CORE VALUES OF KIDS MINISTRY

1. We are mission driven.
   We believe that the Holy Spirit has charged us with the high calling of leading children to saving faith in Jesus and nurturing that faith to full discipleship. We are dispensers of God’s word that brings spiritual life to young lives!

2. We are prayer powered.
   Prayer is vital in all that we do. Our ministry will never grow beyond the amount of prayer given to our Lord. As leaders, we will continually pray for our children and one another so that every need might be provided in seeking his Kingdom.

3. We are Bible based!
   God’s Word is our sole source for authority and through it God empowers his church. We will teach in relevant and creative ways from the Bible. The Bible is inerrant and completely reliable for revealing the whole truth about God and his saving plan for us.

4. We are relevant!
   Children are methodically taught Bible events, yet do not understand how these events relate to their lives. We are dedicated to showing not only how God was alive and active in the lives of the people of the Bible, but also how he is alive and active in our lives as well.

5. We are relational.
   It is important to learn to be relational, not just informational. Discipleship happens more from experiencing life through our interpersonal interactions rather than just accumulating information. Building positive caring relationships with individual children is the most effective tool to disciple them.

6. We equip kids to serve.
   Kids are ministers too! Discipling children not only involves nurturing their faith and serving them, it also helps them give back to the Lord by giving to others. Kids have spiritual gifts and talents that they need to use for the Lord!

7. We are Creative and Fun.
   We want a child-centered ministry. We want to speak their language. God has designed kids with a natural wonder of learning and creativity in play and expression. The best environment to deliver God’s love is one that cultivates fun and creative ways to learn of him.

8. We value volunteer Ministry Partners.
   Having paid staff does not create enough manpower to effectively lead children to Jesus as Savior and Lord. Instead, we wish to empower volunteer ministry partners and continue to value them for their ministry.
VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

• CONNECT
  I understand that serving in ministry is not to take the place of connecting to God and His people in worship. I recognize the imperative for all volunteers to attend worship a minimum of twice a month.

• GROW
  I recognize how the giving of time and talents can be draining if I am not being spiritually fed. All are encouraged to join a Life Group. I can seek assistance in finding a life group by speaking with any member of the Children’s Ministries staff or contacting the Church office for more information.

• FAITH
  I profess an active faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, and seek to grow in full discipleship to serve him.

• SUPPORT
  I promise to support the ministry and leadership of this church in our effort to be faithful to the great commission.

• TRAINING
  I will make every effort to attend training programs as scheduled for the sake of the children we serve.

• PREPARATION
  I will pray and prepare in advance so that I am effective when I arrive for my ministry activity.

• TEAM
  I will commit to excellence by meeting for prayer with my ministry team and by being on time for my teaching or service. I will notify my leader when I will be absent.

• PRAY
  I will pray for those under my ministry charge.

Statement of Belief (please initial)

St. John’s teaches and responds to the love of the Triune God: the Father, creator of all that exists; Jesus Christ, the Son, who became human to suffer and die for the sins of all human beings and to rise to life again in the ultimate victory over death and Satan; and the Holy Spirit, who creates faith through God’s Word and Sacraments. The three persons of the Trinity are coequal and coeternal, one God. Do you support this statement of faith?________

Do you believe the Holy Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, infallible and without error, useful for teaching, rebuking and application for daily living?________
OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

- CLEAR EXPECTATIONS
  We will provide you with a clear statement of philosophy of ministry and a job description for your role.

- TRAINING
  We will provide you with adequate training so that you might develop your ministry skills and increase your impact.

- EQUIPPING
  We will provide you with adequate facilities, materials and curriculum. We will work to keep these items current and in good order.

- SUPPORT
  We will support you with prayer and encouragement. We will seek to build a team around you for your mutual support and joy in the ministry.

- GROWTH
  We will help you grow in your faith as we empower you to learn God’s word and share it with children.

WHAT DOES DISCIPLESHIP LOOK LIKE DURING VBS?

Connect to God and His people in daily worship during chapel services

Grow together in God’s Word during small group time.

Share Christ with their Words, Service and Resources – daily offering, coin drive, praying for one another, and service challenges
SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES
For High Impact Discipleship

1. **God builds his Kingdom.**
   Your ministry belongs to him! He is the power behind it and the one who is to receive glory because of it.

2. **Our first job is prayer!**
   Pray: “Let us do what you are blessing, Lord, not merely try to have you bless what we are doing!” Remember, a ministry will never grow in spiritual depth beyond the amount of prayer given it.

3. **Our greatest resource is faith.**
   We must see how big God is and what he can do!

4. **We must keep Jesus at the center.**
   Jesus is the center of our message. It is only through Him that we have life and salvation. Point to what he has done for us more than what we must do for him!

5. **Continually pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit.**
   This is not a question of how much of the Holy Spirit you have. Instead, it is a question of how much of you the Holy Spirit has! Continually open your life to be used in whatever way he deems best so that you might better serve God.

DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLES
For High Impact Discipleship

1. **Every lesson leads to application.**
   There should be a balance between information and application. It is not just what we know, but how we encounter God and are changed into his likeness. This is application. Jesus’ messages were a balance between doctrine and practice, knowing and doing.

2. **Discipleship happens in relationships.**
   God uses relationships in the body of Christ to build discipleship. Impacting one’s character is more significant than the content of the lesson. Think of who influenced you in your growth. Let everyone in the group build up and encourage one another.

3. **Tickle the need.**
   The more a student is aware of their need, the more receptive they will be to what God is providing to meet that need.

4. **Keep Jesus in the center of every lesson.**
   Every Bible event points to Jesus, because he is the central message of the Bible and the only hope for our transformation. We always refer to him.

5. **Know how to use law and gospel.**
The law convicts us of our sin and need for Jesus. It drives us to the gospel. Our motivation and power to obey God flows from the power of the gospel, not the law. It comes from forgiveness and freedom in Christ. Jesus is now present in our lives to help us obey.

6. **Teach Bible discovery.**
   Inductive Bible study teaches kids to ask questions that help them encounter God’s truth for themselves. They need not only to have someone tell them what is in the Bible, but also they need to learn the joy of discovering it for themselves.

7. **Involve kids in doing activities that reinforce God’s truth.**
   “Tell me and I’ll forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I’ll understand.”
   - Chinese Proverb

8. **Give kids an opportunity to respond.**
   Kids need opportunities to commit their lives to Christ repeatedly. Kids need to learn to pray out loud for each other and for all their needs. Small group prayer time gives kids the opportunity to see how God works in people’s lives.

**EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES**
For High Impact Discipleship

1. **Repeat one main point.**
   It is better to emphasize one point that sticks with kids than to teach so many concepts they cannot grasp the main idea. John 16:12 says, “I have many more things to say to you, but they are too much.” Be sure to repeat the ‘take home point’ several times throughout the lesson.

2. **Know where you are going.**
   Begin with the ‘end goal’ in mind. If you don’t know where you want to end up at the end of the lesson, you will become lost in the journey.

3. **Use multiple senses.**
   The more senses used in teaching (hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, and smelling), the more effective the learning. We remember:
   
   - 5-10% of what we hear.
   - 25% of what we see and hear.
   - 40-60% of what we act out.
   - 80-90% of what we directly experience.

4. **Capture the kids’ attention.**
   Before anyone can learn they first need to pay attention to the topic.

5. **Use the “surprise principle.”**
   When surprised with a new experience, people learn quicker and remember longer.

6. **Speak the language of kids: fun!**
   When kids (and adults for that matter) enjoy learning, they learn more. Use humor!
7. Connect with feelings.
Encounter the lesson at a deeper level by encountering it emotionally. How does a certain situation make you feel?

8. Start with the learner's context.
Learn how to listen. This is where Jesus began. He spoke of fishing and farming. He used water and wine. He pointed to fig trees and flowers. He spoke to people in their language, about their problems. He understood them and their world. Consider what is going on in these kids' lives. How can we connect to them?

9. Know the best large group techniques.
Jesus was one of the best storytellers of all times. How will we present? Consider: costumed characters, audience participation drama, audience refrain storytelling, object lesson storytelling, etc.

10. Ask open questions, not just closed questions.
Closed questions are those that have only one answer. Though they are necessary in the observation portion of discovery, use open questions to dig deeper. These are the questions that challenge kids to think about what the text really means and finally "what it means to me." Affirm the answers to those questions as though they were a treasured gift.

11. Choose a teaching style to fit small group dynamics.
Small group time is more of a discussion and team project than it is a lecture. Consider the techniques that work well here: crafts, group experience games, art, role-playing, etc. Note that effective small groups range from 4-8 in size.

GENERAL PURPOSE SAFETY STATEMENT
St. John’s Lutheran Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children and youth of St. John’s Lutheran Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations. A detailed Crisis Management Plan is prominently accessible in all public spaces.

Definitions
For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and volunteer positions working with minors.

Selection of Workers
All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:
A. Six Month Rule: No volunteer will be considered for any position involving direct contact with minors until s/he has been involved with St. John’s Lutheran Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the volunteer allows for better evaluation and suitability of the volunteer for working with children.
B. Written Application: All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children,
previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at St. John’s Lutheran Church.

C. Personal Interview: Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

D. Reference Checks: Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicant’s references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at St. John’s Lutheran Church.

E. Protect My Ministry background check: All volunteers eighteen years of age and older must complete a Protect My Ministry background check form to be submitted to the church office before spending face time with minors at St. John’s Lutheran Church ministry events. Volunteers will not be scheduled prior to clearing this independent background check. Volunteer screening paperwork is only handled by specified staff members and all reports are held in strict confidence.

Two Leader Rule
It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some classes may have only one adult leader in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three minors with the adult teacher (youth leaders included). Youth Leaders (volunteers under 18 years of age) may not be left alone with students. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse
For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development.

Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at St. John’s Lutheran Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Director of Children’s Ministries for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at St. John’s Lutheran Church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.

3. Civil authorities will be notified, and St. John’s Lutheran Church will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law exists. St. John’s Lutheran Church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.

4. St. John’s Lutheran Church will discern an appropriate spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the community. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.

5. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

6. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from his/her position with children or youth.

Open Door Policy
Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure
For children below grade 3, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who must list allergies or other medical conditions and an emergency contact number on the sign in sheet. In addition, if someone other than the person dropping the child off will be picking them up, it will need to be noted. A valid state issued ID should be requested prior to releasing the child.

Sick Child Policy
It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at St. John’s Lutheran Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 24 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up.

Medications Policy
It is the policy of St. John’s Lutheran Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy. Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life threatening conditions (such as severe allergies or asthma). Parents of such children should address their situation with the Director of Children’s Ministries to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy
It is the policy of St. John’s Lutheran Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing,
hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult the staff member in charge if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

**Restroom Guidelines**
Children five years of age and younger should utilize a classroom bathroom, if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, volunteers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The volunteers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty; then allow the children inside. The volunteers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the volunteer should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the volunteer should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child. For children over the age of five, at least one male leader should take boys to the restroom and at least one female leader should take girls. For the protection of all, volunteers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

**Accidental Injuries to Children**
In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:
1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate. Fill out an accident report form and notify the child’s parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the staff member in charge. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed.

**DISCIPLINE THAT DISCIPLES**
*How To Handle Discipline Problems*

1. **Let the child know that you love them.**
Pray for this child during the week. Practice real concern for the child. The child will recognize it.

2. **Establish clear expectations.**
If your group is really struggling, you might want to write your expectations down and read them every week before you begin. Have no more than five and keep them very simple. Always begin with stating the main purpose for coming to small group, and continue with expectations for behavior. Examples are “Keep your hands to yourself” and “Listen when others are speaking.” Phrase these expectations in positives and not negatives such as “Don’t do this,” or “Don’t do that.”

3. **State what will happen when the expectations are met and when they are not met.**
Explain to the kids that when these expectations are met the entire group has a better experience. You may even provide a small reward or token as rewards. Also be clear that
when the expectation is not met that there will be consequences such as not receiving the reward or losing the privilege of being part of the group.

4. **Give rewards in a consistent manner.**
   Be consistent in praising the behavior that you would like to see the children demonstrate.

5. **Give consequences in a consistent manner.**
   For example: “The first time you choose not to listen and choose to disrupt others, I will ask you to sit next to me so that I can remind you to control yourself. If you choose again to do this behavior, then you will be asked to go with the ministry leader for five minutes. If you still choose to not be a cooperating member of the group, I will talk to your parents at pick up time.”

6. **Use the resources of the team.**
   The role of the ministry leader is to help with special discipline problems. Work together in managing children’s behavior. Also communicate with the parents and ask for their help to ensure the child’s cooperation. Oftentimes the parents will need help in basic parenting skills. Your children’s ministries leaders will refer them to a parenting class we offer or one offered in the Christian community.

**HELP ME FEEL SPECIAL**

**Steps To Attention And Affirmation**

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Colossians 4:6

1. Please call me by name—especially when you see me outside the classroom. Pray for me by name out loud.

2. Make gentle and direct eye contact. If you really want to honor me—I listen when you kneel down to my level.

3. Please don’t ask me "yes" or "no" questions but ask me "how" and "what about" questions. Let me talk and tell you what I think.

4. Touch me in appropriate ways to communicate love. I like hugs, pats on the back, tousling hair, and holding hands. (This does depend on how old I am.)

5. Please be aware of how I’m feeling and accept my feelings. If I’m shy, approach me tenderly. If I’m rambunctious, I might need simply to play with you for a while.

6. I need compliments. But I especially need compliments on the things that God compliments, not just outward signs of beauty the way the world compliments. Compliment the fruits of the spirit that you see in my life.

7. I will really listen to you when I know that you care about me enough to send me a postcard Wow! Hardly anyone has ever done that for me before!
8. Grownups are often in a hurry. I need you to slow down and relax. Take some time and enjoy God with me. After all, didn’t he take a day and make it special just so there would be time for his people to spend with him.

PLEASE UNDERSTAND ME...

I am 2 and 3 years old!

1. I learn best by experiencing.
   a. ”Let me see it, touch it, feel it, hear it… maybe even taste it.”
   b. “Let me act out songs and actions to the Bible events.”

2. I have a short attention span. I may not sit still very long (3-4 minutes).
   a. Rotate activities. Some should be quiet and calm and others should be more active and expressive.
   b. Create a special place for us to do our activities together.

3. I like repetition.
   a. I will learn by watching and doing what you do.
   b. I like hearing familiar stories repeated.

4. I am naturally curious.
   a. I need to ask “why.”
   b. I may have a “one track” mind but it switches tracks often.

5. I can learn about Jesus and God.
   a. I can learn about key people and key names. But I may need to hear them repeatedly.
   b. I especially like to learn about Jesus. He is a real person I will hear about often.

6. I need to feel secure.
   a. I can learn a lot about God’s love by feeling love and getting attention.
   b. Spiritual growth for me has much to do about feelings.
   c. I can learn that God is loving and protecting when I feel safe and secure.

I am 4 and 5 years old!

1. I learn best by experiencing.
   a. ”Let me see it, touch it, feel it, hear it… maybe even taste it.”
   b. “Let me act out songs and actions to the Bible events.”

2. I have a short attention span. I may not sit still very long (5-6 minutes).
   a. Rotate activities. Some should be quiet and calm and others should be more active and expressive.
   b. Create a special place for us to do our activities together.

3. I like learning by repetition.
   a. Repeat the same words.
b. Then repeat the story and let me fill in the blanks.

4. I like to use my imagination.
   a. Help me act out the Bible event.
   b. Let me show you how I might move when we tell the Bible event again.

5. Learning is fun.
   a. I like new things… new words… and new concepts.
   b. I don’t like trying to learn too many things at one time. Please don’t over teach me.
   c. Instead, notice when I learn one thing and celebrate with me!

6. I am a literal learner.
   a. I think concretely. Keep your stories simple.
   b. Don’t tell me many analogies that are abstract.
   c. Trusting God is important to me.

7. I am at the stage where I cannot only understand truths about God but also trust him. You might call this a simple child-like faith.

**I am a 1st and 2nd grader!**

1. I need routine.
   a. Routines are helpful for my security.
   b. Give me clear predictable patterns to follow.
   c. My own space helps me feel safe.

2. Give me variety between quiet and active activities.
   a. My skills are growing and now I can accomplish small motor activities. I like to see the results of my work.
   b. Sometimes I need time to think. Help me slow down and give me quiet time to do so.
   c. Other times, I need to be active and move around while I learn.
   d. Please let me know what your expectations are, so I can do the right thing.
   e. I can concentrate for longer periods of time.

3. I need to belong.
   a. Being part of a group is important to me.
   b. I like having fun with a group of kids.
   c. It helps if you help us get to know one another. Especially help us to know each other’s names.

4. Full participation is important to me.
   a. I like to fully participate in worship or actions if I can. For example, if we sing, please make sure I can sing the songs, too. And equally important, I want to successfully perform the actions to the song.
   b. If we read from the Bible, I like to at least have my Bible open so I can recognize some of the words that I know.
   c. Please don’t make me read out loud, unless I ask to.
5. Please help me connect the Bible events to life.
   a. I like the Bible events and the story line. Now it is easier to see how they can teach me.
   b. I’m interested in what happened long ago and how it can help me today.

I am a 3rd and 4th grader!

1. Friends are very important to me.
   a. I am watching very closely how you react to my friends. Please give positive encouragement to them, as well.

2. I still prefer active learning.
   a. Though I still like quiet, and need it, I prefer more activity in the learning process.
   b. I have an expanded attention span.
   c. Although I still like predictable routine, I’m now able to stay with one task for up to 20 minutes.

3. I love using the Bible.
   a. Show me how to find verses. Let me see it in my own Bible.
   b. Don’t spend too much time letting everyone read out loud. It may go too slowly.
   c. Please don’t force me to read out loud. If I can’t read out loud, it doesn’t mean I don’t like to use my Bible.

4. Discuss how people live their faith. I’m at a stage where I want to know why people live as they do.
   a. I am interested in how to deal fairly with people. And I am very interested in how God dealt “more than fairly” when he gave us his grace in Jesus.
   b. The concept of grace is attractive to me. I especially like a positive image of God.

I am a 5th and 6th grader!

1. I identify better with older kids more easily than with younger kids.

2. I am sensitive to things that are too “kiddy-like.” For example, I used to like watching cartoon shows and now it reminds me of being a little kid. However I am interested in middle school and the next glamorous step for me: becoming a teenager. But I am not ready to enter that world yet, even if I’m eager to do so.

3. I need to ask self-discovery questions. This is a time period that I’m learning much about who I am as I weigh equally the influence of both parents and my friends. Help me discover myself by asking questions about what I think.

4. I am very sensitive to what peers think. Also, I ask how do I fit in? For some of us, this may make me shy and embarrassed sometimes. For others, I may become loud and annoying as I try for other’s attention. Either way, we are watching each other very closely.
5. Spiritually I am asking, “How does life fit together?” I am trying to see how the Bible makes sense and how it can help me in my life. I am asking deeper questions and seeking how God can work in my life. Take time to listen to some of my questions and even help me ask them. Help me put them in my own words. What you say will help me make sense of spiritual truths.

6. I am ready to study and learn from the Bible… but I still need fun. Encourage me to find answers in the Bible but also help the Bible come alive by giving me relational activities that help me learn.

TIPS FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

1. Prepare for children with special needs
Gather your leadership team and ask the question: “What will we do when we have a child with special needs?” Plan now. The following tips will get you started in your planning, but it is best to find one person who will take responsibility to oversee this ministry. This person needs to communicate well with children’s ministry staff and parents so that procedures could be developed to the local ministry setting. See the form, “Personal Information for Kids with Special Needs” as a valuable communication resource.

2. Kids with physical disabilities
You may have children in your program that are physically challenged. They may be in a wheelchair or use a walker. Physically challenged kids might be shy and quiet, but that doesn’t mean they are not intelligent and bright. Help them have success by working with a buddy in your small group. If more severely challenged, you might find a teen age or adult helper.
Find out from a parent or caregiver what the child needs help doing and what he likes to do for himself. Then encourage him to participate in the area he enjoys the most. A buddy can help him in the area he needs help, such as cutting with scissors for example.

3. Kids with learning disabilities
You may have a child in your group with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder or some other learning disability like dyslexia. These children just learn differently from other children. Again, find out from parents what techniques work to help keep this child engaged or refocused when needed.
Incorporating many different styles of learning into the activities is beneficial for special needs students. Give children opportunities to move and use different senses. Shepherds can situate themselves closer to these children and address their needs better in small groups.
For kids with physical disabilities or learning disabilities an additional helper may be assigned to help them one on one.

4. Kids with severe disabilities
Every child of God should be valued. Jesus values them. If a child’s needs are so severe that they are disruptive or cannot assimilate well into a regular small group, a mentor may need to be assigned to shadow them. Please join us in praying for the right adult or teen age mentor that can spend time loving and mentoring this child in a separate classroom. Once a mentor has been found, be sure to incorporate the “two adult” rule. The mentor can
read Bible events, play games, sing songs and talk about how Jesus loves them. This is an invaluable ministry to the parents of these children as well.

HOW TO…

HOW TO TALK SO KIDS UNDERSTAND

1. **Understand their world.**
   Do more listening than talking. You will better understand their world and grasp how to better communicate to the issues in their lives.

2. **Let them know you care.**
   Your non-verbal communication and tone of voice will say much about how you feel towards your children. If you genuinely care for them and pray for them, it will show itself in simple ways. All kids need significant adults to be attentive to them.

3. **Build expectations.**
   If you have something very important to say, don’t hesitate to say, “I want you to listen. What we are going to talk about is very important.” You can also build expectations by giving a teaser such as, “By the end of today’s lesson, you will have the secret for true happiness that can help you the rest of your life.”

4. **Arrange their space.**
   Always be aware of the shape of your circle. As much as possible, keep your children in a circle so that no one is left out. The circles will help prevent someone from crowding in for more attention. This will make it easier for everyone to listen and not be distracted.

5. **Remove distractions.**
   If a child has a toy or an object in their hands and you need their undivided attention, politely ask them to put it away. When their activity relates to the topic, sometimes objects in their hands will help them in conversation and learning. If any one child becomes too domineering and becomes a distraction, remove that child temporarily from the group.

6. **Make eye contact.**
   As much as possible, be at the same eye level as your children—even if this means sitting on the floor or kneeling over a table. Direct eye contact helps children feel valued.

7. **Change voice inflection.**
   If you have something very important to say, you may pause, change the rhythm, or change the voice tone. Such change and variety pulls children’s attention back to the topic if their minds were wandering.

HOW TO HELP KIDS USE THE BIBLE

1. **Use a readable translation.**
   For children, we use and recommend *THE HANDS ON BIBLE (NLT)*. This translation consciously combines scholarly accuracy with natural English.

2. **Encourage kids to bring their own Bibles and use them.**
Kids can even mark their Bibles, underlining special words or passages that are significant to them.

3. **Teach kids to look up verses.**
Kids often see looking up verses as a fun puzzle to solve. You can teach any child to do this in the following way:

   “Look to the index to find the name of the book and the corresponding page numbers. Go to that book. Next go to the big number, which is the chapter number. Finally, you will find the small number, which is the verse number.”

4. **Challenge kids to read their Bibles at home.**
Small group leaders, we encourage you to do this as well. When you are growing spiritually from reading God’s word, you will be more inspired as you share with your group of kids.
One way to encourage your kids to read their Bibles is to ask them if they ever watch cartoons before they are ready to walk out the door to go to school. If they do, that means they have enough time to take five minutes to read from the Bible. This is a wonderful way to listen to what God has to say to them before they begin their day.

   **HOW TO HELP KIDS PRAY OUT LOUD**

1. **Relax when you pray.**
   Much of this world is in a hurry. Show kids that prayer time is a special time with God and that we can slow down, think and not be in a hurry.

2. **Expect to connect with God.**
   Prepare everyone’s expectations that we will be talking to the God of the universe. He will be listening and answering our prayers. It is one of the most important conversations we will have all week long.

3. **Use conversational voice.**
   Avoid preachy or religious intonation. Rather, let it be a natural conversation with God.

4. **Don’t pressure kids to pray.**
   Don’t force kids to pray but encourage them through invitation. Also compliment kids who do pray from the heart even if they have little eloquence. It helps others feel more ready next time.

5. **Demonstrate that short prayers are fine.**
   Let the child know that just a few spoken words are as significant as many. God looks at what comes from the heart not the number of words spoken.

6. **Request prayer for special topics.**
   Give specific suggestions of what needs prayer and ask, “Who will pray for this?” For example:
   - Who knows someone who is sad because they feel all alone?
   - Who knows someone who is sick?
• Who knows someone who may not trust Jesus and needs to turn his/her life to him?
• Who will give thanks?
• Let’s all think of one thing we learned and pray that God would help us do it or remember it.

**HOW TO LEAD A CHILD TO CHRIST**

1. **Be in prayer from beginning to end.**
Remember a child’s conversion or growth in faith is not in your power to give. It is God’s gift. Keep your heart open to how the Holy Spirit is moving in the life of the child. Continue praying when the Lord gives you special opportunity to lead the child to him. *Matthew 9:38.*

2. **Help the child see that God created and loves him/her.**
It is because of God’s love for us that he gave a rescue plan. Don’t take God’s love for granted or assume that everyone knows it. Be impressed with and impress others with the magnitude of God’s love. *John 3:16-18; Jeremiah 31:3; Zephaniah 3:17.*

3. **Help the child be convicted of his/her sin.**
Before a child is ready for the gospel, the child needs to know the need to be forgiven. Before they can truly appreciate being restored to God, they need to know that their relationship to God is broken because of sin. Explain sin as those actions we do that are against what God wants us to do. Because all people sin, they need someone to take their sin away. Explain that Jesus gave his life on the cross to die for our sin. He took the punishment that each person’s sin deserved. That punishment meant that he had to die. But he did not stay dead. He rose from the dead and now is alive. He tells us that if we trust him, he will take our sin away. *John 19:30; Romans 3:10-18 and 23-26; Acts 4:10b-12.*

4. **Encourage the child to be baptized and offer to pray with him/her in thanksgiving for what Christ has done for them.**
Explain that Baptism is one of the ways God gives His grace to us. It is a gift of forgiveness for everyone. Just as good parents bathe their children, God cleanses us from sin in the waters of baptism. You may direct families to our website for more information on getting baptized at St. John’s or talk to your Children’s Ministries go-to staff member to reach out to the family for you.
Help the child say a prayer of thanksgiving for God’s love, His forgiveness and grace. Allow room for the Holy Spirit to work through you and the child as you pray together. *John 6:47, 20:28; Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 John 1:7-9.*

*The Bible has both conveting power and assurance in its pages. Use the verses noted with students age seven and older. Let them see that Scripture is something they can stand on (Psalm 119:89-91) and believe.*
TIPS FOR LARGE GROUP PRESENTERS
How to be an effective large group leader:

1. Pray, pray, pray.
The level of your spiritual maturity and priorities sets the pace for the entire team. Don’t expect to impact kids’ lives without praying for all those in your ministry area. Depend on God who will do a mighty work because of his grace and love toward you!

2. Don’t talk too long. Begin by getting right to the point.
The most common mistake large group presenters make is to talk too much. When they do, they can sound “preachy” and kids will tune them out. Be precise and to the point. Eliminate needless comments. Don’t begin with rhetorical questions like “How are you?” or comments about the weather. Cut right to the chase. Go to the action and begin your teaching presentation that will capture your audience’s attention.

3. Become free from your script.
Some presentations allow you to read a story. But most presentations expect you to be a storyteller. You must know your material well enough to keep eye contact with the audience and only occasionally refer to the script. Most scripts have paragraph topics so you can remember the main points of the presentation.

You must practice your part in advance. Speak it out loud. If you don’t know your script and the flow of the presentation, you will not only appear disorganized but you will talk too long. It takes preparation to be concise, hit the point succinctly and then close the session. See more in the training topic, Preparation before Presentation.

5. Make sure that you emphasize the Take Home Point repeatedly.
Keep this phrase within sight while on stage so you can make sure you use it at least three times. Use the exact words.

6. Prepare the room and props.
You are responsible for arranging the room so optimum communication is achieved. Check the sound system, special lighting, and be sure props are in place. Remove anything that may be a distraction from the stage or seating area. Don’t allow any unnecessary junk or items on stage that are not part of your presentation.

7. Recruit drama people as needed.
The people who enjoy doing dramatic presentations are usually happy to use their gifts in the church. Just remember to find and ask them with plenty of time in advance. Give them a script and encourage creativity in developing their character.

8. Gather your team beforehand for prayer.
The most important preparation you can do as a team is to pray together. Remember great performances do not change lives. God’s word does that as the Holy Spirit uses you to present it.

9. Presentation hint: Design a smooth flow.
If you have several components in your large group presentation, fit them together for a smooth flow. For example, you may have a song, a mission announcement, a Bible event
and a guest introduction. If the singing brings the energy up and you want to maintain it, make sure the mission announcement is engaging and to the point so that you don’t lose momentum before getting to the Bible event. Watch for any dead time between components. Five seconds of lag time is all that is needed to lose the kids’ attention.

10. **Presentation hint: Give clear expectations for behavior.**
Tell the kids what you expect for their behavior in large group. Thank them when they behave well. Keep rules and guidelines simple and easy to be repeated. For example: “Hands to yourself, voices off and listening ears on.”

**Large Group Presentation Techniques**

1. **A Visit from the Traveler:**
The Traveler is a character costumed in traveling gear: backpack, walking stick, hiking hat and shoes. He explains that he has traveled all through the world of the Bible, discovering wonderful deeds God has done. He tells of an adventure he just discovered in God’s word as he pulls the Bible out of his backpack. As he tells the Bible event, he pulls out objects from his backpack that illustrate the story.

2. **Imagination Theater:**
Imagination Theater is audience participation drama where the Bible event is told in creative fashion, using children as actors. The Imagination Box contains the Bible and other special props used for the drama. Begin by removing the Bible and explain that it is God’s word. Open the Bible to the page you will be presenting. Be amazed and delighted in what you find there. Then remove an imaginary hat and place it on your head. This is your Imagination Hat. Invite the children to put on theirs as well. They will also use their imaginations to picture the events the Bible tells us about. Some will even use their imaginations to help act out these events. Distribute props to actors as they are called forward at the beginning of the presentation. Have them sit to the side until they are called on stage. An adult assistant will be helpful in bringing children to the front and preparing them.

3. **Mystery Box:**
The Mystery Box contains objects that will help the presenter tell the Bible event in a creative fashion. They can be lifted out and shown as the story is told. Another option is to have a hole cut in the top of the box so that a child could put a hand in and guess what the object is before it is shown.

4. **A Visit from a Dramatized Character:**
Ask the children to put on their Imagination Hats so they can imagine they are meeting a character from the Bible. Then a costumed adult presents the Bible event, telling it from first person point of view. This can be the presenter or a guest actor. If the presenter performs as the character, then he should make the transition with a bit of dramatic flair. He turns his back to the audience and puts on some costume pieces. When he turns back around to face the audience, he has been dramatically transformed into another character. With new voice inflection, he tells his story.

5. **Simple Storytelling:**
Reading a Bible story or telling the Bible event can be done effectively with expressive voice and dramatic gestures. Children can express part of the story by repeating a phrase or acting out the motions.
6. **Action Pantomime:**
An action pantomime gives children the opportunity to act out the Bible event in unison as directed by the presenter. The presenter says a line and does an action. The children join in echoing the action.

7. **Tandem Story Tell:**
Before beginning each sketch, have the children put on their Imagination Hats. They will be meeting two actors who are pretending to be characters from today’s Bible event. In tandem storytelling, two storytellers stand on opposite sides of the stage and tell the Bible event back and forth in short sentences or phrases. The storytellers act as if they do not realize the other person is there. They may or may not be dressed in costumes. Ideally, the storytellers have the script memorized. But if that is not possible it is also okay for them to read the script. The key to tandem storytelling is to keep each character’s phrases short and keep the energy level high. At the end of the sketch, the storytellers will sometimes discover each other and the sketch will end with them conversing together.

**Storytelling Techniques**

1. **Understand the difference between storytelling and preaching.**
Storytelling is using a technique in which both the presenter and the audience are involved in bringing a message to life. In a sermon or regular theater, the story would be presented whether the audience was involved or not.

2. **Understand that storytelling has a purpose.**
When a Bible event is told in storytelling form, it is not just being told as entertainment, but to make a point. Storytelling will show a change in the main character. Characters will be faced with a challenge or something they desire. After an action is completed, they will either have met or not met the challenge. They will have either filled the desire or left it unfilled. One thing is for sure, change happens and teaches us about what we want to change in our lives.

3. **Logical flow—setting—conflict—outcome.**
Small details in the story lend themselves to the flow. The setting is what explains the situation and character. The conflict is the resolution, or struggle evidenced, in the action that ensues. Oftentimes, the discovery is learned or a direction is taken that can bring resolution. The outcome is the resolution or conclusion that brings transformation about. When preparing for storytelling, ask yourself these simple questions.

   - How would I describe the setting or the characters?
   - What is the struggle being faced?
   - What discoveries or choices are being made? What is the outcome that brings change?
   - What can we learn from such outcomes?

4. **Look for story patterns.**
When telling your story, look for patterns of repetition in groups of three or seven or even forty. Sometimes it’s worth counting. Sometimes it’s helpful with preschool children to have them count with you through some of those patterns. They love to count out loud. Look for special refrains, such as “And God said, ‘It was good.’” Look for surprise reversals. For example, Jesus washed his disciples’ feet.
5. **Put yourself inside the story before letting the story outside of you.**
   This means reading the story and imagining the details of being there.
   - What was the temperature?
   - What did it smell like?
   - What time of day was it? Who else was there?
   - Why were certain words important?
   - What were things that were funny… or sad?

Tell the story to yourself before telling it to others.

Speaking out loud is different than speaking something in your mind. Force yourself to speak it out loud to yourself. It will give you insight to the best ways to share it verbally with others. Practice telling the story with your body as well as with words for the actions will show emotion and more vividly portray the story.

6. **Whatever storytelling technique you use, think about how your audience can be a part of the experience.**
   - What parts can they repeat?
   - What refrains can they repeat?
   - What noises can they make?
   - What thoughts can they share that will help them belong to the storytelling?

**Involving the Crowd Without Losing Control**

1. **Make a strong entrance.**
   Many presenters begin with the rhetorical question, “How are you today?” Kids don’t know whether to respond or not. But it is certainly not a question that warms up the audience or grabs their attention. Consider something like this instead. “I can’t wait to meet our mystery guest today.” With preschool kids you might say, “Hands on your nose, hands on your toes, hands on your back, hands on your lap. I can tell you are ready to listen. You are now ready to meet a most interesting Bible character…” For older kids it is effective to bring out the mystery box and start telling the story directly, with no further introduction. Another idea to warm up your audience is to make a comment of something positive or humorous about what was done in small group warm-up or as they entered the room. Remember, be brief and capture their attention!

2. **Keep expectations clear.**
   The expectations for crowd control need to be short simple and clearly stated each week. This can be done in the following way: “I really do believe that we have some of the greatest kids in the world here. They know the best way to get the most out of this experience. They pay attention up front, do their part when asked, and they remember not to talk to their neighbor until the presentation is over. “

3. **Quiet the room before presenting.**
   If kids are talking to one another, don’t try and talk over them. Instead, get them back on track by using one of the following techniques:
   - Stop, be quiet, stare down, and even approach anyone who is talking without permission or distracting a neighbor.
   - Call that kid to do some motion or action. Continue until the rest of the kids are ready to do an activity or are ready to focus.
   - Briefly explain your expectations.
- Change your tone of voice and ask for their attention because what you are going to say is very important.  
*It is best not to ask for their attention, but rather to capture it by involving them.*

4. **Handle discipline problems with a team approach.**  
Make sure other volunteers are in the area and can break up any disruptions or conversations between children. After being warned once, a child needs to be removed from the center of the group and placed on the outer edge. Though this is a brief distraction, the rest of the kids will know that you mean business.

### How To Get The Audience To Participate

1. **Make clear expectations of what they are to do.**  
Tell them what to do, when to do it and how to do it. Sometimes you will nod with your head to signal a pause or mouth words with the audience so they can follow the cue. Help them know what you expect. Help them experience success. Never criticize the audience for a lack of response. Sometimes actions may be embarrassing or confusing. The audience may not want to participate. Instead of criticizing, make light of it and move on.

2. **Make audience responses simple.**  
If the audience is doing a refrain, it must be simple enough to be remembered. Better yet, it can be written down on poster board and flashed up when it is their turn. When audience participants come forward, make sure they have a role to play.

3. **Understand your audience.**  
With preschool children, be sure you use simple responses and easy group participation activities. With elementary and pre-teen students, be cautious not to make their responses too childish. Don’t make them embarrassed to participate. Don’t emphasize their response so much that they lose the main point of the message.

### SMALL GROUP LEADER TIPS AND TRICKS  
**How To Be An Effective Small Group Leader**

1. **Pray, pray, pray.**  
The level of your spiritual maturity and priorities are vital to giving a high impact discipleship experience to your kids. It will be helpful to keep a prayer journal for your kids and their prayer needs. This also helps you keep track of when they are missing and how you can encourage them by sending a note when they have been absent for a while.

2. **Spend time reading the Bible devotionally.**  
Resist the temptation to read the Bible only as a preparation for serving. Read it to discover what God wants to communicate to you personally. Include the Bible portion of your lesson as part of your personal devotions.

3. **Read over the lesson.**  
Before you arrive, take time to read your lesson and think of what you might share from your own life that applies to that particular truth.
4. **Arrange the seating in a circle.**
When you arrive, please don't overlook the importance of having everyone in a circle sitting on the floor or having furniture situated in a round circle. If you have rectangular tables, circle seating may not be possible. But as much as possible arrange your group so that everyone can see one another. Avoid leaving any one person outside the group. It is very important to create an environment where no one is seated outside the group in such a way that he or she is between the leader and another person.

5. **Make your expectations simple and clear.**
That might sound like this: “I’m looking forward to all of us having a chance to participate in life group today. Let’s remember to respect each other when they are talking. We can do that by not distracting others, listening to what is being said, and being good friends to each other. I am sure that God has something special he wants to say to each and every one of us. Let’s make sure we are able to listen to his voice when he speaks to us in his word.”

6. **Help with “crowd control.”**
During large group presentations help the children stay attentive and focused, by moving around the room and sitting next to children who are distracted. Be as unobtrusive as possible. With gentle taps to shoulders or with eye contact, some children will quickly respond when they know they are misbehaving. If any of the children continue to misbehave or distract the group, remove them from the group and sit with them outside the group, after explaining to them the behavior that was inappropriate.

7. **Watch for new children.**
Ministry events can be a scary and intimidating place for some children when they don’t know anyone. Connect with new children personally and help them find an activity that interests them. Find them a partner to be their special friend and escort for the day.

8. **Communicate with your director.**
Leadership needs your feedback to help the ministry grow and reach more kids. Talk to the director about special questions or needs that you may have. Be open to the training and empowering events provided for you, as well. Please communicate with the director if you are going to miss a scheduled date and are unable to find a substitute.

9. **Invite other adults (or teens) to join the team.**
Your leaders need help in sharing with others how exciting children’s ministry can be. Please invite your friends to join you in observing, so that they might be encouraged to participate as a ministry partner themselves. (Friends may visit one time only before they must complete background checks)

10. **Listen to your kids.**
Before you help your kids apply God’s truth to their lives, you must listen and understand their world. Even a small amount of attention goes a long way. Kids feel valued when a mentor shows interest, asks personal questions and seeks to understand what that child’s world is like.
11. **Help the kids apply the truth, not just know it.**
You are doing something more than simply imparting information. You are challenging kids to apply God’s truth to their world. Check on their progress. Ask about how they applied last week’s lesson.

12. **Give time for kids to think and contemplate.**
Don’t be afraid of quiet or thinking you need to answer all the questions. Give the children time to consider what they think or to listen to what God is speaking to their hearts. It is helpful for them to process what they are learning, so don’t feel in a hurry.

13. **Follow-up.**
You will have a huge impact with your kids when you show special attention outside of class. Any special follow-up such as a postcard to the child when absent or sick for a while… or when they celebrate a special victory… is greatly appreciated. When you arrive to serve, be prayed up and ready to focus on the kids and their lives.

14. **Stay connected to the team.**
If you have frustrations or victories, share them with your lead teacher and other shepherds. The team has much to share with each other and it is vitally important to encourage one another. Your ministry leader is there to help you. You can help them do their job better by giving your feedback and connecting together for the common mission of reaching today’s kids with Jesus.

**Responsibilities**

1. **Your preparation:**
Your daily lessons are in your VBS leader book. Please read the entire lesson beforehand, not just the large group presentation. It is helpful to know what the students are doing in their small group experience. Look over your lessons early enough to allow time for ideas of how you will present can “simmer” in your mind. If you think you will have a hard time remembering your presentation, write out the key speaking points on a piece of paper and place it on the floor or reading stand during the presentation. You can then glance down for visual prompts.

2. **Gather with your team**
Please arrive no later than 8:00 a.m. in the Auditorium to pray, hear a devotion and go over what is needed for the morning.

3. **Prepare your setting:**
Prepare your room, your props and seating arrangements. Also check the setting for lights and sound.

4. **Connect with the audience:**
Develop a relationship with the kids by greeting them when they enter and by taking personal interest in them whenever you can. Become familiar enough with their world so that you can communicate at their level and to their needs.

5. **Group presentation:**
You will have complete scripts to assist you in effective storytelling techniques. This will develop your large group presentation skills.
6. **Support the team:**
When not presenting, be ready to assist with the following:

- Assist in leading interactive events
- Help with small group time
- Assist with craft time
- Distribute snacks

7. **Debrief with your team:**
After your presentation, gather with others that can help evaluate your ministry. Work closely with the rest of the team to assess ways you can continue to improve.

8. **Clean-up:**
After your presentation, put away any equipment and props. Help keep the presentation area clean

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**SMALL GROUP LEADER**

**Overview**

1. **Your primary task:**
Help children connect to God and His people in their own age appropriate worship. Build a relationship with your kids. Listen to them and learn about their lives. Talk to kids as you go through the lesson and activities. Help them discover the truth of God’s word and how it fits into their lives. Especially repeat the main phrase of the day and help them apply it to their lives.

2. **Your time commitment:**
Daily from 8:00 a.m. to 12:20 pm with the exception of Friday. Friday hours will vary depending on how long it takes to clean up your classroom once all students are picked up.

4. **What to do when you will be absent:**
Please keep in mind that we are counting on you each day! However, we understand that there are unforeseeable emergencies that arise. Please contact your team leader and age level director ASAP if you cannot serve one day.

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**Responsibilities**

1. **Your preparation:**
Please take the time in advance to read through your lesson and apply it to your own life. If you have any questions about the lesson, you can contact your leader via email or ask during morning devotions. Pray for your kids during the week.

2. **Arrival:**
Please arrive no later than 8:00 a.m. for devotions. At this time, you will also receive any directions or announcements.

3. **Large group:**
The large group presenter teaches the Bible event for the day. Small group leaders are responsible for helping with classroom management and student participation.
4. **Worship:**
Participate in the worship experience. Assist in keeping the children focused and intervene if a child is distracting another. You may be needed to help in a support role with the large group presentation.

5. **Small group application:**
Gather your small group of children at your assigned table or area of the room. Review the Bible event as you visit with the children, discussing how it relates to the activity. Throughout the morning, be sure to reinforce the Take Home Point. As opportunities arise, help the children find specific ways they can apply the lesson to their life and grow in their trust relationship with Jesus.

6. **Large group wrap-up:**
End your time together by gathering your small group to pray. Help the children pray out loud. Begin with a minute of explaining what they can pray for. Then ask every child to pray. Teach them to begin their prayer with “Dear God”… and then continue. The large group leader advises when it is time to leave with your group for large group wrap-up. The large group presenter reviews the Bible event and the Take Home Point of the day.

7. **Dismissal:**
Be familiar with dismissal procedures, only releasing the child to the parent or guardian who brought them. Be sure to give children any craft or coloring page. Be sure kids leave their nametags and don’t go home with them. After the children are gone, please clean your area and hang up your children’s nametags.