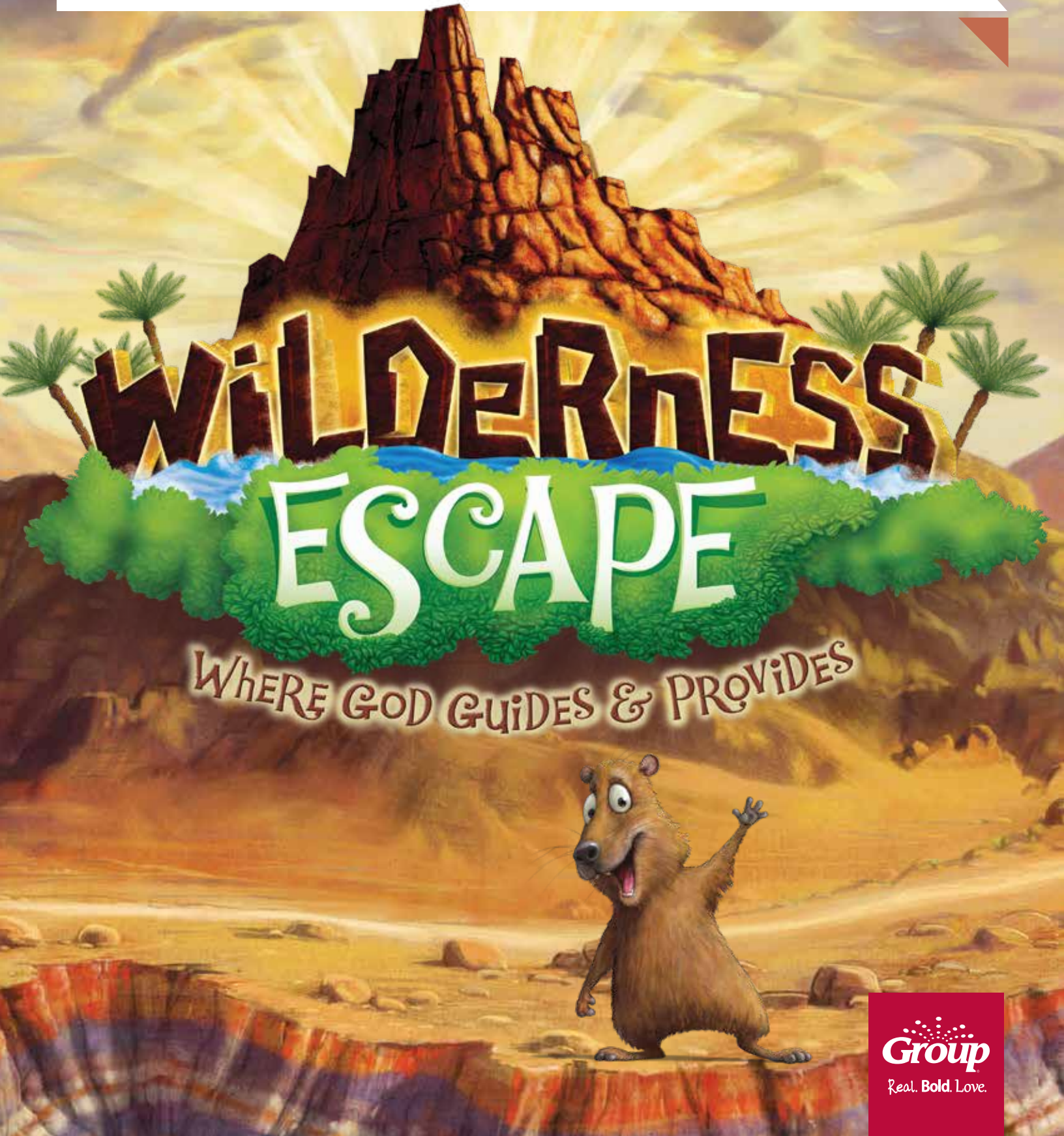


# ONLINE VBS GUIDE

Adapting Wilderness Escape into a  
VBS-at-home experience



# DIRECTOR'S NOTES

## Keep Moseying Forward!

At Wilderness Escape, kids explore how God guides and provides during these uncertain times. You'll lead kids to trust God—not their own strength—in life's challenges. There's no doubt COVID-19 has come through our lives like a sandstorm and brought a thick haze of uncertainty over VBS plans, routines, and expectations. This summer, more than ever, the kids in your community need the hope, reassurance, and abundance of God's love through the unique ministry of VBS. The Bible Points for Wilderness Escape are so relevant:

**gOD IS WiTh US, So...***trust God!*

**gOD giVES US WhAT WE NEED, So...***trust God!*

**gOD giVES US STRENGTH, So...***trust God!*

**gOD sAVES US, So...***trust God!*

**gOD giDES US, So...***trust God!*

We *all* need to trust God's power to pull us through these unprecedented times! This summer, your church has an opportunity to meet families like never before through VBS.

Take a breath, pause, and pray. And don't give up. With some planning, creativity, and faith, you *can* make VBS happen—no matter what. If physical distancing prevents you from having traditional VBS at your church, these adaptations can help you journey forward with an innovative, online experience. We'll guide you to stay on course, using best practices for blending technology and hands-on learning to maximize the online VBS experience.

Here's what we do know:

- ◆ Parents are overwhelmed.
- ◆ Kids and parents miss connection.
- ◆ Kids and parents miss the sense of community that comes from VBS.
- ◆ Online VBS needs to be simple for families yet also interactive, engaging, and relational.
- ◆ We've longed for ways to bring faith into the home—and God has opened the door for this opportunity.

That's why we've modified these stations, allowing *your* smiling faces to be leading the station video segments. You'll maintain relationships with your church and community, and you'll be a warm, welcoming, encouraging neighbor for those you connect with.

Thank you for making an eternal difference by staying faithful with VBS!

*Group's VBS Team*

## Planning

**Begin praying for your church to embrace your online VBS.** Ask God to open new ways to reach the hearts of children, families, and volunteers in your community.

**Choose a format for your online VBS.**

- ☐ Livestream or pre-record segments.
- ☐ Create VBS for families, backyard Bible club (groups of 10-20), or other gatherings that meet CDC guidelines.

- ♦ If your church is blessed with media resources to livestream or pre-record segments, consider reaching out to other churches in your community! Instead of sharing decorations, this year you can collaborate on technology!
- ♦ If you use pre-recorded segments, build daily excitement by posting the link on your website each day at your VBS start time.

**Choose and publicize dates for online Wilderness Escape.**

Remember that VBS doesn't have to be five days in a row. You may want to connect with kids once a week for five weeks or divide the material into even shorter segments once a week all summer long! Get creative and keep your overarching ministry goals in mind as you plan.

## Content

**Plan the timeframe for your online VBS.** We recommend planning content for about an hour. We've made sure the online experiences engage and involve participants, so the time will fly by!

### Online VBS Might Look Like This...



(Include resources like Bible Memory Makers, Mail From Moses, Tribe Time Teaching Kit, Israelite Camp craft kits and other goodies for kids)



Parents drive-up and get a VBS family pack, or volunteers deliver them to families



On your VBS start date, kids and grown-ups gather online. Your team livestreams or shows abbreviated, pre-recorded segments of the following stations:

Celebration | Tribe Time | Moses' Tent



**Plan the content for your online VBS.** While many parts of Wilderness Escape need to happen in a face-to-face environment, you can create a unique, online experience using the following stations (with modifications):

- ◆ Celebration (including Tribe Time)
- ◆ Moses' Tent
- ◆ Israelite Camp (by sending home some of the project components, with instructions—see page 13 for suggestions)

## Check out these simple modifications:

### Celebration and Closing Tribe Time

#### General

- ◆ For copyright purposes, please omit “Holy Is the Lord,” “Let God Arise,” and “This Is How We Overcome.”
- ◆ Determine if you'll assign specific Tribes (from the 12 tribes of Israel) to each family. Modify your script to omit referring to the specific tribes if you're *not* having families play that role.
- ⊘ Omit having Tribe Leaders leave for a huddle and prayer each day.
- ◆ Change references to Leaders or Tribe Leaders to parents or family members.
- ◆ Do each day's Opening Celebration, then move into Closing Tribe Time activity, and choose a song to end with from Closing Celebration section. The following modifications reflect this.
- ◆ When you pose a question, allow time for families to talk about it. It's a good idea to put the question onscreen, then either tell families to pause the recording while they talk (if you're pre-recorded) or play music for a minute to allow them to talk (if you're livestreaming).
- ◆ Hold up the Bible Memory Maker poster so everyone can see it.

#### Day 1:

- ⊘ Omit references to the set in the “Imagine being in the wilderness” section.
- ⊘ Omit the “Head to Tribe Time” section. Instead, pick up on page 19 of the manual and lead the Closing Tribe Time activities, beginning with “Bring out a Crazy Critter.”
- ◆ During “Bring out a Crazy Critter,” have families gather (ideally) on an uncarpeted area. The “critter” rolls better on a hard surface.

- ▶ Continue through “Bring out the Day 1 Bible Memory Makers” and into “Explain God Sightings.” Tell families the unique way you’ll have them celebrate and display their God Sightings. (See ideas on page 9.)

## Day 2:

- ⊘ Omit “Review yesterday’s adventures.”
- ▶ During “Teach the Bible Point,” rather than having sides of the room call out parts of the Point, have parents say one part and kids say the response.
- ▶ Modify the “Talk about God Sightings” section to coordinate with the way you’re having families share and display their God Sightings.
- ⊘ Omit “Head to Tribe Time,” and move into “Bring out a Way-to-Glow Pen and Paper Heart” on page 31.
- ▶ Post the questions on page 32 onscreen, and allow time for family members to answer them. Continue through the activities in “Bring out the Day 2 Bible Memory Makers.”

## Day 3:

- ⊘ Omit “Review yesterday’s adventures.”
- ⊘ Omit the hand-shaking activity in “Teach the Bible Point, and transform the room.”
- ▶ After introducing Chase (on page 40), skip to page 43 and lead “Bring out a Surprise Ariser.”
- ⊘ Omit the questions about leopards in “Bring out the Day 3 Bible Memory Makers” section.
- ▶ Close with a song.

## Day 4:

- ⊘ Omit “Review yesterday’s adventures.”
- ⊘ Omit “Have Tribe Leaders leave for a huddle and a prayer,” but do have family members welcome each other with the “cross hug” from page 50.
- ▶ Continue with “Talk about God Sightings,” then skip to “Bring out a Spray Away Writer and paper towel.” Direct family members to find a paper towel or paper napkin from their home. (Tell them that a thinner-quality paper works best. Even a small piece of toilet paper should work fine.)
- ⊘ Omit the question at the bottom of page 51.
- ▶ If families don’t have a spray bottle for the “Bring out a spray bottle” section, they can pour spoonfuls of water on the paper instead.

- ▶ Continue through “Bring out the Day 4 Bible Memory Makers,” then close with a song.

### Day 5:

- ⊘ Omit “Review yesterday’s adventures.”
- ▶ Replace “Holy Is the Lord” on page 61, then skip to “Bring out an A-Maze-ing Map” on page 63. Have family members choose someone to find a paper clip or coin and a strong refrigerator magnet for the activity.
- ▶ You may want to cut a few of the questions on page 64. Do include the question “What are some specific ways that God helps you know what to do?” Give families time to discuss.
- ⊘ Omit the question about rock badgers on page 65.
- ▶ After handing out the Bible Memory Makers, close with prayer and a song.

## Moses’ Tent

### General

- ▶ Have Moses and Malachi interact together. They can stand about 6 feet apart if necessary—just use a wide shot!
- ▶ When you pose a question, allow time for families to talk about it. It’s a good idea to put the question onscreen, then either tell families to pause the recording while they talk (if you’re pre-recorded) or play music for a minute to allow them to talk (if you’re livestreaming).

### Day 1

- ▶ During “Meeting Moses,” post the question onscreen. Allow time for families to talk about it.
- ▶ At the end of page 14, have families squeeze together in a tight space at home.
- ▶ For the “Red Sea Escape,” Moses can direct families to make their own “Red Sea” with chairs or couch cushions and walk through it.

### Day 2

- ▶ During “Welcoming Tribes,” ask family members to gather around an unlit candle instead of a campfire.
- ⊘ Omit Malachi asking people to call out foods they like.
- ▶ For “Quail Landing,” encourage family members to find a small snack such as a cheese stick or bit of fruit in their refrigerator. Omit having them pretend to roast the snacks over the campfire.

- ▶ During “Manna Meal,” send them to find a dry snack, such as cereal, crackers, or bread.

### Day 3:

- ▶ During “Marching Orders,” lead families in pretending to be the army. Just pause after you say each line of the chant, allowing time for them to respond.
- ▶ For “Strength From Friends,” ask families to find two heavy objects such as water bottles or books. They can take turns raising their arms and supporting each other.
- ▶ Post the two closing questions onscreen. Allow time for families to discuss them before you close.

### Day 4:

- ▶ Direct families to round up a marker (ideally a red one), tape, and several sheets of paper. Even paper towels will work. They’ll need enough to cover the sides of a doorframe.
- ⊘ Omit the first two questions in the “Perfect Paint” section.
- ▶ Have families tape their paper to the sides of a doorframe. During “Perfect Paint,” have them mark the paper.
- ▶ During “Pausing for Pita,” ask a family member to quickly retrieve any crunchy snack such as a few chips, crackers, or even bits of cereal. They’ll need only enough for each person to have a nibble.

### Day 5

- ▶ Film Moses and Malachi going through their script, through “Avoiding the 10 Traps.” Omit having participants call out responses throughout. (You may want to choose a few of the questions and let them respond to those.)
- ▶ Let families discuss the two questions in the “Tribe Talk” section. Post those onscreen.
- ⊘ Omit the “Rules to Live By” section. Instead, refer families to where they can find these in the Bible (Exodus 20).

**Choose and recruit the team that will lead and be videoed for each station.** You will *not* need Israelite Camp or Fun & Games leaders if you opt to use the modifications found at [group.com/ModifiedVBS](http://group.com/ModifiedVBS).

**Turn every living room into a classroom!** Grab your Wilderness Escape Starter Kit Leader Manuals, and print out the modified Station Leader tips on pages 4-7 of this guide.

Station Leaders can access the modifications, print them, and cross-reference them with the Leader Manuals from the Wilderness Escape Starter Kit.

Each day during your VBS week, your team will livestream or show abbreviated, pre-recorded segments of the modified stations.

### **No need to overwhelm parents!**

Parents have turned into teachers and coaches during the past months, putting extra stress and strain on family life. *This VBS experience is designed so parents participate right alongside kids—rather than prepping, planning, and leading the materials. It's an easy way to nurture family relationships!*

**Provide packs for each family.** Kids have had to forgo school trips, family vacations, birthday parties, and sports. Parents have juggled working from home with teaching from home. Everyone needs a break! This is your time to bless families with a bag of excitement that *also* fuels faith! By supplying surprise resources for families, you'll build daily anticipation (a little like Christmas!)—and make each person feel special! Plus, the Group team has consulted with child psychologists and experts to determine which resources will be most meaningful to families during such an anxious time.

Check out the “Resources” section for more info on how to get this cool cargo into kids' hands!

**Assemble an assembly team.** At your church, create family packs filled with resources such as the Tribe Teaching Kit, a Bandura, Bible Memory Makers, Israelite Camp craft kits, Mail From Moses, and Celebration Music CDs. You can simply put all the supplies for the week into one bag per family, or (to make each day a surprise) put each day's supplies into separate zipper-sealed bags labelled for each day. Then you'd put all of *those* into one bag per family. If you make daily “surprise” kits, you can wrap the supplies in tissue paper so kids can't see them.

**God Sightings are more important than ever!** God Sightings give everyone practice in looking for evidence of God all around them. Guiding kids and adults to look for God and thank him is key in helping them cope with the uncertainty and loss they've experienced recently. At Wilderness Escape, you'll celebrate God's goodness every day!



Here are two simple ways for families to celebrate and display God Sightings:

- ◆ Use colorful sticky notes to write or draw an image to represent their daily God Sightings. Post the notes in a window in the shape of a heart.
- ◆ Use chalk to write or draw an image to represent their daily God Sightings on their driveway or sidewalk. Think of how this colorful image can be a conversation starter with neighbors!

## Media & Technology

Connect with the media experts at your church, or identify other “tech gurus” you may know. (Teenagers can be a great asset when it comes to technology.)

- ❑ Enlist help to successfully livestream your VBS. Do a test before your VBS week!
- ❑ Round up a team to help pre-record station segments. Remember, a smartphone can create a high-quality video! Decide if you’ll broadcast these at the scheduled time of your VBS or share a link with families. Be sure to publicize the dates so families know when and where to tune in.

### Streaming Pre-Recorded Content

A “Live” event on Facebook streams at the same time for everyone, but you can also record it in case people can’t watch it at the designated time.

There are two options to stream a pre-recorded video “Live” on Facebook:

- ◆ using a third-party software
- ◆ scheduling a “Premiere” through Facebook

Both options will allow you to schedule pre-recorded content, make announcements in advance, have viewers watch and comment in real-time, and interact with comments in real-time. The only difference is that your video will either show “Live” or “Premiere” in the top left corner—that’s it!

If you have a media team or are confident with your tech-savvy skills, either option will work for you. However, if you’re a little less confident, scheduling a Premiere will be the way to go. Scheduling a Premiere will allow you to upload your video directly to Facebook without the hassle of connecting a third-party software to Facebook. At Group, Premieres are our preferred method of choice when releasing pre-recorded videos.

Below are helpful “How-to Guides” to get started using either option:

Basics: Going “LIVE” on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/business/learn/lessons/go-live-creator-studio>

Going “Live” With Pre-recorded Content Using OBS:

<https://brightspark-consulting.com/live-stream-pre-recorded-video/>

Other Facebook Streaming Software Options:

<https://www.facebook.com/help/publisher/2771226942969318>

Going “Live” Using Premiere:

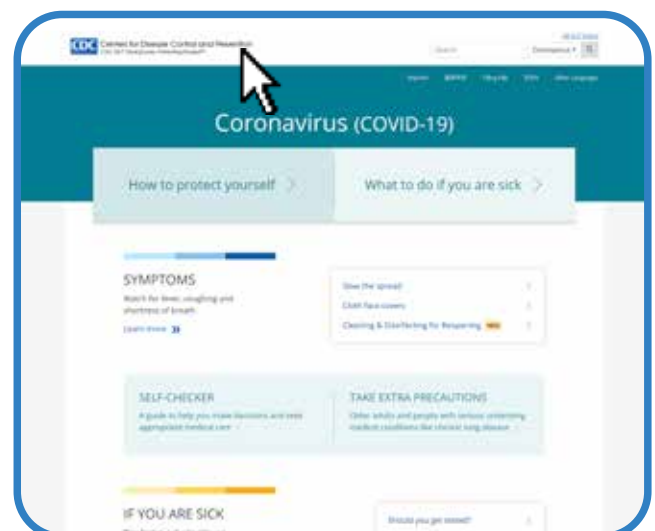
<https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/how-to-use-facebook-premiere-what-marketers-need-know/>

## COVID-19 Protocol

**Always follow the CDC guidelines for your state and local government restrictions.** When prepping supplies that will be distributed to families, have a packing party. Volunteers can maintain physical distancing and wear gloves and masks as they pack supply kits. Safety first! If volunteers will deliver supplies to families, remind them to respect the 6-foot rule.

If you’re using the online content with a small group (such as a backyard Bible club), consider having a pool noodle for each child to use as a reminder to keep physical distance. Have wipes or disinfectant spray to frequently clean items. For instance, if you choose to lead games, have multiple sets of the games supplies so each Crew gets its own clean set. Also supply multiple hand-washing stations.

If you decide to include snack or want to recommend a fun treat for families to provide for their kids, consider preparing the daily Baker snack *only* using store bought items. For instance, instead of making bread from scratch use frozen bread dough. (<https://rhodesbakenserv.com/product/yeast-dinner-rolls/> ).



<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

The great thing is Bible-times foods are pretty simple—pita bread, hummus, dried fruit, cheese, and grapes—making it easy for families to purchase and prepare.

Adjusting *how* we do ministry will allow for ministry to keep happening! Your kids and families will thank you. You've got this!

## Budget

**Reprioritize your budget.** We know budgets are tight and some have been decreased or frozen, but there's good news. You need to decorate only one space for an online VBS, dramatically decreasing your decorating budget! You'll also save by not preparing snack. Strategically invest your reallocated budget in what matters most: the relationships we establish with the kids and the resources we send into their homes. Meaningful resources may be the only Scripture or faith-related *anything* in a family's home! We'll show you what student resources we recommend a little later.

**Supplement your budget.** While it may seem that many are pinching pennies, people are looking for ways to make a difference. Oftentimes a modest financial donation gives individuals a chance to feel like they've helped out, when the gift of time is something they *don't* have. Give your church members the opportunity to play a key role in your VBS through sponsorships or donations. By reallocating your budget toward in-home resources for each child, you'll be sure to reach entire families with hope and the message of Jesus!

## Recruiting & Staff Training

**You still need volunteers for an online VBS!** Just rethink how to use them. As you recruit, make sure your Station Leaders are comfortable being livestreamed or recorded. A bonus of pre-recording is the Station Leader can have a "take two" if necessary!

Tribe Leaders can play an important role in establishing relationships with families. Consider having them pack the family packs and then deliver them to their Tribe members. Packing and delivering a few packs is easy (and requires less time) for most volunteers, who would've been committing closer to 15 hours of their time during a traditional VBS. Just think how excited children will be to get a visit, even if it is 6 feet from the front door of their home, *plus* a cargo pack of fun. And how cool for families to know they have a Tribe Leader praying for them every day of VBS. Next-level the relational aspect by having Tribe Leaders reach out to families after each day of VBS, checking in on the fun they had.

In uncertain times like these, we often focus on what *can't* happen. But in trusting God, he allows us to focus on what *can* happen! Look what *can* happen!

**Your decorating team has only one or two spaces to decorate!** One simple “set” will do, unless you want to also follow the decorating setup given in the Moses’ Tent Leader Manual.

**Shift your staff training to online.** Utilize platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Meet for your volunteer meetings. These platforms allow you to share your screen easily with a PowerPoint or Keynote, so you can get everyone onboard. Be sure to address how station supplies will be gathered and content livestreamed or pre-recorded. We’ve included two blank Wilderness Escape slide images at [group.com/ModifiedVBS](http://group.com/ModifiedVBS) for you to easily create slides for your staff training. Just add a text box and type in your content or add images.

**Keep your church safety protocols in mind.** If you’re planning a backyard Bible club, it’s important to maintain best practices when it comes to child safety.

- ✦ Remember that all volunteers working with children need to have up-to-date background checks. Additionally, a child should never be left alone with a noncustodial adult—even in a home.
- ✦ Coaching your home-based volunteers about your church’s safety protocols protects them, you as the leader, and your church—and most important, it keeps kids safe.
- ✦ Group’s Shepherd’s Watch provides easy, affordable, and thorough background checks for VBS volunteers. Learn more at [group.com/shepherdswatch](http://group.com/shepherdswatch).

## Resources

**Student resources reinforce Bible truths long after VBS.** Focus on the important things—student items are the core resources of the VBS experience. Reinforcing what kids experience in the livestream or pre-recorded station videos is key to making learning stick. As a VBS leader, you understand how kids learn best! When we teach like Jesus, we use something tangible (things we see, hear, taste, touch) to make spiritual connections that last.

Many student resources are sold in packs of 10. For your Israelite Camp, you need to choose only one craft kit to send home per day. So decide which are your favorite five! Here's what we recommend:



RECOMMENDED FAMILY PACK CONTENTS	
Essentials for Elementary and Preschool	Choose Five Craft Kits From the Six Options
Bible Memory Makers (pkg includes 10 sets, enough for 10 kids)	Bitty Butter Bottles (pkg of 10)
Wilderness Escape Carabiners (pkg of 10)	Camel Caravan Bells (pkg of 10)
Banduras (pkg of 12))	Simple Sandals (pkg of 10)
Mail From Moses (pkg of 10)	Triumphant Tambourines (pkg of 10)
Tribe Time Teaching Kit	Air Dry Clay (pkg of 10)
	Tiny Tapestry Loom Kit (pkg of 10)

Allocate the money you save on the things you *aren't* doing (such as decorating and snacks) to supply important student items. Get your church involved in building a supply packs. You can even add other fun items like sidewalk chalk to record God Sightings!

Decide how families will get student resources.

- ☐ Tribe Leaders or other volunteers deliver the packs to the homes.
- ☐ Families drive through and pick up the packs at church.

**Station resources enhance online experiences.** There is one poster pack that will visually reinforce what Station Leaders are saying. If you're pre-recording the video segments, you need only one set of them.

- ◆ Celebration: Giant Bible Memory Maker Posters\*



## Decorating

### **Decorating for Wilderness Escape has just gotten a *lot* easier!**

You have to decorate only two spaces for an online VBS—the main set and (optionally) one other room for Moses' Tent.

Celebration and Tribe Time will all happen in the same space—we recommend using the main set area. Moses' Tent will be in another room.

Have station supplies ready to go on a table that can be easily carried or rolled into camera view. You'll livestream or pre-record all station segments in those two spaces.

Here's how to do it in a fast-track way!

### **Main Set Simple as 1-2-3!**

1. Use the Wilderness Escape Fabric Wall Hanging\* to create your backdrop.
2. Add the Giant Bible Memory Maker Posters\* mounted on foam core.

### **Main Set Next Level**

1. Create some palm trees out of carpet tubes, brown lunch bags, and cardboard.
2. Pop up a wilderness tent with some neutral-colored fabric, rope, and branches.

### **Moses' Tent**

While it's not required, you may want to follow the day-by-day setup in the Moses' Tent Leader Manual. A few items you may not have in your supply closet:

- ◆ Big Blue Sky Fabric Backdrop\*
- ◆ Water Fabric\*
- ◆ Electric Campfire\*

### **Bonus: Decorating At-Home**

Encourage your families to dig into their closets and get on Pinterest to create their own Wilderness Escape environment! Have families take pictures of themselves in their own Bible-times environment and post on your church's social media. What a fun way to build community when we can't be together!

## Registration

**Have kids preregister for VBS just as usual.** Even though kids won't be coming to your church, you still need to know who is participating. Set a deadline, ideally a week from the first day of your VBS. This will allow time for your packing party to create the family packs and deliver them or have parents pick them up.

Your VBS Starter Kit comes with a free easy-to-use online management tool called VBS PRO, which includes registration. You can upgrade to VBS PRO Premium and auto-assign kids into Tribes, allowing you to quickly give Tribe Leaders the addresses they need if they're delivering family packs.

## Follow-Up

Take the opportunity at the end of your VBS to reach families who don't regularly attend your church. Kids love getting mail, so here's a great way to invite them to participate in your weekly children's ministry, as restrictions are lifted. They'll be eager to get out and come to your church!

Use the themed clip art on the Clip Art & Resources CD to create a personal invitation from all the Bible Memory Makers at Wilderness Escape.

**Keep  
moseying  
forward and  
planning for  
your for VBS!**



# WILDERNESS ESCAPE VBS PERMISSIONS FOR ONLINE VBS USE

## GRANTED PERMISSIONS FOR ONLINE VBS PRESENTATIONS

### Who can use these permissions?

These permissions are granted solely to the church or organization that purchased the Wilderness Escape VBS starter kit. The permissions are granted for use in VBS programming only.

### What specific items are the permissions granted for?

Wilderness Escape Songs, music videos, and lyrics:

Other Wilderness Escape Media:

God Will Guide Us  
I Am  
I Will Sing Unto the Lord (The Horse and Rider)  
Shalom  
Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah  
There's Power in the Blood  
The Old Rugged Cross  
Wilderness Soundtrack (instrumental)

### What types of online events do I have permission to use these items in?

Livestream Events—online public or private presentations that occur one time live at a specific time.

Recorded Events—online presentations publicly or privately available for viewing on demand.

### How long are these permissions in effect?

You may take advantage of these permissions until 9/1/2020. Specific timing stipulations for the type of event are as follows:

Livestream Events—Permission for one-time use for the duration of the live event until 9/1/2020.

Recorded Events—Permissions granted for a 30-day period from the time the event is first posted online or 9/1/2020, whichever occurs first.

## **DENIED PERMISSIONS FOR ONLINE VBS PRESENTATIONS**

*Copyrights for the following music items are not owned by Group and we cannot provide permission for these items to be used in any online application whether audio or video or lyrics. If your church has a CCLI license agreement, you can contact the copyright holder and inquire about online rights for your church use. That copyright information can be found in the packaging of your Wilderness Escape Celebration Music CD.*

Wilderness Escape Songs, music videos, and lyrics:

Holy Is the Lord

Let God Arise

This Is How We Overcome

### **Can I use these items in a downloadable presentation?**

No. Permission is not granted for download use.

### **Can I use the Wilderness Escape VBS media items for online presentations that are not related to VBS?**

No. Permissions are only granted for online VBS use.