

Elementary Crew Leader Guide



What's a Crew Leader?

If you've been asked to be a Crew Leader, you've met two important qualifications: You love the Lord, and you love children. During True North, you'll visit different activities with a group of three to five children. *You're not in charge of preparing or teaching activities; you just get to be there and help kids enjoy them as you shepherd the members of your Crew.* Because your Crew is small, you'll get to know and affirm each member by asking questions, really listening, and being encouraging.



What We Found

This isn't from our field test but from a VBS director who frequents our online forum. She reminds the Crew Leaders that some of the kids at VBS might not ever hear a kind or affirming word. She encourages her Crew Leaders to speak God's love to *each child*. This director says it makes a huge difference in the way Crew Leaders treat and speak to the kids. Wonderful idea!



Make it memorable

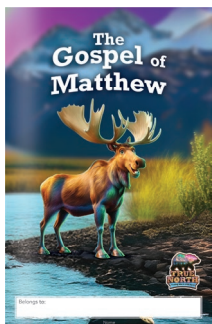
ONLY PRE-K CREWS WILL BE GETTING THE BIBLE BUDDIES!

*Elementary kids will be receiving a carabiner with Bible Buddy dog tags

Bible Memory Buddies®

During each day's Sticky Scripture™, you'll give every kid in your Crew a True North Bible Memory Buddy that kids can drop into their Buddy Packs. (Be sure to help kids write their names on their Buddy Packs.) Each Buddy has the day's Bible verse written on the bottom, too!

At the end of each day, kids will leave their Buddy Packs and Bible Memory Buddies in the Crew bag. This will ensure kids aren't without their Buddy Packs and collection of Bible Buddies each day at True North.



Gospel of Matthew Bible Books

Many kids who come to True North may not have a Bible at home... and those who do may not feel comfortable using such a big, grown-up book. That's why this kid-size bite of the Bible is *perfect*! During Sticky Scripture, you'll guide kids in practical

Bible skills, reading one easy passage from the Gospel of Matthew each day. And at the end of the week, kids have a bit of Scripture to take home and continue reading.

COMPASS CLUE

It can be a challenge to get take-homes to actually make it home throughout the week. So with that in mind, we've suggested the Gospel of Matthew Bible Books go home on the last day of VBS. Your Director may choose to distribute them differently, but no matter the approach, excitedly encourage kids to take the books home and *use them*! Your enthusiasm will help kids know these books were designed especially for them, have value, and are a way to keep the fun going at home.

Who's who in the Crew

During their first Sing & Play Peak station, kids will choose Crew jobs. Each child will have one of the jobs listed in the chart. If children can't agree on who should perform each of the jobs, assign jobs to kids for Day 1; then rotate jobs each day so that by the end of the week, all children in the Crew have had an opportunity to do each job. The name badges also list these Crew roles on the back. If your Crew has fewer than five kids, some kids may have more than one job. Kids are excited about having special jobs. Encourage them to fulfill their roles, and provide lots of opportunities for them to do so.

Guide

chooses action ideas for traveling through True North (such as bear crawling or crab walking.)

Kit Carrier

distributes and collects supplies and helps carry the Crew's bag

Prayer Person

leads or opens prayer times

Schedule Supervisor

helps monitor the daily schedule to let the Crew know what's coming next

Thank you-er

leads the Crew in thanking Station Leaders each day

The Crew family

Every member of your mixed-age Crew adds something to every activity!

I've just completed kindergarten. I'm a unique and important part of my Crew because I have a great imagination. I can help my Crew really get into each awesome Bible adventure!



I've just completed first grade. I'm a unique and important part of my Crew because I like to be the best. I can help encourage my Crew to be the best it can be.



I've just completed second grade. I'm a unique and important part of my Crew because I want everything to be fair. I can help make sure we all take turns and treat one another fairly.



I've just completed third grade. I'm a unique and important part of my Crew because I like to be challenged. I can help younger members of my Crew with challenging projects.



I've just completed fourth grade. I'm a unique and important part of my Crew because I like to ask questions. I can help my Crew ask questions to make sure we understand what we're learning.



I've just completed fifth grade. I'm a unique and important part of my Crew because I like to make choices. I can help younger Crew members with tasks and help the Crew Leader guide everyone in showing Jesus' love.



Top 4 Crew Leader tips

1 Participate!

- ▶ Sing the songs and do the motions.
- ▶ Play the games.
- ▶ Be curious in Imagination Station.
- ▶ Use your imagination in Bible Adventures to interact with each day's story.
- ▶ Share your own God Sightings.
- ▶ Give your own insights during Sticky Scripture.

3 Lavish your attention on the kids.

- ▶ Turn off your cellphone—you can contact your friends *after* VBS!
- ▶ Use kids' names in kind and loving ways.
- ▶ Use eye-to-eye contact.
- ▶ Be a tuned-in, affirming listener during discussions. Paraphrase kids' answers in a response back to them to show that you've heard and understood what they've said.
- ▶ Give hugs or high-fives throughout the day.
- ▶ Be there for the kids as they arrive. Get there early. Check with your VBS Director to see when he or she would like you to arrive each day.

2 Support the Station Leaders.

- ▶ Quickly sit in knee-to-knee circles for Crew discussions.
- ▶ Listen to each Station Leader, and encourage kids to listen too.
- ▶ Put the Crew bag (and other distracting items) out of the way during activities.
- ▶ Be enthusiastic.

4 Be positive.

- ▶ Model the behavior that you want kids to have.
- ▶ Positively acknowledge kids' answers to questions. Rather than saying "No, that's the wrong answer," say "Thanks for sharing. Anyone else have thoughts?"
- ▶ Smile! Have fun!



Use Positive Words Like These:

- ▶ Let's keep moving so we can do as many fun activities as possible.
- ▶ Listen carefully so you'll know what to do next.
- ▶ Stay with the Crew; we need your help in this activity!
- ▶ That's a unique way of doing things! How did you think of that? Let's try it this way.
- ▶ It's important that we all follow the instructions and work together as a team.
- ▶ Please move over here so you can see better.
- ▶ Let's all sit in a circle so we can see and hear one another better.
- ▶ Those Buddies sure are cool! Let's keep them put away so we can hear about this next activity.

What to do if...

***Your crew will have 7-8 kids**

Most of the time, things will go smoothly, but every once in a while, you may run into a dilemma. Here's some advice on how to handle different challenges.



If my Crew won't stay together...

Encourage your Guide to come up with creative ways to travel. Or work with your Thank You-er to come up with cheers to say as you travel.

If I have a clique in my Crew...

Encourage friendships among all Crew members by pairing kids with partners they don't know very well during games and other activities. Offer reminders when needed that they're all superstars and that means caring for each other and that no one is left out.

If older kids are unhappy being grouped with mixed ages...



Highlight their helping role. Encourage them to help younger kids find Bible passages and other activities. Acknowledge them by telling younger kids, "[Name of older child] is really good at that. Why don't you ask him [or her] to help?"

If a Crew member won't participate...

Help shy children feel welcome by calling them by name and asking them questions directly. Respond to their questions with a smile and a statement such as "That's really interesting!" Also try giving children special jobs, such as finding a place for your Crew to sit at each station.

If someone *really* doesn't want to participate in Reef Rec games, that's okay. True North can be tiring! Let kids rest until they're ready to participate.

If people in my Crew don't get along...

Quietly take the children aside. Tell them you've noticed that they're not getting along. Let them know that although they don't have to be best friends, they do have to be together all week, so things will be a lot more fun if they can at least be kind to one another. (Use the daily Bible Points for these teachable moments!)

If I have an overly active child...

Pair this child with yourself for partner activities, and suggest that he or she sit with you during quiet times. Or give him or her a focused role of helping you keep the Crew on task and setting an example for everyone else. Or, ask your Director if you could have an assistant Crew Leader to help the child focus and participate.

If my Crew is out of control and unruly...

You can be direct in calling out behavior, but maintain the fun in your voice and language. It'll help you avoid setting a pace for a battle of wills. Use these fun True North puns to call attention to behaviors that need to stop:

- ~ Cheating in games or other activities: "We have to follow the trail; let's get back to following directions!"
- ~ Not paying attention to Station Leaders: "Trek back here and tune in. We need to listen."
- ~ Distracted by side conversations or horse play: "Okay, goofy grizzlies! Paws down at your sides. Be as still as a hibernating bear while we listen."
- ~ Complaining about activities at stations: "Let's show all our leaders *they're* our friends by showing respect. You may not love everything we do, but if you don't participate, you might miss out on something you didn't expect to be *amazing*."

If by midweek there are two or more kids in your Crew who just won't listen no matter what you try, it might be necessary to move a child or two to a different Crew. Talk to your Director about making a few Crew roster adjustments to help make sure each child gets the most out of the time at True North VBS.

What do I do at each station?

Sing & Play Peak is where kids worship by singing upbeat action songs. Your job at Sing & Play Peak is to

- ▶ greet your Crew members in your designated seating area.
- ▶ follow the motions and sing out loud.
- ▶ help kids quiet down between songs so they can hear the Sing & Play Peak Leader.

Imagination Station is where kids experiment, play, and discover as they use amazing sciency-fun items from the Crew Discovery Pack.

At Imagination Station

- ▶ listen carefully to the instructions because you may need to repeat them for Crew members.
- ▶ use your imagination and share your curiosity as kids explore!
- ▶ help kids complete activities (when they need help).
- ▶ help clean up your area before leaving.

Sticky Scripture is where kids dig into the day's Bible verse—with a fun video and their Gospel of Matthew Bible Books. Here you'll

- ▶ encourage kids to tune in and participate along with the video.
- ▶ give kids their special Bible Memory Buddies in the way the leader explains.
- ▶ lead kids in discussion when it's called for.
- ▶ help kids find the daily Scripture in their Gospel of Matthew Bible Books.

Many stations engage kids in discussions about real life and some of the struggles or challenges we face.

If a child brings up a serious issue, such as indicators of neglect, abuse, or violence he or she has experienced, say, "Thank you for telling me about that. It's very important, and we need to talk about it with our VBS Director [or children's minister if he or she isn't the VBS Director] to give you a chance to say everything you need to say—and help you with your feelings." Involve the appropriate person at your church who can follow through with necessary steps after the conversation, as there is not only a moral but a legal obligation to report circumstances where a child might be in danger.

Tundra Treats is where Crews come for a tasty snack. At Tundra Treats you'll

- ▶ gather your Crew in a designated area.
- ▶ help your Crew focus on the Tundra Treats Leader as he or she explains the way snack time will work.
- ▶ use snack time to get to know kids...and be sure to see if anyone needs to use the restroom.
- ▶ help kids clean up your area before leaving.

Glacier Games is where kids play team-building games and learn about Operation Kid-to-Kid. Your job at Glacier Games is to

- ▶ listen carefully to the instructions so you can help your Crew members follow them.
- ▶ participate in each activity, and cheer on your Crew members as they participate.
- ▶ participate during one day's game time in a "photo shoot" for the day's Spotlight VBS slideshow (a customized slideshow)!

Wild Bible Adventures is where kids experience the Bible story. Be sure to

- ▶ gather with your Crew outside the door.
- ▶ listen carefully to hear how Crew Leaders should help out that day.
- ▶ encourage Crew members to participate.
- ▶ share your own discoveries during discussion times and your excitement during each Bible adventure.

Compass Closing is where kids experience an exciting review of the day's lesson. Your role at Compass Closing is to

- ▶ lead kids to your assigned seating area.
- ▶ participate in singing and other activities.
- ▶ remind your Crew to participate without being rowdy or disruptive.
- ▶ collect Crew members' name badges and Bible Memory Buddies and store them in your Crew bag until the last day of VBS.

When we wonder, we can trust Jesus.

Bible Verse: “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise.” (Matthew 7:24)

Bible Story: John prepares the way and baptizes Jesus. (Matthew 3; 11:1-6)

Jesus’ cousin John came with unconventional clothes, a pauper’s diet, and a bold message: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.” Meaning? Jesus—the Messiah and fulfillment of God’s kingdom on earth—is *here*! John proclaimed Jesus’ power and authority. He resisted the very idea of baptizing Jesus, the one who would baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit! While John adamantly proclaimed Christ, even he had questions about Jesus. From prison, John sent a message to Jesus, asking, “Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?” John’s circumstances may have caused him to wonder if (and when) Jesus might take political action. Scholars ponder if John may have assumed the Messiah would be the one to rescue God’s people from Roman rule—as many Jews of the time anticipated. However, Jesus had a greater mission than anyone could comprehend. He came to save *the world* from sin. Such love and compassion go beyond anything we can understand or imagine!

Kids’ curiosity can be intimidating—and a bit wearying. They have so many questions, many of which we simply can’t answer. And when it comes to questions about Jesus, God, or the Bible, adults can *really* feel overwhelmed and underprepared. But we don’t have to have all the answers! Sometimes our wonderings can lead to true *wonder*, as we discover the mystery and marvel of God. Today, celebrate curiosity and questions. Point kids to Jesus, a trustworthy and true friend who will guide us as we seek to know and understand him better.



Pointing to Jesus

People (even John the Baptist) wondered about Jesus. This passage can encourage kids that it’s okay to ask questions about Jesus—he will always help us find the truth.

When we feel alone, we can trust Jesus.

Bible Verse: “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

Bible Story: Jesus teaches about God’s love for us. (Matthew 6:25-33; 18:12-14)

Jesus’ ministry had just begun when he stopped on a mountainside near Capernaum and began to speak...and speak...and speak! What we call the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus’ call to live a life pleasing to God. He covered practical topics such as prayer, divorce, enemies, and giving. No wonder a crowd of more than 5,000 soon gathered! Jesus challenged the multitude, but he also comforted them. He reassured people of God’s gentle care for each person. This mattered because in Jesus’ time, most people led a hand-to-mouth existence. The average citizen awakened each day unsure of how to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. Imagine the peace found in Jesus’ words: “So don’t worry about these things...your heavenly Father already knows all your needs” (Matthew 6:31-32). Ahhhh! Jesus encouraged listeners to rest in God’s loving care, trusting in his unfailing presence. With God by our side, we never face challenges alone.

Some kids will come to your VBS with physical needs. Maybe food isn’t readily available at home or new shoes haven’t been in the family budget for a while. Others have emotional needs—they’re in a friendship famine, or anxiety has starved them of peace. Both types of needs can isolate kids, causing them to feel alone in their struggles. And kids who try to handle stress by themselves end up feeling exhausted and anxious. Jesus’ words provide a feast of encouragement! He offers his broad shoulders and strong arms to carry whatever heavy burdens kids feel they carry alone. Use today’s lesson to bring comfort to hurting kids, reminding them that they can rest in Jesus’ loving care. Kids can trust Jesus, who truly values and sees them.



Pointing to Jesus

Jesus affirms just how valuable we are to God. So when kids feel lonely, left out, or cast aside, they don’t need to worry. They can trust in God’s rock-solid love.

When we feel powerless, we can trust Jesus.

Bible Verse: “‘Don’t be afraid,’ he said, ‘Take courage. I am here!’” (Matthew 14:27)

Bible Story: A Roman officer trusts Jesus.
(Matthew 8:5-13)

Capernaum, situated on the Sea of Galilee, boasted a Roman customs station and proximity to busy trade routes. Considering Rome’s occupation of the city, Roman soldiers likely patrolled the streets. Their presence offended plenty of devout Jews, who recoiled at the idea of worshipping many gods, among other Roman practices. So onlookers got a big surprise when a Roman centurion—a powerful leader of up to about 100 men—approached Jesus with humility and respect. This leader, who clearly understood what it meant to have authority, identified Jesus as someone with power. The centurion wholeheartedly believed that Jesus could heal his servant with just a word. What confidence from one who likely *didn’t* follow God! Jesus praised the centurion’s faith to the gathering crowd. And, just as the centurion trusted, Jesus’ power provided miraculous, authoritative healing for the servant.

If anyone understands what it’s like to be powerless, it’s a kid. Hungry? You need a grown-up to buy food. Don’t like broccoli? Too bad—that’s what’s on your plate! Want to visit a friend who lives far away? You’ll need to find someone who can drive you there. Oftentimes kids don’t have the power to make daily choices. But on a bigger scale, kids hear overwhelming and frightening news about the world and feel incapable of making a difference. Broken families can bring about anxiety and a sense of helplessness. Yet Jesus promises his powerful presence when life feels out of control. Today, point kids to the mighty power of Jesus—a faithful friend with the authority to conquer every fear.



Pointing to Jesus

Even a mighty Roman officer knew he didn’t have power like Jesus. When circumstances make kids feel helpless, they can always trust in Jesus’ strength.

When we need hope, we can trust Jesus.

Bible Verse: “And his name will be the hope of all the world.” (Matthew 12:21)

Bible Story: Jesus dies and comes back to life. (Matthew 26:47–28:8)

Everything about Jesus offended the religious leaders of the time. He forgave sins. He spent time with tax collectors and people of poor reputation. He seemed to disregard religious tradition. And he claimed to be the Messiah—the awaited Savior and King of God’s people. Their outrage culminated in Jesus’ arrest, trial, and crucifixion. Jesus’ followers must have felt like hope was crucified that day, too. They’d seen Jesus heal lepers and make blind people see. They’d trusted his promises. They’d hoped that he was God’s Son. And now their friend and teacher lay lifeless behind a wall of rock. How could this be? Had they been wrong? What was next? The mystery continued when, three days later, they found an empty tomb and angelic messenger who told them, “He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen.” Jesus lives! Hope is resurrected, giving *all* who believe the promise of eternal life!

Maybe you like working with kids because they bring you hope. Spending time with kids reminds you of days when everything seemed possible. “I’m gonna play pro football,” “I can’t wait to be an actor!” or “Someday I’ll fly a plane!” The future is full of promise. Yet every child experiences a moment when dreams fail, reality crashes in, hope dies. Parents lose jobs, grandparents get sick, families move, friends leave. And frightening news stories may lead to despair about what our future holds. Today, take the opportunity to boldly declare the hope we *all* can have...in Jesus! God’s Son offers a truly hopeful future—one that lasts into eternity and is full of joy and promise. Point kids to the truth and hope Jesus brings through his loving sacrifice.



Pointing to Jesus

Like Jesus’ followers, kids may face times that seem hopeless or dark. Today’s passage encourages kids that Jesus *is* our hope—both here on earth and for eternity!

When we need help, we can trust Jesus.

Bible Verse: “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)

Bible Story: Jesus gives the Great Commission, and the Holy Spirit comes. (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 2:1-12)

For about three years, the disciples talked with Jesus, watched him perform miracles, absorbed his interactions with religious leaders, and listened to his teaching. Returning to heaven, Jesus handed the baton to his followers, giving *them* the monumental task of growing God’s kingdom throughout the *world*! Help! But Jesus didn’t leave them alone. He promised to be with them and gave them the divine helper, the Holy Spirit. Soon after Jesus returned to heaven, the followers saw the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, giving them the ability to speak in many languages. Plus, the Holy Spirit empowered Peter to share the news of Jesus in such a way that 3,000 people believed! With God’s help, impossible things happened—in big ways!

How do the kids at your VBS need help? Maybe reading is hard for them, and they need a little assistance. Or they’re shy and need some guidance finding friends. There may be kids who need physical or emotional support. Kids may need help forgiving someone or getting along with family members. Wherever we come up short, the Holy Spirit can step in! Yet kids may wonder how to access the power of the Holy Spirit. *How does Jesus help us?* Today, show kids what it means to live a life of faith, relying on Jesus to help us through every challenge. Point kids to practical ways to pray, read Scripture, talk with other friends of God, and receive the help Jesus freely gives!



Pointing to Jesus

Jesus gave his followers a *huge* job to do! When kids feel overwhelmed, today’s passage can remind them that Jesus promises to be a faithful friend who helps us no matter what.