



Leader Devotionals

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Encouragement and Helps for VBS Leaders

As VBS leaders and teachers, our first goal should be to communicate the Bible to children in such a way that it comes to life for them. We must accept the challenge to be concise and engaging as we share the scripture. Since Rolling River Rampage focuses on the Gospel stories, it is essential for children to understand that each of these is a story from a very long, big book.

Background on the Bible

- ▲ The Bible has two parts: the Old and New Testaments.
- ▲ The Old Testament is the first part of the Bible and it is very old. It is about God creating us and loving us and being in relationship with us.
- ▲ The second part of the Bible is the New Testament and it is the section about Jesus, the church, and us. In the New Testament there are four books called the Gospels and they are about Jesus' life.
- ▲ The four Gospels are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They were all written by different people at different times so, even though they are all about Jesus, they each have a unique perspective.
- ▲ Both gospels used in this curriculum are synoptic. Matthew and Luke are sourced (as well as Mark) from what we believe to be one original document. As a result, there are many similarities between these three gospels.

The Gospel of Matthew

We believe Matthew to have been a Jewish tax collector for the Roman government, not a person the Jews thought of highly. He was well educated and could read and write. His book is sometimes called the Jewish Gospel because of its implied understanding of Jewish law and custom. His style of writing uses persuasive speech for Jews to know Jesus as the Messiah.

The Gospel of Luke

Luke was a doctor who wrote a gospel that tells of people as they are. He was a companion of Paul and had ample opportunity to research the details of Jesus life which he fastidiously recorded for us in the gospel. Luke was not Jewish, so his perspective presents Jesus as Savior for all the world.

A Note about Our Theme Verse

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. - Isaiah 43:2

The prophet Isaiah from the Old Testament recorded for us this rock solid promise from God—not a promise that we will avoid trouble, not a promise that guarantees an easy ride. It's a promise that says I, the Lord your GOD, am going to be beside you through it all. I created you and will not abandon you. You are not alone. What a wonderful message to teach children, and to encourage us as leaders, too!

How to Use These Devotionals

These devotionals are appropriate for use in a group setting or as personal devotional readings. If you are doing them on your own, write out your responses to the discussion questions in your journal or somewhere else as a personal reflection for you.

These readings also lend themselves well to the Lectio Divina method of Bible study. Lectio Divina means "holy or divine reading." It is a way for us to come to scripture expectantly, asking God to reveal God's self to us. It is thoughtful and meditative in its approach to reading, understanding, and applying the scripture. Simply do the following:

- ▲ **Step 1—Read** the scripture passage slowly. What does it say? What is happening in this passage? Note any words or phrases that specifically catch your attention.
- ▲ **Step 2—Meditate** on the passage, especially the words/phrases you noted. Try to be still and listen. What is God saying to you in/about this passage?
- ▲ **Step 3—Pray** about what you have read and heard through this passage. What is your reaction to God's Word? Be honest, and don't worry; God can handle any emotions you are having!
- ▲ **Step 4—Apply** what you have read, heard, seen, and felt to your life. How are you going to follow through on God's Word for you?

After this process, move through the bible Background found at www.cokeburyvbs.com or in the Bible Storyteller.

Leader Devotional

Jesus calls us to a great adventure!

Welcome to Rolling River Rampage, where we will experience the ride of a lifetime with God!

First of all, thank you for saying yes to serving in VBS. You have given of your gifts, time, and energy to bring the incredible experience of life in God's presence to young people.

Our overall goal in Rolling River Rampage will be to help our Rafters embrace our Rafting Ready Verse from

Isaiah 43:2: When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.

- ▲ **Have you ever experienced this verse coming to life in your own journey? Describe it.**
- ▲ **How will this verse help our Rafters to experience the ride of a lifetime with God?**

It is our hope that this verse will encourage our Rafters with the knowledge that, no matter what the conditions of life, God will be with them during the easy times and the difficult times.

In our first Bible story, we meet ordinary working people who answered the call to follow Jesus. These people walked away from their livelihood and their lives, which ultimately led to ride of a lifetime with God. Such a response could be troubling to some children while for others, it may seem natural to be so excited that you drop everything and chase after something much better.

- ▲ **Ponder for a moment how this childlike sense of wonder allows the possibility to encounter Jesus and jump into the journey with immediate trust and commitment.**

Consider Jesus' invitation in Matthew 4:19a: "Come follow me."

- ▲ **Think of a time when you said yes to that question. How did it feel to say yes?**
- ▲ **Is it easy or difficult for you to follow without knowing exactly what will happen?**

During each session at Rolling River Rampage, we will discover a Rapid Reminder (key learning) to absorb and apply to our lives. Our Session One Rapid Reminder

is Find Adventure on the River! Our goal is to teach Rafters that God is with them during each adventure; in the easy and difficult times of this journey we call life. As leaders, we will repeat this reminder often during teaching times with our Rafters.

Let's pray.

Kind and gracious God, we ask for your guidance this day and each day at Rolling River Rampage. Guide us as we live out your Word. Help us lead by example, showing Rafters our care and concern. May we listen and respond with action to the call of Jesus. Thank you for loving us. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Now let's get ready to ride!



Bible Story

Jesus Calls the Disciples

Matthew 4:18-25

Rapid Reminder

Find Adventure on the River!

Rafting Ready Verse

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you." Isaiah 43:2



SESSION 2

Bible Story

Jesus Accepts Mary and Martha

Luke 10:38-42

Rapid Reminder

Find Acceptance on the River!

Rafting Ready Verse

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.” Isaiah 43:2

Leader Devotional

Jesus loves us for who we are!

Welcome back to Rolling River Rampage, where we experience the ride of a lifetime with God!

In our last session, we learned that Jesus called ordinary people to a great adventure. We reflected on God’s call in our own lives and how we respond to that call. In this session, we look anew on Mary and Martha, who welcomed Jesus into their home.

We often hear this story as a condemnation of Martha, but that doesn’t present a complete picture of Jesus’ heart. Jesus didn’t chastise Martha so much as he gently rebuked her for over-valuing her activity, and judging her sister in the process. This is good news for children who can’t do much or feel judged by others for their abilities!

▲ **Have you ever been criticized for not doing enough? Have you ever criticized someone else for not doing enough?**

▲ **How can we encourage children who may be wrestling with these feelings or experiences?**

We must be careful not to take this snapshot of one moment in Jesus’ ministry and give it universal applications. Jesus was on his way to the cross at this point in time, so it makes sense that he simply wanted to BE with his friends more than anything. However, there were several times in his teaching that Jesus praised the gift of hospitality as an act of worship, a human expression of God’s love and

provision (Matthew 25: 31-46, Luke 16:19-31, Luke 10:25-37).

We need our Marthas in the Church, and we need our Marys, too! We need to be like Jesus, who loves and accepts us all for who we are, and who gently corrects us when we fail to love each other in the same way.

Re-read Luke 10: 42 with these thoughts in mind.

▲ **Think back to our first question in this devotional; would you choose differently if faced with these same situations today?**

Play the RRR song, “No Matter What” and reflect on the words as you listen.

▲ **How do the words of this song apply to today’s story?**

Our Rapid Reminder for this session is Find Acceptance on the River. Our goal is to accept our Rafterers for who they are so they can believe that God loves and accepts them, too.

Let’s pray.

Almighty God, thank you for bringing us together this day. Bless our readiness and plans, and also empower us to be present for each child in our midst. May we accept each other as we teach the ones in our care. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Now let’s get ready to ride!

Leader Devotional

Jesus is a friend who sees us!

Welcome back to Rolling River Rampage, where we experience the ride of a lifetime with God!

In our last session, we took a fresh look at the story of Mary and Martha to remind us that Jesus loves, values, and accepts us for who we are. In this session, we will rediscover one of our best-known children's stories from the book of Luke. This story details a powerful encounter between Jesus and the man named Zacchaeus.

We're familiar with many teachable moments in this story for children, yet what about you? Even though it might be a familiar story, read this Bible story silently, then we will read it together out loud.

- ▲ **Did you hear anything new?**
- ▲ **Describe what stood out to you the most.**

We know that Zacchaeus was short in stature and had a high-profile job which seemed to have afforded him a very comfortable lifestyle. And yet, he desperately wanted to see Jesus! To accomplish this task, he climbed in a tree—not the most glamorous of positions. Then, as Jesus walked by, he not only saw Zacchaeus in his odd, obscured position, but he immediately paid him the honor of dining in his house. This is good news for children, who are often overlooked due to their small size and perceived lack of importance in many social situations!

- ▲ **This encounter with Jesus transformed Zacchaeus. Why do you think that is?**
- ▲ **How can we show this kind of love to our Rafterers?**

Our Rapid Reminder for this session is Find Joy on the River. Our goal is not only to teach, but to show Rafterers Jesus' love in action - the kind of love that transforms hearts and gives us joy no matter what our circumstances!

Let's pray.
Dear God, allow the joy of Jesus in our lives to shine through this day and each day. May we embrace this verse from the book of Psalms to guide us. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you, Lord, my rock and my redeemer."
Amen.

Now let's get ready to ride!



Bible Story

Jesus Walks with Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10

Rapid Reminder

Find Joy on the River!

Rafting Ready Verse

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you." Isaiah 43:2



Bible Story

Jesus Shares a Special Meal

Luke 22:14-20

Rapid Reminder

Find Rest on the River!

Rafting Ready Verse

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.” Isaiah 43:2

Leader Devotional

Jesus shows us how to rest!

Welcome back to Rolling River Rampage, where we experience the ride of a lifetime with God!

In our last session, we revisited the fun and familiar story of Zacchaeus to remind us of the joy our friendship with Jesus brings to the journey. In this session, we discover that Jesus invites us to rest and remember all that God has done for us. This is good news for VBS leaders, especially after so many days of hard work and investment!

In our fast paced world, it can be difficult to take time to rest and remember. In fact, we tend to view resting as laziness and enjoying sleep as a weakness.

- ▲ **Do you have a difficult time getting adequate rest? Why or why not?**
- ▲ **What do you think it means to honor the Sabbath and keep it holy (Exodus 20:8)?**

Of course, for children, rest may seem especially bothersome or boring. It may feel like an unnecessary interruption of more important activities...but then, that's the trap for all of us. God created special observations of rest not to slow us down, but to reconnect with God and to recharge us for the ongoing adventure!

In this Bible story, Jesus celebrated the traditional Jewish Passover meal that was central to his faith. It is a story that resonates with children in a simple, kingdom way. Jesus took something ordinary

and traditional, and turned it into a sacrament, extraordinary and mysterious. Jesus knew we would need a way to remember long after he was physically gone how much God loves and cares for us.

Read Luke 22:19b, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

- ▲ **How much do you typically focus on this verse when you participate in communion?**
- ▲ **How does the Lord's Supper help us to rest and remember God's love for us?**

Our Rapid Reminder for this session is Find Rest on the River. Our goal is to show children how to rest by remembering that God keeps God's promises. When we do that, we can turn every day into a holiday!

Let's pray.

Dear God,

Thank you for the privilege to teach these children and young people. Thank you for trusting us to guide them. May we practice what we teach by taking time to rest and remember that you love us, and that you always keep your promises. Amen.

Now let's get ready to ride!

Leader Devotional

Jesus keeps the adventure going!

Welcome back to Rolling River Rampage, where we experience the ride of a lifetime with God! Can you believe we're almost at the end?

In our last session, we learned about the Lord's Supper and the powerful connection between rest and remembering what God has done for us. In this session, we will learn about a promise Jesus made that helps us keep the adventure going long after VBS is over!

During this post-resurrection Bible story, we find Jesus giving his followers a final set of instructions, called the Great Commission. Jesus believed in the disciples and entrusted them with carrying to completion the mission of sharing God's love to all the world. To cap off his charge to them, Jesus made a very powerful promise: "I myself will be with you every day..." (Matthew 28:20b). Today, Jesus keeps that promise to be with us every day, too.

- ▲ **How does that promise make you feel?**
- ▲ **How can we help our Rafter's to believe this promise and see it in action?**

This promise is, of course, a part of the Great Commission. Read Matthew 28:19a. "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations." Sometimes that little word "go" can seem so large, especially in this context of responsibility...yet the promise of Jesus gives us peace because we know we are not alone.

Jesus' words here bear a striking resemblance to our Theme Verse, don't they? As a closing Bible story, Jesus' promise is a sending forth of us from Vacation Bible school into the world to share the adventure of a lifetime with God with others.

Let's re-read our Bible story verses, Matthew 28:16-20, out loud together.

- ▲ **Our Rapid Reminder for last session was about rest, and the one for this session is about peace. How are these two things different?**
- ▲ **How are they the same?**

Our Rapid Reminder for this session is Find Peace on the River. Our goal is to empower our Rafter's with the knowledge of Jesus' promise, and to encourage them to share the great adventure with others!

Let's Pray.
Dear God,
Thank you for the gift of these leaders. Bless each one who has been with us, as well as their families. May these experiences they have had during VBS be reminders of your love for them. Empower us to share your love with others. We know you promise to be with us, and we look forward to the adventure continuing through the end of VBS and beyond! In your name we pray, Amen.

Now let's get ready to ride one last time (but not really)!



Bible Story
Jesus Makes a Promise
Matthew 28:16-20

Rapid Reminder
Find Peace on
the River!

**Rafting Ready
Verse**

"When you pass through
the waters, I will be with
you." Isaiah 43:2