1. **Plan**
   1. At least four months out, set a date and time for your Vacation Bible School.
   2. Decide which stations and rotations to use.
   3. Develop and personalize your “Choose Your Own” Station. Use this station to set your VBS apart from the others!
   4. Personalize your materials to fit your context.
2. **Advertise**
   1. Begin advertising your event one month out.
   2. Utilize all internal and external church communications to spread the word - newsletters, bulletins, e-notes, social media, etc.
   3. Consider purchasing an ad in a local newspaper.
   4. Brainstorm creative ways to advertise in your context - signage, community boards, other events, etc.
   5. Have a clear and efficient way to record all who have registered - you don’t have to hold on to paper registration forms! Try creating a Google Form on Google Drive, and watch as parents register their kids online - all their information flows into a spreadsheet for you! For those who prefer hard copies, simply add their info into the spreadsheet as you receive their forms.
3. **Recruit**
   1. Estimate how many children you will host. Be sure to keep a 6:1 child to adult ratio in order ensure safety.
   2. Three to four months out, identify your leaders in the church and personally ask each of them to serve during VBS week in some capacity. Remember, not all are called to work directly with children, but you will need help with oversight, check-in, logistics, tech, snack prep, and other jobs.
   3. Secure a few substitute volunteers, just in case.
   4. Personally asking a volunteer to give their time and energy yields higher results than a blanket-ask from the pulpit.
   5. Don’t leave your volunteers hanging - remain in open communication with them in the months/weeks leading up to VBS. Train them well; volunteers are more likely to serve again if they feel empowered and equipped to do their job well. Give them any and all resources they need to succeed!
4. **Check-In**
   1. Parents should know exactly where check-in is once they arrive. Clear signage and good room flow is key.
   2. Set up a table with a sign for those who have already registered. Have nametags and group assignments already ready for each child.
   3. Set up another table with a sign for those who have not yet registered. Keep a stack of hard copy registration forms, blank name tags, and class rosters to add new kids.
   4. Blare some great kids music during registration each day.
   5. Check-In should be high energy and friendly - loud and warm, so kids feel excited about coming to VBS. Situate your most outgoing and welcoming volunteers at the entrance.
5. **Decorate**
   1. You May Need
      1. Black and Red Butcher Paper
      2. Red Crepe Paper, Ribbon, or Yarn
      3. Tape
      4. Paint, if you would like to paint on the butcher paper
   2. Large Group/Common Area
      1. This is where we did snack and art.
      2. Hang the butcher paper on the walls or on dividers/set pieces. Tape red ribbon, yarn, or crepe paper to the butcher paper as if they were lasers. If desired, you could paint silhouettes of spies on the butcher paper. We painted the red butcher paper like a brick wall. You could add “Mission:Called” in graffiti, if desired. We also painted one portion like the old-fashioned 007 red and white swirl. **For more ideas, search “Spy Themed parties” on Google or Pinterest.**
      3. Take advantage of the included silhouettes. Feel free to print those off and project them onto butcher paper to either paint them or cut some out to hang up places.
      4. Choose one hallway to use as the Laser Obstacle Station. Tape red yarn across the hallways to create a laser obstacle course. You could add to the length each day. We used this activity to fill extra time if the small groups finished early. This could also be a fun way to begin outdoor games.
   3. Classrooms for Small Group
      1. I printed out the character, memory verse, secret code, and the decoded code for each day and stapled them to the bulletin boards in each room. I left a space blank for the days they had not decoded the message yet, and I added that day’s code later (so they wouldn’t know ahead of time what the code was).
      2. Depending on available space and the number of kids, you can choose to have each class do the decoding activity in their room or have a “Special Agent Training Lab,” where they do the activities then move into their designated classroom.
         1. If you choose the first option, you will need to make the room accessible for movement and the necessary materials for each day.
         2. If you choose the second option, use one empty room in which to do all of the activities. This will cut back on the need to print off multiple sets of cards for the Mine and Target activities. You will also use less tape and will not need as many balls or beanbags. You will still need the same number of balloons per class.
   4. Bulletin Boards
      1. I covered every bulletin board we had with black or red butcher paper. If you do not have access to butcher paper, plastic table cloths work just as well.
6. **Small Group Activity Setup**
   1. Abraham Activity
      1. Blow up at least 15 balloons per class. You may need more or less balloons, depending on how many children you anticipate per class. In each set of balloons, one should contain a printed and folded up copy of the secret code, and another should contain the cipher. You should print extra ciphers to pass out after the “bombs are deactivated” so there is no quarrelling over being able to see the cipher.
   2. Moses Activity
      1. Print the Moses Secret Code Cards. If you plan to use tacks or nails on a bulletin board to hang the cards, punch out a hole at the top of each card. If you plan on using sticky tack, there is no need for the hole. Hang the cards up in order (secret code facing out) on the wall or bulletin board. Gather a couple of balls. Place tape on the floor to indicate the distance that they must throw.
   3. Esther Activity
      1. Print the Esther Secret Code Cards and Mine Cards. Arrange the cards in a grid formation, then tape them to the floor. In order to make ours look cleaner, we taped a grid down then added the cards. Gather a couple of bean bags. Place tape on the floor to indicate the distance that they must throw.
   4. Mary and Mary Activity
      1. Mix ¼ c. baking soda with ¼ c. water. Paint “Jesus is Alive!” onto white poster boards (2-4 posters per class). Gather tape, grape juice, cups or containers to pour the grape juice, and paintbrushes. You will want to cover the table with a cloth or newspaper. You may also want to collect old t-shirts for the kids to wear while they paint with grape juice (it stains!).
   5. You Activity
      1. No setup required!
7. **Large Group Presentation**
   1. Once you download them, you are welcome to rearrange the slideshows in any way you choose.
   2. Once you download them, you are also welcome to edit the images. All original images used were collected through a Google image search. We made sure that there were no copyright issues; they were all labeled “for reuse with modification.”
   3. All slides and edited images were created using the free photo editing website: [www.picmonkey.com](http://www.picmonkey.com). It’s awesome. Seriously.
8. **Follow Up**
   1. This is SO important. Give your kids an opportunity to respond to God’s call on their lives.
   2. On the last day of VBS, send home with each kid a Follow Up Invitation (included in Images Folder - you can edit to include your own KidsMin logo) to Sunday School and worship.
   3. Keep a list of parents’ emails and contact information. Include them in your KidsMin monthly newsletters; send out invitations to Back to School programming, Christmas Eve and Easter services, and any other special events your church does to draw families.