciples "to the end" (John 13:1), even the one who would betray Him.
- The Lord and Teacher took the lowest servant's job and washed dirty feet (John 13:4-5).
- Jesus gave us an example of humble, loving service to follow (John 13:14-15).
- People will know we are His disciples by our love for one another (John 13:34-35).

Drawn from 31 Days with Jesus: Day 25: The Lord's Supper (Remembering Jesus); Day 30: "Do You Love Me?" (Renewed Love and Calling); Day 19: Miracles of Jesus (Trusting God's Provision). Preaching Library: Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet (John 13:1-20, 2016 class lesson); Love As Displayed By God (1 John 4:7-9).

Day 4: Jesus Saves Me (He Is Risen!)

Story: The Cross and the Empty Tomb (Matthew 27:27-28:10; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:30). **Memory verse:** Matthew 28:6. **Takeaway:** Jesus died for my sins, was buried, and rose again, so I can be saved and live with Him.

The cross was planned long before it happened. Isaiah wrote that the Messiah would be "wounded for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5). John the Baptist called Jesus "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Jesus said Himself that He would be killed and be raised the third day (Matthew 16:21). Crucifixion was a slave's punishment, one of the cruelest deaths ever invented. Jesus was mocked, spit on, beaten, and crowned with thorns (Matthew 27:27-31). Above His head they wrote, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Matthew 27:37). Yet Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34). Darkness covered the land, and Jesus cried, "It is finished!" (John 19:30).

- Jesus, the sinless Son of God, willingly died on the cross for our sins (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Jesus was buried in a borrowed tomb that was sealed and guarded (Matthew 27:57-66).
- On the third day Jesus rose from the dead, just as He said (Matthew 28:6; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).
- Because Jesus lives, we have forgiveness, hope, and good news to tell (Matthew 28:7).

Drawn from 31 Days with Jesus: Day 26: The Crucifixion (The Ultimate Sacrifice); Day 27: The Guarded Tomb (Waiting in Hope); Day 28: The Resurrection (Risen Indeed). Preaching Library: A Slave's Punishment for a King (Matthew 27:54); Jesus' Burial and Ours (Matthew 27:57-66; Romans 6:3-11); Opening Our Eyes to Jesus (Luke 24:13-32); Love As Displayed By God (Romans 5:8).

Day 5: Jesus Sends Me (Go and Tell!)

Story: The Great Commission, the Ascension, and the Day of Pentecost (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:3-11; Acts 2:22-41). **Memory verse:** Mark 16:15-16. **Takeaway:** Jesus sends His followers to tell the good news, and everyone who hears can obey it the way people did in Acts 2.

After His resurrection, Jesus "presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days" (Acts 1:3). Before He returned to the Father, He gave His followers their mission, often called the Great Commission. Matthew records it this way: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). Mark adds, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16).

- Before He went back to heaven, Jesus sent His followers into all the world with the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15).
- Jesus ascended to heaven and will come again (Acts 1:9-11).
- On Pentecost people heard the gospel, believed, repented, and were baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:36-41).
- Every follower of Jesus has good news to share and a life of faithfulness to live (Acts 1:8; Revelation 2:10).

Drawn from 31 Days with Jesus: Day 31: The Ascension (Empowered to Go); Day 29: Breakfast with Jesus (Restoration and Purpose); Conclusion: The Journey Continues. Preaching Library: Jesus the Teacher (Jesus taught about hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, baptism, and being faithful); Jesus' Burial and Ours (Romans 6:3-11).

Daily schedule template

Adjust the times to fit your evenings or mornings. The sample below is a 2 hour 15 minute evening program. Nursery stays in the nursery the whole time.

Time	Segment	Where	Notes
[PLACEHOLDER] 5:45	Registration and check-in	Foyer	Sign-in by an authorized adult; name tags; allergy check
6:00 (20 min)	Opening assembly	Auditorium	Welcome, call and response, prayer, a cappella singing, memory verse, skit
6:20 (40 min)	Bible class	Classrooms	Lesson, discussion, memory verse, activity sheets (see teacher guides)
7:00 (20 min)	Crafts	Craft room or classrooms	Daily craft for each class
7:20 (15 min)	Snack	Fellowship hall	Themed snack; check allergy list
7:35 (20 min)	Recreation	Gym or outdoors	Daily game; water breaks; shade
7:55 (20 min)	Closing assembly	Auditorium	Review, songs, verse recognition, announcements, prayer
8:15	Dismissal and check-out	Classrooms or foyer	Release children only to authorized adults

Rotation tip: if you have several classes, send younger classes to snack and recreation first while older classes do crafts, then switch.

Staffing and roles

- VBS director: [PLACEHOLDER: name]. Oversees schedule, supplies, and communication.
- Teachers and helpers: at least two approved adults in every room at all times.
- Song leader for assemblies: leads well-known a cappella children's songs (no instruments or recorded accompaniment).
- Prayers in assembly are led by the men of the congregation.
- Registration and security team: check-in, check-out, name tags, door monitoring.
- Craft, snack, and recreation leaders.
- Skit volunteers (adults or teens). The narrator reads Jesus' words from Scripture; we do not portray Jesus with an actor.

How to teach each age

Nursery (ages 0–2)

- Keep it short, warm, and repetitive. Toddlers learn by hearing the same simple words again and again.
- Use one picture (the enlarged coloring page), one prop, and the Bible. Say, “This story is from God’s book.”
- Sing softly, use finger plays, and let children touch the props.
- Expect wandering and short attention. Love and patience are the lesson too.
- Send home the Take-Home Bible Story so parents can repeat the story at home.

Pre-K (ages 3–5)

- Tell the story with lots of actions and let children repeat key lines.
- Use the short verse with hand motions every day.
- Activity sheets build small motor skills: coloring, tracing, and matching. Talk about the story while they work.
- Keep instructions to one step at a time.
- On Day 5, teach the five steps from Acts 2 with motions, framed as what we do when we are older.

Grades 1–3

- Read from an open Bible and invite good readers to read a verse.
- Ask simple recall questions, then one “how can you” question.
- Use games for the memory verse.
- Easy word searches, mazes, fill-in-the-blank, and matching reinforce the story facts.
- Celebrate effort, not just right answers.

Grades 4–6

- Students should open their own Bibles and find passages. Teach them how to find book, chapter, and verse.
- Ask “why” questions and let them answer from the text.
- Bible lookups come first; crosswords, codes, and scrambles reinforce vocabulary.
- Connect each lesson to real situations at school, at home, and with friends.

Grades 7–8

- Respect their questions. Discussion matters more than lecture.
- Use small groups of 3 to 4 for discussion questions.
- Study sheets train them to read Scripture carefully; journal pages make it personal.
- Be honest about the cost of following Jesus and the joy of it.

High School

- Teach from the text in context and expect them to do real Bible study.
- Encourage personal ownership of faith (compare 2 Timothy 1:5).
- Use the discussion and application pages to move from knowing to doing (James 1:22).
- Be ready to answer questions about obeying the gospel from Scripture, and connect students with their parents and the ministers or elders.

Teaching the gospel with care

On Day 4 we teach the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). On Day 5 we study Acts 2, where people heard the gospel and asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Teach the Bible’s answer plainly and lovingly:

Step	What it means	Scripture
Hear	Listen to and learn God’s word about Jesus	Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24
Believe	Trust that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God	John 8:24; Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6
Repent	Turn away from sin and turn to God	Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3
Confess	Say with your mouth that Jesus is Lord	Romans 10:9-10; Matthew 10:32
Be baptized	Be buried with Christ in water for the remission of sins	Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-4; Acts 22:16
Live faithfully	Keep following Jesus every day	Acts 2:42; Revelation 2:10

- Teach from the open Bible. Let the text speak.
- Do not lead a “sinner’s prayer” or ask children to “ask Jesus into their heart.” Use Bible words and Bible answers.
- For little ones, keep it simple: Jesus loves you, Jesus died and rose again, and when you are older you can obey Him like the people in Acts 2.
- If a student wants to talk about being baptized, affirm them, pray with them, and connect them with their parents and with [PLACEHOLDER: minister or elder contact]. Never pressure a child.
- Write down any questions on a follow-up card for the VBS director.

Singing

All singing is a cappella. Song leaders may choose from these well-known titles:

Day	Suggested songs
Day 1	I Have Decided to Follow Jesus; I Will Make You Fishers of Men; Footprints of Jesus; Jesus Loves Me; Where He Leads Me
Day 2	The Wise Man Built His House Upon the Rock; This Little Light of Mine; Wonderful Words of Life; Trust and Obey; Read Your Bible, Pray Every Day
Day 3	Jesus Loves the Little Children; Oh, How I Love Jesus; Deep and Wide; Footprints of Jesus; Jesus Loves Me
Day 4	Low in the Grave He Lay (Up from the Grave He Arose); Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross; Nothing but the Blood; Jesus Loves Me; He Is Lord
Day 5	Go Ye Into All the World; I Have Decided to Follow Jesus; He Is Lord; Jesus Loves the Little Children; Where He Leads Me

Safety and check-in basics

- Follow the congregation's child safety policy, including any required background checks for workers. [PLACEHOLDER: policy name and coordinator]
- Two-adult rule: never be alone with a child. Keep doors open or use rooms with windows.
- Check-in: a parent or authorized adult signs each child in and receives a matching claim tag or code.
- Check-out: release children only to the adult who checked them in or an adult listed on the registration form. When in doubt, ask the director.
- Name tags for every child and worker. Nursery name tags go on the back of clothing.
- Allergies and medical needs: post the allergy list (no names on public walls; keep it with the teacher) and check it before every snack.
- Restrooms: an adult escorts younger children; older children go in pairs. Nursery and Pre-K diapering and toileting follow the nursery policy.
- Know the location of the first aid kit, the AED, fire exits, and the severe-weather shelter area.
- Emergency plan: take the attendance sheet in any evacuation and count children at the meeting place.
- Lost child: notify the director immediately; secure all exits.
- Photos: only photograph children whose parents gave permission on the registration form.
- Report any concerns about a child's safety to the director or elders according to policy.

Supply list

General supplies for every class

- Bibles (NKJV) for teachers and extra for students
- Copies of student lessons and activity sheets (see class folders; print one per child plus extras)
- Crayons, colored pencils, pencils, washable markers
- Glue sticks, tape, child-safe scissors (adults cut for Nursery and Pre-K)
- Construction paper, cardstock, white copy paper
- Paper plates, brad fasteners, hole punch, yarn or ribbon
- Name tags, sign-in and sign-out sheets, attendance sheets, follow-up cards
- Wet wipes, paper towels, trash bags, hand sanitizer
- First aid kit, allergy list, emergency contact list

Teaching props by day

Day	Props
Day 1	a fishing net (or mesh laundry bag) and a few paper fish
Day 2	a rock and a cup of sand
Day 3	a towel, a basin (bowl), and a pitcher of water
Day 4	a large gray ball or paper "stone" and an empty box
Day 5	a globe or world map

Snacks by day

Day	Snack

Day 1	Fish-shaped crackers in a small paper boat or cup (“nets full of fish”) with water.
Day 2	“House on the Rock”: a graham cracker square (house) on a cereal-treat square (rock). Offer a nut-free option.
Day 3	“Towel rolls”: rolled fruit snacks or tortilla roll-ups, with a cup of water. Older classes can serve snack to a younger class today.
Day 4	“Empty tomb”: half a mini pita or a round roll (the tomb) with a grape or round cracker “stone” rolled beside it. Open the pita to show it is empty.
Day 5	“All the World” snack: round crackers or cookies with blue and green icing (globes), or a nut-free “Go and Tell” trail mix.

Craft supplies by day and class

Day	Class	Craft	Materials
Day 1	Nursery	Paper Plate Fish	Paper plates cut into fish shapes (prepare ahead); Large stickers or pre-cut tissue paper squares; Glue stick (teacher use); Googly-eye stickers or a marker dot
Day 1	Pre-K	Net Full of Fish	Blue construction paper; Fish shapes cut from colored paper (5 per child); Plastic mesh produce bags or netting cut in squares; Glue sticks, crayons
Day 1	Grades 1-3	“Follow Me” Footprint Boat	Paper cups or small paper boats (pre-folded); Fish cutouts with paper clips; Magnet on a string tied to a craft stick (fishing pole); Markers
Day 1	Grades 4-6	Verse Fishing Game	Cardstock fish (8 per child) with a paper clip on each; Dowel or pencil, string, and a small magnet; Markers
Day 1	Grades 7-8	Leave Your Nets	Paper fish shapes; A piece of netting or a fishnet hung on the wall; Pens; Index cards
Day 1	High School	Why Do You Follow? Commitment Card	Cardstock cards; Pens; Envelopes
Day 2	Nursery	House on the Rock	Gray paper rock shapes (prepare ahead); Simple paper house shapes; Glue stick (teacher use); Blue paper strips (rain)
Day 2	Pre-K	Wise Man’s House	Construction paper; Pre-cut house, roof, and gray rock shapes; Cotton balls (clouds); Blue crayons, glue sticks
Day 2	Grades 1-3	Rock and Sand Experiment Card	Small tray of sand and a flat rock; Small blocks or cups; Spray bottle of water; Cardstock house template, crayons
Day 2	Grades 4-6	Building Blocks of the Sermon on the Mount	Paper cups (10 per small group); Labels or markers; Bibles
Day 2	Grades 7-8	Foundation Stones	Smooth stones or gray paper stones; Paint pens or markers; Bibles
Day 2	High School	Hear and Do Challenge	Index cards; Pens; Bibles
Day 3	Nursery	Helping Hands Heart	Red or pink paper hearts; Washable paint or crayons; Wet wipes; Marker
Day 3	Pre-K	Towel and Basin	Paper bowl or basin shape; Blue paper (water); Small fabric or paper towel strips; Glue sticks, crayons

Day 3	Grades 1-3	Helping Hands Coupons	Coupon template sheet (8 coupons); Crayons or markers; Scissors; Envelope or stapler
Day 3	Grades 4-6	Servant's Towel	Small washcloths or paper towels; Fabric markers or regular markers; Ribbon
Day 3	Grades 7-8	Towel and Basin Service Project	Note cards and envelopes; Pens; List of shut-ins or members to encourage (from the church office)
Day 3	High School	Service Plan	Planning sheet; Pens; Bibles
Day 4	Nursery	Empty Tomb Plate	Paper plates folded in half (tomb) with an opening cut; Gray paper circle (stone); Brad fastener (teacher attaches) or tape; Crayons
Day 4	Pre-K	Rolling Stone Tomb	Brown or gray paper plate halves; Gray paper circles; Brad fasteners; Crayons, green paper strips (grass)
Day 4	Grades 1-3	He Is Risen Pop-Up Card	Cardstock folded in half; Tomb and stone cutouts; Brad fasteners; Markers
Day 4	Grades 4-6	Three Crosses Bookmark	Cardstock strips; Markers; Ribbon or yarn; Hole punch
Day 4	Grades 7-8	The Who, What, When, How, and Why of the Cross	Folded half-sheets (five panels); Pens; Bibles
Day 4	High School	Passion Week Timeline	Long paper strip; Markers; Bibles
Day 5	Nursery	Jesus Loves the World	Blue paper circles (globe); Green paper shapes or green crayons; Heart stickers; Marker
Day 5	Pre-K	Five Steps Handprint	Construction paper; Crayons or washable paint; Marker
Day 5	Grades 1-3	Footsteps Path	Footprint cutouts (5 per child); Long paper strip; Markers, glue
Day 5	Grades 4-6	Acts 2 Bracelet	Cord or pipe cleaners; Pony beads in 6 colors; Key card (printed)
Day 5	Grades 7-8	Go and Tell Invitation	Invitation cards; Pens; Church information slips [PLACEHOLDER: service times and address]
Day 5	High School	Open Bible Practice	Bibles; Sticky tabs; Study sheet

Opening and closing assembly scripts

Day 1: Jesus Calls Me

Time	Opening assembly (20 minutes)
0:00	Welcome (leader): Welcome everyone to Following Jesus VBS! This week we are going to walk step by step with Jesus. Today we meet some fishermen who were working hard and catching nothing, until Jesus stepped into their boat. Listen for two words Jesus said to them. (Pause.) Jesus said, “Follow Me!” Let’s practice our VBS call: When I say “Jesus said,” you shout “Follow Me!”
0:04	Opening prayer, led by a brother.
0:06	Singing (a cappella): I Have Decided to Follow Jesus; I Will Make You Fishers of Men.
0:12	Memory verse: display the poster and read Matthew 4:19 together twice. “Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.””
0:15	Skit: Fisherman Skit (2 to 3 min): A volunteer in a robe with a net (a sheet works) sits in a cardboard boat grumbling, “All night long and not one fish!” A narrator reads Luke 5:4-5. The fisherman lets down the net and pulls up paper fish taped inside. He kneels and says, “I will follow Him!” (Do not portray Jesus with an actor; the narrator reads Jesus’ words from Scripture.)
0:19	Call and response one more time (“Jesus said” / “Follow Me!”) and dismiss to classes.

Time	Closing assembly (20 minutes)
0:00	Singing (a cappella): Footprints of Jesus; Jesus Loves Me.
0:06	Review (leader): Who remembers what Peter caught after he obeyed Jesus? (Lots of fish!) And what did Peter leave to follow Jesus? (His boat and nets.) Jesus calls each of us to follow Him too. Let’s say our memory verse together: Matthew 4:19. Tomorrow we will climb a mountain and hear Jesus teach!
0:12	Recognize children who can say the memory verse. Announcements: [PLACEHOLDER].
0:16	Closing song: Where He Leads Me. Closing prayer, led by a brother.
0:20	Dismiss to classrooms or the check-out area. Release children only to authorized adults.

Day 2: Jesus Teaches Me

Time	Opening assembly (20 minutes)
0:00	Welcome (leader): Welcome back to Following Jesus VBS! Yesterday Jesus called the fishermen. What did He say? (Follow Me!) Today we climb a mountain and sit at the feet of the greatest Teacher who ever lived. Jesus told a story about two builders. Listen closely, because the difference between them is the difference between wise and foolish. Our call today: When I say “Hear,” you say “And do!”
0:04	Opening prayer, led by a brother.
0:06	Singing (a cappella): The Wise Man Built His House Upon the Rock; This Little Light of Mine.
0:12	Memory verse: display the poster and read Matthew 7:24 together twice. ““Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.””
0:15	Skit: Two Builders (3 min): Two volunteers build block towers, one on a cardboard “rock”, one on a tray of sand. A narrator reads Matthew 7:24-27 while helpers “rain” with a spray bottle and blow with a fan. The

	sand tower topples; the rock tower stands. The builder on the rock says, “I heard Jesus and I did what He said!”
0:19	Call and response one more time (“Hear” / “And do!”) and dismiss to classes.

Time	Closing assembly (20 minutes)
0:00	Singing (a cappella): Wonderful Words of Life; Trust and Obey.
0:06	Review (leader): Where did the wise man build? (On the rock!) What made him wise? (He heard Jesus’ words and did them.) Let’s say Matthew 7:24 together. Tomorrow we will see Jesus pick up a towel and do something none of His disciples expected!
0:12	Recognize children who can say the memory verse. Announcements: [PLACEHOLDER].
0:16	Closing song: Read Your Bible, Pray Every Day. Closing prayer, led by a brother.
0:20	Dismiss to classrooms or the check-out area. Release children only to authorized adults.

Day 3: Jesus Shows Me How to Love

Time	Opening assembly (20 minutes)
0:00	Welcome (leader): Welcome to Day 3 of Following Jesus! Jesus called us on Day 1 (Follow Me!) and taught us on Day 2 (Hear and do!). Today Jesus shows us how to love. Look what I have: a towel and a bowl of water. In Bible times, the lowest servant used these to wash dirty, dusty feet. Today we will see who picked them up. Our call today: When I say “Serve,” you say “Like Jesus!”
0:04	Opening prayer, led by a brother.
0:06	Singing (a cappella): Jesus Loves the Little Children; Oh, How I Love Jesus.
0:12	Memory verse: display the poster and read John 13:15 together twice. ““For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.””
0:15	Skit: Who Will Wash? (2 min): Volunteers playing disciples come in arguing, “I’m the greatest!” “No, I am!” They point at a towel and basin by the door and each says, “That’s not my job.” A narrator reads John 13:4-5 and 13:14-15. The disciples look at each other, go quiet, and one picks up the towel to serve the others.
0:19	Call and response one more time (“Serve” / “Like Jesus!”) and dismiss to classes.

Time	Closing assembly (20 minutes)
0:00	Singing (a cappella): Deep and Wide; Footprints of Jesus.
0:06	Review (leader): What did Jesus pick up? (A towel and a basin.) Whose feet did He wash? (His disciples’, even Peter’s and Judas’.) Jesus said He gave us an example. Let’s say John 13:15 together. Tomorrow is the most important day of the week: we will learn how much Jesus loves us at the cross and the empty tomb.
0:12	Recognize children who can say the memory verse. Announcements: [PLACEHOLDER].
0:16	Closing song: Jesus Loves Me. Closing prayer, led by a brother.
0:20	Dismiss to classrooms or the check-out area. Release children only to authorized adults.

Day 4: Jesus Saves Me

Time	Opening assembly (20 minutes)
0:00	

	Welcome (leader): Welcome to Day 4! So far Jesus called us (Follow Me!), taught us (Hear and do!), and showed us how to love (Serve like Jesus!). Today is the most important day of all. We will learn why Jesus came. It is a sad story at first, but it has the happiest ending ever. Our call today: When I say "He is not here," you shout "He is risen!"
0:04	Opening prayer, led by a brother.
0:06	Singing (a cappella): Low in the Grave He Lay (Up from the Grave He Arose); Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross.
0:12	Memory verse: display the poster and read Matthew 28:6 together twice. ""He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.""
0:15	Skit: The Guard's Report (3 min): A volunteer dressed as a Roman guard staggers in, out of breath: "You won't believe it! We sealed the stone. We stood guard. Then the ground shook, an angel rolled that stone away like it was nothing, and sat on it! I've never been so scared!" The narrator reads Matthew 28:5-6. The guard says slowly, "He… is… risen?" and the children shout, "He is risen!" (Keep the cross portion reverent and age-appropriate; do not reenact the crucifixion.)
0:19	Call and response one more time ("He is not here" / "He is risen!") and dismiss to classes.

Time	Closing assembly (20 minutes)
0:00	Singing (a cappella): Nothing but the Blood; Jesus Loves Me.
0:06	Review (leader): Why did Jesus die on the cross? (Because He loves us and to take away our sins.) Where was Jesus put? (In a tomb.) What happened on the third day? (He rose again!) Let's say Matthew 28:6 together. Tomorrow we will find out what Jesus told His followers to do with this good news, and what people did when they heard it!
0:12	Recognize children who can say the memory verse. Announcements: [PLACEHOLDER].
0:16	Closing song: He Is Lord. Closing prayer, led by a brother.
0:20	Dismiss to classrooms or the check-out area. Release children only to authorized adults.

Day 5: Jesus Sends Me

Time	Opening assembly (20 minutes)
0:00	Welcome (leader): Welcome to our last day of Following Jesus VBS! Let's review our calls: Jesus said? (Follow Me!) Hear? (And do!) Serve? (Like Jesus!) He is not here? (He is risen!) Today Jesus gives His followers a job. It is a big job for the whole world. Our call today: When I say "Go," you say "And tell!"
0:04	Opening prayer, led by a brother.
0:06	Singing (a cappella): Go Ye Into All the World; I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.
0:12	Memory verse: display the poster and read Mark 16:15-16 together twice. "And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.""
0:15	Skit: Breaking News (3 min): A volunteer "reporter" with a toy microphone interviews someone in the crowd on the Day of Pentecost: "Sir, what happened here today?" He answers, "Peter preached that Jesus was crucified and God raised Him up! We asked what we should do. He said to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. About three thousand of us obeyed today!" The reporter faces the audience: "This is good news. Go and tell!"
0:19	Call and response one more time ("Go" / "And tell!") and dismiss to classes.

Time	Closing assembly (20 minutes)
0:00	Singing (a cappella): He Is Lord; Jesus Loves the Little Children.
0:06	Review (leader): Let's review the whole week! Day 1: Jesus calls me (Follow Me!). Day 2: Jesus teaches me (Hear and do!). Day 3: Jesus shows me how to love (Serve like Jesus!). Day 4: Jesus saves me (He is risen!). Day 5: Jesus sends me (Go and tell!). Let's say Mark 16:15-16 together. Following Jesus does not stop when VBS ends. Keep following Him every day!
0:12	Recognize children who can say the memory verse. Announcements: [PLACEHOLDER].
0:16	Closing song: Where He Leads Me. Closing prayer, led by a brother.
0:20	Dismiss to classrooms or the check-out area. Release children only to authorized adults.

Parent take-home notes

Copy these onto the back of the student lesson or send them home separately. Separate print-ready notes are in handbook/parent-notes/.

Day 1: Jesus Calls Me

Dear Parents,

Today your child learned that Jesus called fishermen named Peter, Andrew, James, and John, and they left their nets to follow Him (Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 4:18-22). Our memory verse is Matthew 4:19: “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” At dinner, ask: “What did Peter do when Jesus told him to let down the net?” Talk about one way your family can follow Jesus this week.

Questions? Contact [PLACEHOLDER: VBS director name and phone]. Gadsden Church of Christ

Day 2: Jesus Teaches Me

Dear Parents,

Today your child learned that Jesus is the greatest Teacher. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told about a wise man who built his house on the rock and a foolish man who built on the sand (Matthew 7:24-27). Our memory verse is Matthew 7:24: “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Ask your child: “What makes someone wise?” Choose one of Jesus’ teachings to practice as a family this week.

Questions? Contact [PLACEHOLDER: VBS director name and phone]. Gadsden Church of Christ

Day 3: Jesus Shows Me How to Love

Dear Parents,

Today your child learned how Jesus took a towel and a basin and washed His disciples’ feet, giving us an example of humble, loving service (John 13:1-17). Our memory verse is John 13:15: “For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” Ask your child: “Why was it surprising that Jesus washed feet?” As a family, choose one way to serve someone this week.

Questions? Contact [PLACEHOLDER: VBS director name and phone]. Gadsden Church of Christ

Day 4: Jesus Saves Me

Dear Parents,

Today your child heard the most important news in the world: Jesus died on the cross for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day (Matthew 27-28; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Our memory verse is Matthew 28:6: “He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” Ask your child: “What did the angel say to the women at the tomb?” Older children may have questions about obeying the gospel; please talk with them, and feel free to contact our ministers or elders.

Questions? Contact [PLACEHOLDER: VBS director name and phone]. Gadsden Church of Christ

Day 5: Jesus Sends Me

Dear Parents,

Today your child learned that Jesus sent His followers to tell the whole world the good news, went back to heaven, and will come again (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:9-11). We studied Acts 2, where people heard the gospel, believed, repented, and were baptized for the remission of sins. Our memory verse is Mark 16:15-16. Ask your child: "What did the people ask Peter, and what did he tell them?" If your child has questions about becoming a Christian, please talk with them and reach out to our ministers or elders. Thank you for sharing your child with us this week!

Questions? Contact [PLACEHOLDER: VBS director name and phone]. Gadsden Church of Christ

Where to find everything

- handbook/: this handbook (PDF and Word), parent notes
- day1/ through day5/: a folder for each class (nursery, prek, grades1-3, grades4-6, grades7-8, highschool) with the student lesson, teacher guide (PDF and Word), and activity sheets
- combined/: one PDF per class with all five days, plus a student-pages-only PDF per class
- graphics/: printable banners, door signs, name tags, certificate, and memory verse posters
- graphics-brief.md: notes for a designer who wants to make matching graphics

Sources

- "31 Days with Jesus" by Christopher Gallagher, The Preacher's Pen (preacherspen.org/courses/31-days-with-jesus/).
- Preaching Library (OneDrive): "Why Do You Follow Jesus?", "Jesus the Teacher", "Who Is Jesus?", "Hard Sayings Produce True Actions", "Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet", "Love As Displayed By God", "A Slave's Punishment for a King", "Jesus' Burial and Ours", "Opening Our Eyes to Jesus", and the 2015 "31 Days with Jesus" reading calendar and question sheets.
- Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version (NKJV).