



Leader Devotionals

Use the devotionals on the following pages in connection with the Bible Background information on pages 11-15 to prepare leaders for each session of teaching during VBS.

As leaders, our first goal should be to communicate the Bible to Voyagers in such a way that it comes to life for them. Be concise and engaging. Since *To Mars and Beyond* VBS focuses on the Gospel stories, it is essential for Voyagers to understand that each of these is a story from a very long, big book.

Where needed, explain to Voyagers that the Bible has two parts, the Old and the 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. 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. They are how we know Jesus and we are going to get to really hang out with him this week. The four Gospels are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They were all written by different people at different times so, as you might imagine, even though they are all about Jesus, they are all different.

Vector Verse

Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us!

-Ephesians 3:20 (CEB)

Lectio Divina

One prayerful option to use is the Lectio Divina before you teach. If Lectio Divina is a practice you are familiar with, feel free to skip this part and wade on in.

If not, read on for an explanation of this meaningful practice and approach to the scriptures.

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 prayerful, thoughtful and meditative in its approach to understanding the scripture.

Step One:

Read the scripture passage slowly, after intentionally asking God what God wants you to hear/feel/see.

Step Two:

Spend time in prayer with the scripture. Remembering that prayer is two-way communication: sharing and listening.

Step Three:

Sit with the scripture. Simply allow your spirit to be with the scripture.

Leader Devotional

Welcome to Mars and Beyond! While at Mars and Beyond, our mission will be to explore where God's power can take you and the children and youth in your care.

First of all, thank you for accepting the mission of serving in VBS. You are giving your time, talents, gifts and energy to provide a solid biblical foundation for faith development for the children and youth of the church and community! Your commitment is out of this world and beyond.

Our overall mission will be to empower our Voyagers as they encounter ways to live out the Vector Verse. (See sidebar.)

- ⊕ Think of ways you have experienced this verse in your own faith travels. Describe them.
- ⊕ How will this verse equip your Voyagers to explore where God's power can take them?

Our first Bible lesson is a familiar one; that of Daniel in the lions' den. Daniel had great faith in God. Daniel knew his relationship with God was the very thing that had brought him wisdom, strength, and happiness in all circumstances. He trusted that God would continue to take care of him even in the face of his enemies' schemes.

- ⊕ Think of a time you trusted that God would continue to take care of you. Take time to give praise and thanks to God for this special time.

Read and reflect.

Faith is the reality of what we hope for, the proof of what we don't see. Hebrews 11:1

- ⊕ How does this verse provide hope and assurance for us each day?

No matter our circumstances, we can have faith God will help us in amazing ways to do amazing things! What comfort it is to know that we can have faith in such an amazing God.

During each session at To Mars and Beyond we will discover a Power Launcher (key learning) to remember this lesson. Our Session 1 Power Launcher is Go Beyond with Faith! Our goal is to teach students that we can have faith in God in all our circumstances and that God is there to help us in amazing ways to do amazing things! As leaders, we will say this Power Launcher during our teaching times with the students.

Let's pray.

Gracious God, we ask for your guidance as we begin our journey To Mars and Beyond. Guide us as we live out your word and instruction. Help us lead by example, showing students 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.

The countdown begins!



Bible Story
**Daniel Trusts God in the
Lions' Den**
Daniel 6

Power Launcher
Go Beyond with Faith!

Vector Verse
Glory to God, who is able
to do far beyond all that we
could ask or imagine by his
power at work within us!
-Ephesians 3:20 (CEB)

Leader Devotional

We had a blast during our first session of **To Mars and Beyond! Welcome back for Session 2.**

In this session, we discover another Bible story from the Old Testament. This lesson focuses on Queen Esther. Eight years after Esther's remarkable rise from commoner to Queen, Xerxes appointed an evil man named Haman as his second in command. Haman had a hatred for Jews in general, and resentment against Mordecai, Queen Esther's cousin, in particular. Queen Esther used her wisdom and boldness to persuade the King to save the Jewish people.

Just like Queen Esther, we are called to be bold and use our position, influence, and resources to stand up for others who have less or none of those things...and just as with Queen Esther, God will be faithful to sustain us give us boldness to go far beyond the confines of our fears and limitations!

- 🕒 Think of a time when you witnessed someone boldly standing up for God and/or others. Describe that time.
- 🕒 Reflect back on a time when you stood up for someone. How were you able to rise above your fears to stand up for others?

Listen to the song, "God of Wonders." Read and reflect on these words:

**God of wonders beyond our galaxy
You are holy, holy.**

**The universe declares your majesty.
You are holy, holy.**

Read Ephesians 6:10.

- 🕒 How does God's powerful strength equip us to have faith that is strong enough to boldly stand up for God and for others? Share an example.

Because of our faith, we can boldly stand up for God and for others!

During this session at To Mars and Beyond we will discover another Power Launcher (key learning) to help us remember this lesson. Our session two Power Launcher is Go Beyond with Boldness! Our goal is to teach students that our faith in God will empower us to stand up for God and others boldly. As leaders, we will say this Power Launcher during our teaching times with the students.

Let's pray.

Almighty and gracious God, thank you for your grace and guidance during our first session. We come to you asking for that same grace and guidance for today. May we remember your words from Psalms. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you, Lord, my rock and my redeemer. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The countdown continues!



**Bible Story
Queen Esther Takes
a Stand**

Esther 4-9

Power Launcher
Go Beyond with Boldness!

Vector Verse
Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us!
-Ephesians 3:20 (CEB)

Leader Devotional

Our experience at VBS last time was out of this world! We're glad to have you back for another session at To Mars and Beyond. During this session, we will focus on kindness. Because of our faith, we can show kindness in powerful ways.

In this session, we transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament to uncover details from a familiar Bible story.

The term Good Samaritan comes from Jesus' parable in today's reading, referring to modern-day people who demonstrate the sacrifice and compassion that we see in this story and in Christ himself. However, the parable of the good Samaritan is about more than showing kindness to strangers; it is about confronting our prejudices.

🔗 Even though this story may be familiar, have you ever thought about it in those terms? Why can following this call to action be difficult for us?

Through the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus taught that kindness goes beyond showing compassion to friends, loved ones, and people who share our beliefs. We also must expand our understanding of the word *neighbor* to include strangers and even people we've come to think of as our enemies.

🔗 Who is your neighbor?

🔗 Why do you feel it is difficult to show kindness to all neighbors?

Read and reflect on Psalm 90:17.

🔗 Before we can truly share God's love and kindness with others we need to ask for this kindness to be part of our lives. Why is that step important for us?

During this session at To Mars and Beyond we will discover another Power Launcher (key learning) to help us remember this lesson. Our session one Power Launcher is Go Beyond with Kindness! Our goal is to teach students that, because our faith in God, we can share God's love with others through not just nice words and good manners, but through powerful actions. As leaders, we will say this Power Launcher during our teaching times with the students.

Let's pray.

Kind and gracious God, we thank you for your grace and kindness. May your kindness abide in us as we teach your precious children. Use us to share your love with others in our care this day. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The countdown continues!



Bible Story

**The Good Samaritan
Helps a Fellow Traveler**

Luke 10:25-37

Power Launcher

Go Beyond with Kindness!

Vector Verse

Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us!
-Ephesians 3:20 (CEB)

Leader Devotional

We shone like stars during our last session! Glad to welcome you back for another adventure To Mars and Beyond. During our fourth session, we will focus on thankfulness. Because of our faith, we can show thanks in powerful ways.

Today's Bible story tells of 10 men with skin diseases who approached Jesus, desperate to be made clean so they could return to their homes and communities, free from the shame of sickness and impurity. When Jesus saw them, he immediately instructed that they show themselves to the priests. "As they left," Luke tells us, they were healed (verse 14).

Play the song, "We Thank You."

Expressing our thanks is an important part of being in relationship with God. We must go beyond by making a practice of showing gratitude in tangible ways. Many times we take many of our everyday blessings from God for granted.

- 🌀 Think of times you have taken these blessings for granted. Share them with one another.
- 🌀 Name some ways we can act out our thankfulness to God.

Read and reflect:

Give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make his deeds known to all people! Psalm 105: 1

- 🌀 How does this verse empower us to go beyond to shower others with our thankfulness?
- 🌀 Think of a time when you acted out your thankfulness to God by helping others. How did it make you feel? Plan to send someone a card who has been caring.

During this session at To Mars and Beyond, we will discover another Power Launcher (key learning) to help us remember this lesson. Our session one Power Launcher is Go Beyond with Thankfulness! Our goal is to teach students that our faith in God will empower us to show our thanks in powerful ways. As leaders, we will say this Power Launcher during our teaching times with the students.

Let's pray.

Almighty and gracious God, we are thankful for our time together. Guide us as we instill the values of grace and thankfulness with the children as we teach today. Use us to empower others to practice kindness, grace and a thankful spirit. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The countdown continues!



Bible Story

Jesus Heals 10 Lepers

Luke 17:11-19

Power Launcher

Go Beyond with
Thankfulness!

Vector Verse

Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us!
-Ephesians 3:20 (CEB)

Leader Devotional

In this last session, we conclude our countdown. Thank you for blasting off with us during this adventure. In this lesson we walk along the road to Emmaus with two of the disciples and Jesus. These two followers of Jesus were sad since their Lord had died. As two of Jesus' followers walked from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus, talking about the rumors they'd heard, a "stranger" approached and asked about their conversation. The stranger was Jesus himself, but the two men "were prevented from recognizing him." (See verse 16).

When they arrived at Emmaus, the disciples invited the man to eat dinner with them. Jesus blessed and broke the bread and when he did, the men immediately recognized him. At that moment, he disappeared from their midst, yet they were so excited and full of hope from the experience that they left right away to share their story.

- 🚀 Think back to a time when you were so full of hope you wanted to run and tell others about it. Share that story.
- 🚀 Now think of a time when you rushed to tell the good news of Jesus with others. Describe that experience with others.

Listen to the song, "Safe Inside your Love."

- 🚀 What words blast out to you?
- 🚀 Why do you feel those words call you to action to serve?

Read and reflect. We put our hope in the Lord. Psalm 33:20

During this session at To Mars and

Beyond we will discover another Power Launcher (key learning) to help us remember this lesson. Our session five Power Launcher is Go Beyond with Hope! As leaders, we will say this Power Launcher during our teaching times with the students.

Let's pray.

God of grace. We come with thankful hearts for our time here at To Mars and Beyond. What a blessing it has been to be your servant while at VBS. Thank you for your gift of Jesus to us, we know that with Jesus we can have hope that you, God will help us move beyond our troubles into better things to come. For that reassurance we are grateful. In your name we pray. Amen.

The countdown concludes. Thank you for your ministry with the children of the church and community!



Bible Story
**Jesus Comforts Friends
on the Way to Emmaus**
Luke 24:13-35

Power Launcher
Go Beyond with Hope!

Vector Verse
Glory to God, who is able
to do far beyond all that we
could ask or imagine by his
power at work within us!
-Ephesians 3:20 (CEB)