



**Saddle up, Partners! Get Ready for a rootin' tootin' hoe-down show-down with
Outlaws for God...an Adventure in the Wild West and the World**

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Introductory Notes

Howdy! Welcome to a rowdy Western adventure romp through the pages of history and the Bible. This Vacation Bible School program will take you through a series of Bible stories that highlight characters who were “outlaws,” defying norms (and sometimes even laws!) if that's what it took to follow God and hold fast to righteousness. And just wait until we meet the surprising ultimate rebel of the Bible....(spoiler alert: He happens to be God's son!) Along the way, we will enjoy making fun cowboy crafts, sampling some tasty snacks, playing some “galloping games,” and practicing our frontier skills! It's all part of a unique and memorable VBS program.

As you embark on this journey, please take a moment to pray for your program. Ask that God would use the stories, activities, and songs to make lasting impressions on the lives of participants. Even more so, ask that the people leading and participating would demonstrate the love of God and be vessels of it. VBS has powerful potential to impact the lives of our children.

Outlined here are several suggested possibilities to make your Vacation Bible School terrific. The schedule lay-out is based on a week-long (five-day) program with roughly three hours of Vacation Bible School each day. Of course, these are all mere ideas. All are highly adaptable to suit the individual characteristics and needs of your groups and programs, so please feel free to adjust and alter as much as needed. This is hopefully a great springboard from which to launch with your own creative ideas and activities. Giddyup!



Outlaws for God: An Adventure in the Wild West and the Word!



*The Lord is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?*

*The Lord is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid? -Psalm 27:1*

Day One

Craft: Let's be cowboys (and girls)! Add decorations (jewels, paint, pens) to bandanas to wear like real cowboys and cowgirls!

*Alternative (younger crowd? Bandanas too expensive or not attainable?): Make paper bag cowboy "vests" and cardboard star "spurs."

Game(s): Play "barn yard" game: somewhat like "sharks and minnows," but students must cross a field when their "animal" is called off; if "barnyard" is called all kids run and cowhand "rope wrangler" tries to tag them.

Also play horse shoes and/or ring toss

Bible Story: This week we will look at some "outlaw" figures who did strange, challenging, or amazing things for God. First we peek at Gideon...with just a tiny army and some trumpets and pitchers, Gideon defeated the powerful force of the Midianites! We will hear how God used Gideon's faith and willingness to lead for standing up to the enemy. This guy was ready to go against the grain and follow God no matter what his directions were. (Judges 7)

Music: Fun younger student songs like "The Farmer in the Dell" and "Old MacDonald;" older kids start working on special camp songs.

Frontier Fun: Gold "mining..." talk about life in olden days and touch briefly on how men would pan for gold...hide gold "nuggets" or small rocks in the midst of different materials: sand, grits, etc. Help students sift water and look for gold nuggets.

Snack: Chow down trail mix...put together cups with raisins, cereal, and extra items to make tasty trail-riding trail mix.

Extras: Welcome to VBS! We'll receive group assignments, nametags, and learn about what is to come.

Day Two

Craft: Animal collage... We will draw a picture with crayon and use some special supplies (hay, animal crackers, etc.) to jazz it up a bit!

Game(s): Potato sack races! We'll enjoy some hoppin' action, and we will also have goofy-footed relays: duck waddle, horse gallop, frog hop, etc.

Story: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego... This was not just a wilderness campfire. The three friends were kidnapped from their homes and taken to Babylon, but they stood up for their faith. We will hear and act out how the Hebrews followed God and escaped the fiery furnace. (Daniel 1-3)

Music: "Home on the Range" and fun farm songs to celebraate.

Frontier Fun: Creating a frontier snack... we will work together to make corn bread (or corn pudding perhaps?). We will also sample forms of corn: popcorn, corn chips, and regular corn!

Snack: Cowboys had campfires, and what's a campfire without s'mores? We will enjoy a s'mores buffet of sorts with a variety of graham crackers, marshmallows, and chocolate chips.

Extras: Do you have animal-themed or animal print clothing? Wear it for animal spirit day! Or just dress in the color of your favorite animal.

Day Three

Craft: Horse and lasso... We will use chunks of pool noodles and decorating supplies to create our own "horse stick" friends. We will also braid together yarn to make special "lasso" ropes (aka horse reins).

Game(s): "Horse and wagon": Students will work in teams to race around the field with a "driver" behind and "horse"(s) in front, running around attached.

"Rope the cow": Use jump ropes to "catch" balls/balloons and "herd" them into hula hoop corrals.

Story: Deborah, Barak, and a woman with a tent peg! Today's story features a female judge from the Old Testament, Deborah, and a chilling prophecy she made about an encounter with enemies...these "outlaw" characters fulfilled God's will with their boldness. (Judges 4)

Music: Continue cowboy songs and Western favorites... "She'll be coming 'round the mountain..."
"Beans, beets, oats and barley groats"

Frontier Fun: A real live horse! Or something like it...Conditions permitting, we will meet a "real cowboy" today, complete with real horse. We will talk about horses and animals, and observe. If you're fresh out of "live" cowboys, you can also create a horse of sorts with hay bales, wagons, and/or saddles real or imaginary.

Snack: Taste our corn bread from yesterday, along with string cheese "horse sticks."

Extras: Crazy hat day! And don't forget tomorrow is water day...be prepared to get a little wet! *Also* bring a plain white shirt to decorate!

Day Four

Craft: Stamping and branding! We will design (for older kids) our own stamps by cutting rubber pieces...younger will use pre-made stamps. All students will have opportunity to “brand” themselves with fun temporary tattoos! Optional: we will also create our own VBS souvenir shirts!

Game(s): “Elijah’s miraculous oil...” Water day! We will have some splashy fun with water balloons and bucket games today. Wear something you can get wet!

Story: Elijah’s exciting escape and providence. Elijah was a Biblical outlaw if ever there was one...he was banished by Ahab and chased away by Jezebel, hiding and returning and wrestling with God. Today we will look at Elijah’s experience in the wilderness as God took care of Him with birds. We will also look briefly at his subsequent encounter with a widow and her son, and learn God always takes care of us. (1 Kings 17)

Music: Continue frontier fun themed songs (“She’ll be Coming Round the Mountain,” “Home on the Range,” etc....) along with square dance intro (continued in frontier fun).

Frontier Fun: Let’s line dance! Today we will meet a special guest musician and learn a mini-lesson in do-si-do line dance fun.

Snack: Fresh fruit and wiggly Jell-O!

Extras: Water day excitement today! That may or may not wash off the ink and marker from tattoo/branding day, though...

Day Five

Craft: Hats and badges...We will use plates and bowls to make cowboy “hats” of a sort, decorating and attaching to look like a real hat. We will also use star-shaped cardboard to make sheriff badges. Also finish shirts and sign our names.

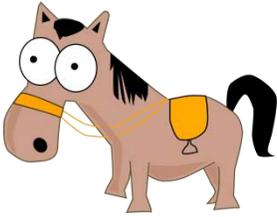
Game(s): Tumbleweed kickball! Also select our favorites from earlier in the week’s daily game fun!

Story: Jesus upsets the temple tables...the ultimate outlaw! We will learn today that sometimes it is okay to be mad, but that God is responsible for fixing things. We’ll also see Jesus show everyone who is boss.

Music: Final practice and celebration of weekly music! Wrap up and review our songs for the week.

Frontier Fun: Train ride...talk about transportation in the Wild West and experience a virtual “train ride” experience.

Snack: Twizzler rope licorice “whips” and carrot and pretzel rod sticks (leftover fruit, too).



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Wish List for Vacation Bible School 2016

We need YOU! Each year VBS is made possible by generous time, talents, and donations from the congregation of Trinity. If you are interested in making a contribution, here are some items we could use:

Snacks

- Graham crackers
- Sliced fruit (apples, oranges, bananas)
- String cheese/cheese cubes
- Raisins
- Pretzel sticks
- Chex cereal
- Marshmallows (miniature)
- Nilla Wafers
- Marshmallows (full-sized)
- Animal crackers
- Chocolate chips
- Popcorn
- Carrot sticks
- Twizzlers (pull and peel variety)
- Corn (frozen/canned)
- Jell-O cups
- Hershey's "Nuggets" chocolate pieces
- Grits and/or cornmeal
- Corn bread mix
- Powdered lemonade
- Styrofoam cups
- Plastic cups (5 oz and 7 oz variety)
- Plates (small and larger sized)
- Napkins

Crafts

- Glue
- Bandanas/kerchiefs
- Large paper bags
- Decorative material: jewels, puffy paint, googly eyes, pens, etc.
- Stickers
- Tissue paper (colorful)
- Yarn
- Pool noodles
- Stamps
- Ink pads or paint daubers
- Foam or rubber (like shoe inserts)
- Foam bowls
- Card stock

Also, we would be happy to borrow any Western or cowboy- themed items you may have to loan! (Items will be returned)

- Horse items (saddles, brushes, toys, etc.)
- Pictures/books
- Boots, hats, etc.
- Chicken wire? Hay bales??



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Volunteers Needed

Registration; manning table with “floater” to help.

Welcome/opening:

Attendance/Counting Offering

Newsletter

Opening/Closing – announcements/Skit

Story Time: need volunteers daily...

Snack

Games/Activities

Crafts

Music

Decorations

Group Leaders (group split???)

These helpers are responsible for taking the VBS kids to the different stations throughout the week.

Split groups as needed based on numbers and ages of participants

Frontier Fun (Cowboy/historic theme)

Wagon Wheel Watering Hole...

Daily Snack essentials

Day 1: Tasty trail-riding trail mix. Variety of items mixed together and doled out in cups/plates for children. Items to include in our mix:

- Mini marshmallows
- Cereal
- Raisins
- Goldfish crackers
- Pretzels (save some of these for Friday)

Prep: Mix items together; spread on plate or place in cups. Also prepare water/lemonade.

Day 2: “S’more fun with a campfire...” Students receive two graham crackers, two marshmallows (flavor of choice), and a few chocolate chips or chocolate pieces; they will put together and smooch their creations.

- Graham crackers (1 full sheet/2 small squares per child; several boxes)
- Marshmallows (large; 2 per child)
- Chocolate chips (just a few)
- Supplement with animal crackers (craft leftovers) and leftover trail mix

Prep: Have supplies ready to dole out; allow children to choose variety of marshmallow and chips (we will have a couple of options).

Day 3: Cornbread and string cheese...during yesterday’s “frontier fun” activity, we made our own cowpoke corn bread. Today we will sample it, along with string cheese “horse sticks” to go with the horse sticks we created.

- Corn bread (from yesterday)
- Butter and honey to spread
- Cheese sticks to accompany items

Prep: corn bread cut up and plated; un-wrap the cheese sticks for smaller children.

Day 4: It's water day, so we will celebrate with some tasty fresh watery fruit, along with wiggly blue Jell-O!

- Jell-O gelatin (blue preferably)
- Fruit of various kinds (watermelon, apples, oranges, bananas, etc.)

Prep: Have Jell-O mixed and chilled ahead of time; scoop the Jell-O into bowls (okay, so it's just a messy day). Chop up the fruit for plating.

Day 5: Some “whips” and “sticks...” A final snack in honor of horsey adventures!

- Twizzler licorice ropes
- Pretzel sticks
- Carrot sticks
- Leftover fruit: sliced apples, oranges, etc.

Prep: Make sure fruit and veggies are properly cut up
Open and unwrap licorice and pretzels.

Chuck wagon Crafts...Daily Breakdown

Day 1: Giddyup, cowboy! (And Cowgirl) Students will be making some Wild West gear to sport and enjoy...they will decorate large paper grocery bags to wear as cowboy vests, along with cardboard badges and boots.

- Large paper grocery bags (1 per child)
- Yarn (pre-cut lengths for ease?)
- Stickers, markers, etc.
- Card stock paper boots and stars
- Tape, scissors, staples

Note: If enough bandanas have been donated or purchased, older students may decorate those, as well.

Prep: Have cardstock stars and boots cut to decorate; have adult help to cut arm and head holes in the bags for vests...if students need to, they may also add fringe to the bag by cutting small slits down the sides.

Once vests are done (if time allows), pass out sheriff badges and boots. Children add markers, stickers, and sparkles to decorate. If desired, badges can be hole punched and attached to string (we are NOT messing with pins...).

Day 2: Stamps and animals...today we will use animal crackers, hay, sticks, and more to jazz up some fun pictures. We will also practice making our own stamps, and/or using some that are prepared for use already. And we will have opportunity to “brand” ourselves with real tattoos!

- Construction paper or cardstock
- Animal crackers
- Glue (tacky); scissors
- Hay, sticks, leaves, etc.
- Rubber pieces (from shoe inserts)
- Markers, crayons

Invite students to get creative with their collage crafts...they can start with the animal crackers, or draw a scene and then glue in the crunchy friends. They can scatter additional materials anywhere! To make stamps, cut simple shapes from rubber/foam and use ink to put it together.

Day 3: Ride ‘em, ranger! Horse stick fun...We will make a craft today that we can “ride,” carry around, and take home to play with all the time! With some adult help and plenty of glue, we will fashion ourselves some saddlin’ up pardners...

- Foam pool noodles (one per kid)
- Twine/rope
- Yarn
- Google eyes; and/or large felt eyes (maybe pre-cut with buttons glued on)
- Extra felt bits

Prep: Have felt pieces pre-cut in shapes for ears, maybe “saddles,” and round eyes. Some eyes can be large google eyes with others as felt and buttons (glue ahead of time). Pre-cut yarn for manes.

Procedure: Help students bend the “head” of the horse and secure with twine/rope to tie it sturdy (should this be done ahead of time, too?). Allow them to select colors for ears and style for eyes, and glue them on. Add felt saddles if desired, and additional decorations as needed.

Day 4: Make yer own camp T-shirt! We will create some keepsake souvenirs of Vacation Bible School, and have something to sign and wear!

- T-shirts (each student should bring their own; we should have some extras for those who forget)
- Fabric markers
- Puffy Paint
- Cardboard pieces

Prep: Cut cardboard to fit shirts (if necessary)

Procedure: Allow students to select colors and décor, and help them in putting bits and pieces onto shirts. Label the cardboard and slip inside to keep the shirts from sticking as they dry. Pass out tomorrow for autographs!

***Alternate (or in addition):** Homemade stamps and “brands....” Students can decorate pieces of foam or rubber and (with assistance if needed) cut and attach to a handle to create stamps. Pick out temporary tattoos for “brands.”

Day 5: Cowboy “hats” of a sort...we will also wrap up any extra crafts from earlier in the week.

- Styrofoam or paper plates (one per student)
- Styrofoam or paper bowls (one per student)
- Markers, crayons, etc.
- Stickers
- Yarn
- Staplers
- Hole puncher
- Glue

Prep: Cut yarn pieces; hole punch sides of plates.

Have students decorate a bowl and plate for the activity...help them to attach the bowls to the plates, placing them upside down (staples work best? Maybe glue??). Attach yarn to the sides to hold the “hats” on.

Frontier Fun

The activities in this station will focus on pioneer life and Western ways, intending to give kids opportunity to engage in some unique and entertaining Wild West experiences...feel free to tweak or adjust, add or detract as is fit.

Day 1: (Probably best done outside)

Gold mining fun! Today we will begin to talk about life for cowboys and life in the olden days or Western days. Okay, so miners and forty-niners are not exactly cowboys, but we'll make it work...discuss gold rush participants and how some would strike it rich while most didn't find much. Then help students to do some "mining" of their own. Also have a few sensory things to dig through (probably not actual water):

- Buckets with sand
- Buckets with grits (cornmeal style)
- Buckets with oats/regular grits
- Maybe water beads?

Within these things will be hidden little treasures, wrapped up in foil or wrap. These might be:

- Small toys or trinkets
- Small candies, particularly "Nuggets" chocolate by Hershey

Students will use their hands or "pans" (Styrofoam bowls) to sift and find treasures. Make sure that all students get a treasure of some sort (teachers can hold them).

Day 2:

Corny fun! Another element of Western life is home cooking...and also corn crops!

Several items will be featured today...we will have:

- Canned corn/frozen corn (heated)
- Pop corn
- Corn tortillas or corn chips

Students will look at ears of corn and talk about parts of the plant...they will see pictures of crops, and sample some of the corn products mentioned above. Then we will do some frontier cooking as we make our own corn bread. We will use the boxed mix for ease and timing purposes (maybe put a different label on it). Students will help add the necessary ingredients and mix it all together. Then we will put it in the oven to taste tomorrow!

Day 3:

Horse time! If possible, invite a “real” cowboy (or someone who knows about horses) to come and chat with kids, and maybe bring some elements of riding (saddle, reins, etc.). If this is unavailable, create a “horse” of your own. All you need is a wagon, a cushion or hay bale, and some creative decorating to have fun on “horseback.”

It’s also fun to practice “roping.” Provide students with a yarn or twine lariat (or help them braid one), and give them a small toy or target to “lasso.” Talk about how cowboys used this methods long ago in the West and how they continue to use them today.

Day 4:

Music day...music was an important part of life on the frontier, and along with music dancing was a popular way to celebrate occasions or spend time. If you can, find a visitor who can come in and share musical talent (especially on a fiddle or guitar). Share pictures and musical samples of frontier-style music. Building on what may be practiced in music, share some do-si-do square dance moves, and help students practice them.

It may also be fun to create instruments of your own! Students can use tissue boxes, rubber bands, coffee cans, paper towel tubes, or any other sort of recycled elements that might make for a good instrument. Practice playing and strike up the band!

Day 5:

Train ride! There are multiple possible options here, of course, but the idea is a “virtual train ride.” To start off, explain to students how important trains were in the West. They brought people to the frontier, and also moved goods from place to place, allowing mail, groceries, clothing, and other things to reach pioneers hungry for the luxuries of more civilized territory. Show some pictures of trains to children.

Decorate a room or area so that it mimics a train (maybe even borrow some pew benches or chairs; place tape on the floor to resemble a railroad track; decorate large cardboard boxes, etc...). Have students sit down in the “train,” and blow a wooden whistle (available at toy stores). Hook up a TV to a laptop and use a youTube video of a train journey.

While the video is playing, come behind students (if possible) to shake their chairs and vibrate the “train...”

Midway through the video (or at the end, depending on length), invite a volunteer to barge in dressed as a bandit, to “rob” the train. However, this is a friendly bandit. Instead of taking things from the passengers, he will give them something. Have Mr. (or Ms.) Railroad Robber ask students what they learned this week, and for each fact provide a small coin or other prize to take with them.

Gallopin' Games

***Note:** These are some handy suggestions outlined, but feel free to change up however you like. Please adapt based on audience and available materials.

Day 1:

“Barn Yard” ...this game is somewhat like the game of “sharks and minnows.” Select one or two “ranch hands” to serve as taggers (these can also be adults or helpers). The rest of the children are divided into teams of 2-4 (depending on numbers). These teams are assigned animal names: sheep, cows, pigs, etc... The ranch hands stand in the center of the field, with “animals” lined up on one end and the “pen” lined out on the other side. The ranch hands will call off one of the animals, and all students with that animal try to run to the other side and get into the safety “pen.” If the ranch hands call “barn yard,” all of the students run.

If they are tagged, they can (a) become ranch hand taggers also, or (b) make the animal sound and jump back in play. This can be up to discretion based on the crowd of kids and temperament of players.

Additionally (if there is time or it works better), you can play horse shoes and/or ring toss. If you do not have a ring toss, you can also make up your own by using hula hoops and cowboy boots, or smaller hoops (pool toys?).

Day 2:

Jumpin' fun!!! Enjoy potato sack races with different variations (forward, backward, making noises, etc.). Also line up for some “goofy-footed” relay races...these include odd versions of movement, such as:

- Frog hopping
- Bunny hopping
- Horse galloping
- Duck waddling
- Inchworm crawling
- Bear crawling

....to name a few. Be creative! ☺

Day 3:

“Horse and wagon...” This might work better for older students...students will work in groups of two or three. One student is set up as the “driver” and must stand behind the other student or students, who are the “horses.” They will race other wagons around the field, but must somehow stay connected. This could mean holding the shoulders of the partner(s), or holding a jump rope...they will not be moving too quickly, of course, but it takes team work.

Also play “rope the cow...” have balls or white balloons with black spots. These will be spread around the field. Students will use pool noodles, ropes, or brooms to gather in the “cattle” and bring them to their team’s designated hula hoop “corral.”

Day 4:

Water day! In honor of our Bible story (Elijah and the widow and miraculous oil...), today will be our fabulous water emphasis day. Get ready to play water game favorites according to your crew and to the degree of wetness you’d like to achieve! Possibilities include:

- Over/under sponge pass (Students make two lines and race to pass a dripping sponge over one child’s head, under the legs of the next, and so on).
- Leaky cup relay (again, two lines: students race to fill a bucket, but the vessels they use to transport water are cups poked full of holes!)
- Hot potato sponge (pass a wet sponge around a circle; person it lands on squeezes the water out.)
- Ice cube melt (race to see who can quickly melt an ice cube...no mouths allowed)
- Water balloon toss
- Spray bottle tag
- Sprinkler dash

Day 5:

Tumbleweed kickball...play traditional style kickball, but with different balls—different sizes, maybe a whiffle ball and bat or tennis ball and racket, etc. Also (in addition or replacement), bring back the favorites from the week or play more boot-themed games. One of these is “shoe swap,” where students place one (or two) shoe in a pile; then pick up someone else’s shoe and find the person to learn a fun fact.

Hoe-Down Music...Songs and Suggestions

Gideon Song (to go with Day One story): This is to the tune of “Hush, Little Baby”

God called Gideon for His plan
But Gideon said, “I’m not the right man.”
God said, “Gideon, trust in me.
I will help you; you will see.
God called Gideon for His plan.
Gideon knew he was the right man.
God said, “Gideon, trust in me.”
Gideon trusted and believed.

She’ll be Coming ‘Round the Mountain (extra verses!)

She’ll be comin’ round the mountain when she comes
She’ll be comin’ round the mountain when she comes
She’ll be comin’ round the mountain, she’ll be comin’ round the mountain,
She’ll be comin’ round the mountain when she comes

She’ll be ridin’ on a camel when she comes
She’ll be ridin’ on a camel when she comes
She’ll be ridin’ on a camel or some other mangy mammal
She’ll be ridin’ on a camel when she comes

She’ll be tuggin’ on two turtles when she comes
She’ll be tuggin’ on two turtles when she comes
She’ll be tuggin’ on two turtles, they’ll be wearin’ purple girdles
She’ll be tuggin’ on two turtles when she comes

She’ll be carvin’ three thick thistles when she comes
She’ll be carvin’ three thick thistles when she comes
She’ll be carvin’ three thick thistles just to make some penny whistles
She’ll be carvin’ three thick thistles when she comes.

“Oats, Peas, Beans and Barley Grow”

Oats, peas, beans and barley grow
Oats, peas, beans and barley grow
Do you or I or anyone know
How oats, peas, beans and barley grow?

Additional Suggestions:

My God is so big

Home on the Range

Old McDonald Had a Ranch

Cowboy in the Dell

Oh My Darling Clementine

Camptown Races

Swing your Partner!

Music is a great time to discuss the types of instruments used out on the frontier, and to practice some unique dance moves! Demonstrate the basics of square dancing with children, including the initial “bow to your partner” and the promenade.

Six-Shooter Stories

Day One: Reluctant Warrior: Gideon Gallops in for God

Bible Focus: It is fun to hear stories about people who do wild and crazy stunts professionally, or to see people defy odds and do the impossible. However, it can be scary if we are facing seeming impossibilities and don't know what will happen. It is important to remember that whatever we do, our strength comes from GOD, and He deserves all the credit. This lesson focuses on Gideon, and how God did amazing things through His faith.

Lesson Opener: Change one thing game...start out with this old favorite...select one person (leader/helper) to leave the room and change something subtle about their appearance. Invite the rest of the group to guess as to what changed...alternatively, while the student is gone, change one aspect of the room environment, and see if the student guesses what it was. After a few rounds of play, explain that today's story has to do with hard transitions—or changes. Change can be challenging, but we know it is necessary. After all, it gives life variety and keeps things fresh. But it also presents fear of the unknown. Invite comments about transitions students face, and how they make people feel.

Lesson and Verses: *Note: Feel free to read or paraphrase as necessary....

Ask again what students find scary about changes. What kinds of things can comfort us? Explain that this week we will be looking at a few Biblical heroes who faced tough situations, and overcame through following God's direction and relying on His omnipresent power. The main focus today will be on a Biblical warrior who was really quite the weakling wimp, but was used by God in amazing and remarkable ways. Invite students to examine the character of Gideon, in the book of Judges (beginning in chapter 6). Explain that in this time, the Israelites had made some poor choices and been overtaken by the power of the Midianite army. They had to hide away and do things in secret to keep them from the Midianites. They were being outlaws! Gideon was preparing wheat one day when God came to him:

The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. 12 When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." 13 "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian." -Judges 6:11-13

We first meet Gideon while he is literally hiding away, trying to keep from being discovered. He seems rather confused at the whole "mighty warrior" title and tries to argue with God's messenger, asking why all of these bad things are happening if God is with them. Well, arguing with God is never a very good idea. And of course God comes back with a rebuttal:

The Lord turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?"

15 "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."16 The Lord answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive."17 Gideon replied, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. 18 Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you."

And the Lord said, "I will wait until you return." Judges 6:14-18

God is tremendously patient with Gideon here. Excuse after excuse is brought forward, and the Lord could easily have shut down Gideon's requests and struggles. Notice what He emphasizes, though: the strength is from God. This is a huge theme in the story of Gideon, and in our lives as well. Succeed or fail, nothing is done on our own power but on His. God assures Gideon that He will deliver Israel on GOD's power. But Gideon is still reluctant and doubtful, and begs for signs. God still humors Him. But it does not excuse Gideon from carrying out God's work...

That same night the Lord said to him, "Take the second bull from your father's herd, the one seven years old.[b] Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole[c] beside it. 26 Then build a proper kind of[d] altar to the Lord your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second[e] bull as a burnt offering."27 So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the Lord told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the townspeople, he did it at night rather than in the daytime. -Judges 6:25-27

Do we ever try to hide away, or wish that we could just disappear from things? Gideon obeys, but only in secret. We tend to be so afraid when we are not sure what's coming or what people will think of our actions. How do we hide our deeds? Explain that after this, Gideon was still not convinced of God's providence, so he made a test by putting out a fleece...

Explain that a fleece was a sheep skin. Gideon wanted to test the laws of nature with this cloth. Give everyone a cotton ball to hold. Option: spritz with water...

Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew." 40 That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew. -Judges 6:39-40

Twice in a row Gideon begged for the fleece to be one way or another. And again, we see God patient enough to show Him. Have we ever tested God? Ever doubted He will do what He says? Gideon keeps trying to emphasize his own weakness and hesitation, only to be met with God's great strength and ability. But God needed to make sure that the army (and its commander) did not develop a swollen ego. So there was some paring down to be done...

The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, 'My own strength has saved me.'⁸ Now announce to the army, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.'" So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.

⁴ But the Lord said to Gideon, "There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will thin them out for you there. If I say, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go; but if I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go."⁵ So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him, "Separate those who lap the water with their tongues as a dog laps from those who kneel down to drink."⁶ Three hundred of them drank from cupped hands, lapping like dogs. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.⁷ The Lord said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home."⁸ So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites home but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.
-Judges 7:2-8

When things are going well, it's easy to be confident. When we have success, it is tempting to rely on our own power or boast of our own accomplishments. But God is the one doing the work. We don't have to go it alone, and we don't succeed on our own! God always proves HE is the powerful one. Here He shaves down the army, while the enemy has countless forces. But watch what happens...

The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore. -Judges 7:12

Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands.²⁰ The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!"²¹ While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled. -Judges 7:19-21

Give each child a cup. When you reach the part about blowing a trumpet, invite them to "blow" and make noise with their cups...then let them smash them if they wish. Also, hide the flashlight in a cup...open or break the cup to reveal how suddenly seeing the fire might have been scary for the Midianite soldiers.

After all of that worry and fear and doubt, all that Gideon and his men had to do was blow their horns and break their pitchers, and the army fled. There are so many times that we worry ourselves sick, only to find things were not nearly as tough as we anticipated. So why waste our time on that?

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. -Philippians 4:6-7

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. -Matthew 6:33-34

Gideon was not particularly strong and courageous on his own. But with God on his side, anything became possible. When we trust God and pay attention to the Bible and our teachers and moms and dads, anything can be possible for us, too! Tell students that reading the Bible and finding its truth is like mining for treasure...there is so much treasure in those verses and when we find it we can hold tight for truth! As a take-away treat, give each child a "nugget" of (chocolate) gold...probably best given to teachers to hang onto for the rest of the day. ☺

Day Two: You're Fired! The Story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Lesson focus: God wants us to honor us first and foremost; He promises to reward our faithfulness with positive results, but poor choices will lead to negative consequences.

Passage: Daniel 1-2

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th Grade (adaptable older or younger)

Lesson Opening:

Start out with a little “would you rather...” challenge. Provide students with some choices between healthier and not-as-desirable options: would they rather have a carrot stick or a cookie? Lie down with a pillow or do 15 jumping jacks? Write ten sentences or watch a video? Provide some of these real options (cookies and carrots available). After going through a few decisions, explain that all of life involves choices. What seems like the fun or desirable thing to do is not always the right thing to do, and God wants us to honor HIM in all of what we do. Today we are going to hear a story about some people who did that. The people in this story also went against the laws of government to obey God.

Bible Lesson:

Have you heard the story of Belteshazzar, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah? You might not recognize the names, but Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego are some Old Testament heroes we know and study. Explain a little background: Daniel and a few of his friends were taken from their home to Babylon, where they were supposed to learn how to work for the king. Imagine being suddenly taken from your home and family and stuck in a new country with strange rules and language to learn. How would you feel?

*Note: feel free to read, paraphrase, whatever...no need to read word for word.

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia³ and put in the treasure house of his god.

⁸ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility— ⁴ young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.¹⁰ ⁵ The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

⁶ Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

Now, the King had a special training plan for the young students, and he gave them all very special food to eat. But Daniel had special instructions from God not to eat certain foods. He knew God wanted him to stand up for what He knew was right, and he worked hard to bargain a test so that he could have what he needed...

But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. ⁹ Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, ¹⁰ but the official told Daniel, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your¹¹ food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you.”¹¹ Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ¹² “Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then compare our appearance with that of the

young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.” “So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.” At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. “So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.’ To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.” At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. “The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king’s service. “In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

” And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

So what happened? Why did these foreign people see something so special in the young Israelites? Obviously, choosing the right thing resulted in blessing from God. Daniel got a job promotion and public recognition! But notice that he didn’t claim the glory...he gave GOD credit for good things.

*Interactive opportunities: Select students to act out the roles of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, as well as King Nebuchadnezzar and “extras” for special effects...

But an even more challenging situation arose later, when King Nebuchadnezzar made a big statue and told everyone that they had to bow down to it when music played. **Display some sort of large doll or blow-up creature and have students “bow” before it...allow a couple of kids to play instruments.**

The king ordered everyone to bow...but guess who refused? Well, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego knew that God's law said not to bow down to anything but Him. So they didn't bow. This did not make the King happy.

Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, 14 and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? 15 Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” 16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us[c] from Your Majesty’s hand. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” (Daniel 3:13-18)

Talk about what a furnace is...sometimes when it is extra super hot outside, we walk out and feel roasty toasty! Well, a furnace was a big huge fire where trash was burned. Would you be afraid to get put in there? Well, the three children of God may have been scared...but that didn't stop them!

Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual 20 and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. 21 So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. 22 The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, 23 and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

Wow. The fire was so hot everyone around it got burned up. **Allow kids to feel a purposely hot “furnace sauna” room...if you have kids acting parts, tie up the three main characters...**

What do you think happened? Did they all get destroyed? Well, even though they were willing to die for God, they didn't...God rescued them...just watch!

Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?”

They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.”

25 He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”

26 Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, 27 and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.”

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

So these folks went against the king's instructions, but they knew what God wanted them to do. We want to make great choices so that we do the right thing for God!

Provide stickers and “flames” (paper/tissue) to recall story... :)

Day Three: Jael and Sisera...

Note: The outline offers the story of Deborah, Barak, Sisera, and tent peg-wielding Jael as the story for today. This tale is a fun and exciting example of how intense the Bible can be, and is also a great “outlaw” Wild West style tale. If you choose to use it, the story can be found in Judges chapter 4. Emphasis for Bible stories can include courage, God’s will, and following directions. It is a fun one to act out or use puppets to describe!

However, the story is slightly graphic. If your crew is on the younger side or you would prefer a different sort of story, consider the following alternative, based on Biblical “wanderers” and the lessons they bring...

Displaced...but not Misplaced! Ideas for supplementary stories of Bible wandering...

There is plenty to go on as far as the “lost Bible characters” theme goes... You could expand on one or two stories in particular, or highlight several of them...be creative and as always, involve the kids as much as possible. Maybe lead children around the room with eyes closed to “wander...” or perhaps build a fort with blankets! Emphasize God’s presence in the midst of all situations, and how He loves us and cares for us.

Coinciding with our Wild West theme, you could also touch on pioneers migrating out West, or cowboys out on the range...how might it feel to not have a permanent place, or to have to wander around not certain of the future?

Following (or even during) the story you can talk about how there are people in our own time and place who do not have all that they need...some people are moving from other countries, some of them don't have jobs that pay enough money to have good houses, and some have medical issues that need attention. We can help these people by donating time, money, or just reaching out with words or letters.

Some ideas of wandering/refugee type Bible stories...

- Abraham roams and selects new home
- Moses flees Egypt and shepherds in the desert
- Israelites wander in the wilderness and live off manna
- Ruth leaves her home to pursue another life
- David flees King Saul and hides
- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (and Daniel...and others) captured and brought to Babylon from their home
- Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem to have Jesus...then forced to flee to Egypt with him to escape wicked Herod
- Early Christians persecuted and hide out
- Paul wandered and traveled as a missionary
- John exiled to Patmos

Obviously, those are just a handful of many potential possibilities...feel free to use others as well! ☺

Day Four: Evicted, Escaped, and Eating with Birds: Adventures with Elijah

Following God is not always easy...we have the great privilege and blessing of living in a time and country that are not too threatening for Christians, but this certainly has not always been the case. In the Bible, we see many instances of people suffering for serving God and obeying His instructions. Elijah was an "outlaw" if ever there was one...he went against the grain of some wicked rulers and had to run away from society because of them. In Elijah we see perseverance, faith, and trust; and we see those attributes rewarded by God.

Lesson focus: God wants us to honor Him first and foremost; He promises to reward our faithfulness with positive results, but poor choices will lead to negative consequences.

Passage: 1 Kings 17 (various verses)

Materials Needed: Small snacks (bread, crackers, gummi worms[?]); oil; clothespins; paper bags; feathers (dark); google eyes; paper.

Lesson Opening:

Begin with a little “raven relay race” today in honor of the birds of the story. You might even go outside for it, if that works better (courtyard/playground) Have one or two children as “Elijah” (depending on how many total students you have) and the others as ravens (you might want to have two teams with an Elijah and ravens on each team). Have the Elijahs hide and explain to the ravens that they are to find and feed Elijah. Hand each raven a clothespin “beak” and show them a designated area where the snacks are set up. On signal, the ravens must run to the snack pile, retrieve a snack with the clothespin, and bring it back to Elijah. Try to see who gets the most the fastest!

Bible Lesson:

Have you ever done or said something that was not very popular[?] Did you get in trouble or have people angry at you[?] This is not such an unusual situation (perhaps share an anecdote). But did your words result in a death threat[?] That is what happened in today’s story...

Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe^h in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.” -1 Kings 17:1

Now, in the days that Elijah lived, there were some very bad kings ruling. These men had done some very EVIL things that God did not like, and one of the most wicked was named Ahab. Ahab took over when Elijah was a prophet. God wanted to warn the king that his horrible deeds would not go unpunished, so He sent Elijah to tell that to Ahab. However, this did not make the king too happy, and he wanted to have Elijah captured and killed. So God sent His messenger away and promised to care for Him. Elijah went:

Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: ³ “Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. ⁴ You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there.”⁵ So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. ⁶ The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. -1 Kings 17:2-6

Now we do not necessarily know every detail, but notice how Elijah acted: he did not question or doubt God but left and followed instruction immediately and went out to an isolated area to hide. What happened to him then[?] God took care of Him. He used birds to supply Elijah’s needs. (Give each child a cracker to sample; maybe a small cup of water).

Explain that the story doesn’t end there. Eventually even that brook dried...what would Elijah do next^{???}

Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. ⁸ Then the word of the Lord came to him: ⁹ “Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.” -1 Kings 17:7-9

What do you do when you get hungry or thirsty? Usually we can ask our mom or dad to help provide when we need something. Well, Elijah had nothing, but God instructed him what to do. Elijah had to trust these strange directions and he followed...

So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, “Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?” ¹¹ As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.” -1 Kings 17:10-11

Again, we see Elijah following God’s instruction without question. He goes to the widow that God told him about and finds her just as promised. Her answer seems to throw a wrench in the plan, though...

“As surely as the Lord your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.”¹³ Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴ For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: “The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.” (12-14)

Mention the importance of oil in Mediterranean culture, and how it was used to cook. Maybe let children try a drop or two of olive oil/vegetable oil.

God is about to do something truly amazing here. Not only is He taking care of Elijah; He is also using Elijah to help someone else in need! This widow had reached the end of her rope and was all out of hope. But Elijah knew that God always has a plan.

She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. ¹⁶ For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah. (15-16)

So God took care of Elijah, and the widow too! (Might go into the remainder of the story and curing the young boy who died...but that could be a little much all in one go). The Bible reminds us that He will always supply what we NEED.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? -Matthew 6:25

What do we **need** in this life? Toys? Games? Nice clothes? God has promised to give us what we need. If we follow God and want what He wants we can know that He will care for us, just as He did Elijah.

Craft: (If time...)

A raven full of needs...make a bird puppet that doubles as a prayer and gratitude bag. Using paper bags and materials, craft a bird puppet to remember the ravens in the story. Add eyes, feathers, and more as desired. On slips of paper, write things that might be desired or wanted, but also things that are genuine *needs*. Place these things inside the raven bag to remember that God will supply all that we need.

Close with prayer and reminder of God's work in our lives. Ask God for wisdom and strength in making choices, and also for gratitude in what He has already granted. Ask God to help us honor Him in all that we say and do.

Day Five: Righteous Anger...Jesus the Rule-Breaker

Lesson focus: Having the right attitude in our hearts is the most important part of following God. Sometimes Jesus went against the rules of leaders, because He valued truly loving people more.

Passage: John 2:13-25

Materials: Small table, stuffed animals, yarn, TP tubes, tape, coins

Lesson Opening:

What is it for? Start with a funny little proposal to illustrate why Jesus got angry at the usage of the temple. Tell children that they are going to have a little snack...then take it into the bathroom and pop down the diaper-changing table. Act totally normal and ask why this would be strange. Is it not what the room is supposed to be used for? Would it not be a good idea to have a snack in the bathroom? Well, that is sort of what happens in our Bible story today. Jesus got mad and did something that might sound wild and crazy. But He did it because His number one priority was serving God.

Bible Lesson:

Did you know Jesus did not always get along very well with the people that ran the church? Sometimes He did things they did not agree with very much...He reached out to people that priests didn't think should be helped, and He even sat and talked and ate with those who most thought were "bad." But Jesus wanted to get to know people and He loved them more than anything. One time, He got really mad. -Talk about a time when you have been upset. Is it okay to be angry? Sometimes, it is...

*Note: feel free to read, paraphrase, whatever...no need to read word for word.

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. 15 So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. 16 To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" 17 His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me." [c] John 2:13-17

Act out this part of the story, coming up to the table with stuffed animals and (carefully) tipping it over to spew the animals all over the ground. Use the ribbon "whip" to emphasize, too.

Explain that people were in the temple selling things. What is a temple? Talk about how a temple is the house of God, and an important part of Jewish culture. But some people were trying to take advantage of people by selling animals that they knew they would need for sacrifices. They over-charged them to try getting more money for themselves. This was NOT what the temple was for, and Jesus decided to fix it. Of course, the temple leaders asked Him about this...

18 The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." 20 They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" 21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. 23 Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. [d] 24 But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. 25 He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person. John 2:18-25

Jesus warned that He would destroy and re-build the "temple." But that temple was actually Himself. Jesus is the real temple, where God lives. And we are also part of His body, so we want to treat His dwelling places with respect. How can we do that?

Talk about how we can make positive choices and use our things, our bodies, and our churches well. Also mention how God's rules are most important.

If there is extra time, use the yarn to make a keepsake "whip..." attach yarn braids to tubes and allow students to use them as "Western lassos" or "whips..." (maybe just give to teachers)...

Possible Timing Break down: Example Daily Schedule

Vacation Bible School Daily Schedule

	Crafts	Snack/playground	Story time	Music	Games	Frontier Fun
9:15am	TLA Room 3	TLA Pre-K	Prep time	Pre-K-1 st grade	TLA Room 7	2 nd -5 th grade
9:40am	2 nd -5 th grade	TLA Room 3	TLA Pre-K	Prep time	Pre-K-1 st grade	TLA Room 7
10:05am	TLA Room 7	2 nd -5 th grade	TLA Room 3	TLA Pre-K	Prep time	Pre-K-1 st grade
10:30am	Pre-K-1 st grade	TLA Room 7	2 nd -5 th grade	TLA Room 3	TLA Pre-K	Prep time
10:55am	Prep time	Pre-K-1 st grade	TLA Room 7	2 nd -5 th Grade	TLA Room 3	TLA Pre-K
11:20am	TLA Pre-K	Prep time	Pre-K-1 st grade	TLA Room 7	2 nd -5 th Grade	TLA Room 3

This schedule is based on a three-hour time slot, beginning and ending with a fifteen-minute gathering time for students and leaders. It is a possible suggestion, but of course the best thing is always to adjust and alter as suits your group's needs.

**Calamity Kristin and Tune-Totin' Tom...
Opening Skits VBS 2016**

The openings feature “California Calamity Kristin,” an Amelia Bedelia-type confused character who is trying to acclimate into the Wild West theme. From an introduction with the perplexed aspiring cowgirl through daily thematic focuses, we will follow Kristin as she learns how to be a potential “outlaw for God.”
(Note: feel free to change names or alter characters as fits your program and actors).

Day One

*Kids file in and find seats...have piano or CD playing in background as they gather. Call everyone to attention once they are in. **Kristin** is in back of the sanctuary.*

Tom begins to welcome kids to VBS, promising exciting time of Wild West fun...**Kristin** enters interrupting...she gallops in on the donkey (puppet or stick), wearing a visor and combat boots, and ringing a jingle bell...

Kristin: Yeehaww!!!! Come and get it! Rope and ride rustle and hustle and wrangle howdy pardners here I come!!! Shoo-eee!

Tom: Ummm.....hello? Can I help you?

Kristin: Howdy there! I'm Calamity Kristin from Californee! I done heard tell there was a wild west hoe down showdown in town and I just thought I'd come on down and get in on the fun! I've been practicing my y'all drawl and getting ready to wave a lasso and all sorts of great stuff! Yeeeyawww Heehaww!

Tom: Well, you know...I think you might be just a bit confused. For one thing, that is not a horse. It's a donkey. And that is definitely not a cowgirl hat by any means. And I'm not sure why you have jingle bells...but they aren't particularly appropriate on a ranch. And I don't even know exactly what type of dialect study you did, but it's pretty out of order.

Kristin: (disappointed, then perking up) Golly....you don't say...wow. Well, at least I've got my boots though! (holds up combat boots)

Tom: I don't think steel-toed combat boots are typically found on the Western ranges, Miss Kristin. But hey, it's all right if you don't have all the right gear just yet. We can help you! In fact, this week we are going to spend time learning all about life in the Old West, and how people lived long ago, and all about Bible outlaws!

Kristin: Outlaw? Now why would you want to outlaw the Bible? That don't sound good at all. In fact, I saw a sign outside that said “outlaw adventure...” you should never do that. I thought being an outlaw was a bad thing. Shouldn't we call a sheriff to come and rustle 'em up?

Tom: Well, when we talk about outlaws of the Bible, we are actually going to learn about people who did things *for* God. See, usually it is important to follow rules and obey the law. But every now and then, people make rules that are not so good and might actually contradict what God tells us. If that happens, it is more important to listen to God's instructions. This week we will be learning about some Biblical heroes that went against the grain to follow God.

Kristin: Against the grain? Well now I know I'll learn a lot here...I thought ranch hands wanted to harvest the grain and go with it- Heehee!!!

Tom: I think you may still be a little confused, Miss Kristin...but don't worry. Stick around here and you might pick up a thing or two (like a better wardrobe...)

Kristin: Okay; I can't wait! Thanks!

Leader then gives brief intro to the day's activities; telling teachers where stations are located and giving necessary reminders. Send in prayer and direct groups to first stations.

Closing will re-cap the day's activities and preview next day...review Gideon and pray for strength.

Day 2

Mr. Tom starts off again with a happy re-cap of yesterday's songs and welcome note. Begins to speculate about Miss Kristin and if she managed to learn anything, when she gallops in, with boots, horse, flamboyant (preferably pink) cowboy hat, and cowbell...also with Bible and Hershey's nugget.

Kristin: Okay, Okay, I got it! How's this for Western flair, eh? I got my horse, I got my boots, I got my spurs that jingle jangle...I think I'm authentic, eh Mr. Tone-tooting Tom? See I learned some things yesterday. And you know, I learned more about this wild and crazy outlaw thing, too. And I learned about being authentic for God and authentic in the wild west! I am yeehaw hi-ho ready to rope and wrangle and lasso and go!

Tom: Um....pink?? A pink hat? Next you'll be saying it lights up...

Kristin: you beat me to it...check it out! (displays hat) Haha I'm ready for action!

Tom: Oh boy... your Wild West wear is as corny as an Iowa field...

Kristin: Corn? I LOVE corn! Popcorn, kettle corn, candy corn, corn cake.... You know, back in California we have all sorts of fat-free granola, sugar-free soda pop, gluten-free flavor-free cardboard baked nonsense. It's so good to come out on the frontier here and meet cowboys who fix up beans and chili, and see people who don't mind some good ol' fashioned corn syrup! Why they even introduced me to a new kind of gold nugget, look! (Munches Hershey's)

Tom: Well, Miss Kristin, I'm glad you're excited....but you should be careful. You want to take care of your body so it can be used for God.

Kristin: Well don't worry. I'll take a shower later...

Tom: Yes, but even if the outside is clean, you want to put healthy things *inside* too. God says your body is a temple to worship Him. When you make good choices about what goes in your body, it helps keep it ready for action!

Kristin: Oh. So this (holds up candy)...this ain't real corn?

(Enter **Jacob**)

Jacob: No, that's not corn!!! That doesn't grow from the ground, don't ya know?

Kristin: Well howdy there! If it ain't another real live authentic cowboy-farmer...yeehaw!

Jacob: Yup, that's right....I'm here to tell y'all a bit about farming and frontier fun...and we're going to learn about corn today!

Kristin: Wow...corn, cowboys, animals, outlaws...it sounds like a heap o' fun. Let's get started!

Continue with prayer, reminders, dismissal...

Day 3

As Mr. Tom starts with songs etc., Kristin enters...she is trying to put shoes and white bridal veil on the toy horse puppet...meanwhile, she is tangled up in a jump rope, which is wrapped around her legs. She hobbles in frustrated...

Kristin: Oh, I don't know if I'll ever get the hang of this cowgirl thing! I just can't get it?

Tom: Miss Kristin? What exactly are you doing to that poor horse?

Kristin: Well, I'm trying to do what I heard everyone talk about...see, I heard someone saying you have to make sure to put shoes on the horse...well, here's the shoes. But I don't think he can even walk in 'em! Someone else said the horse needs a saddle and a bridle. Well, here's a bridal veil, but I don't know why it would help my horse! And then they said I could start roping up calves. I tried getting the rope around my calves and now I can't even walk, neither! I don't see how them old cowboys did this...

Tom: Well...I think you might (once again) be just a little confused, Miss Kristin...

Kristin: You bet I am! I mean, I've heard so much about how important these things were in history, and how people get so excited about them, but...I mean, it's just another animal, right? Why should it make such a big difference?

Tom: Oh, God made all animals with very special purposes. I am still trying to figure out mosquitos...but horses have helped people travel and carry things for centuries...they were the first form of cars! If you were taking a long trip, horses could help you so you wouldn't have to walk all that distance yourself.

Kristin: Oh...yeah, I sure wouldn't want to walk all across the country just on my two feet. I'd much rather have four, like a horse, heehee! Really, though, it ain't no fun wandering on your own. You know, this one time, I was on a hike...(begins rambling into complicated story about getting lost and confused in the middle of a mountain....Tom finally cuts her off).

Tom: Okay, okay, yes...it isn't much fun to be lost. And you know, there are people out there who are lost or don't have homes physically...and also people who are lost spiritually and don't know what to do. There are ways we can help both of these kinds of people. Did you know that?

Kristin: Well, I hope none of those things involve horses...because I'm not sure if I'd be too much help with one of them. Maybe a car ride...

Tom: Don't worry...the people we are going to talk about today really can be helped by us...and not with horses! Speaking of horses, though, we are going to get to talk about them and learn a little more about cowboy life.

Kristin: Well, that sounds just great! I'd love to learn more about how I can be a good neighhhh-bor... We'd better get going so we can hear the "mane" event and not get caught at the "tail" end heehee! ☺

Continue with prayer, announcements, dismissal...

Day 4

Today Kristin enters with confused look...carrying a couple of brand name boxes, and covered with stamps and temporary tattoos/markings...

Kristin: Wow...I just never know what I'm getting myself into on this here ranch!

Tom: Do I even want to ask...?

Kristin: Okay, so I was reading one of my “ranch wrangling for dummies” books, and I saw it said something about branding. I thought that sounded funny because I have seen brand names in stores, but how and why would you put one of those on a cow?? I mean I've got all sorts of brands here, but I wasn't sure. Well, I asked one of the ranch hands what it meant...and before I knew it they had me sat down and I was all covered with...well, I don't even know. You can see what happened. Sorta...

Tom: Well...actually, branding was an important part of cowboy culture out there on the plain. But did you know, originally when people branded cattle, they used hot iron and burned their markings into the animals?!

Kristin: Phew! Well, I sure am glad that's not what they did to me! But hang on...WHY would they do this to animals???

Tom: Well, branding was a way of marking animals to show who they belonged to. Sort of like when you write your name on a toy or something that is special to you. See, back in the old days people sometimes tried to take things that were not theirs—including animals. And since cows can't talk, farmers and ranchers could tell whose was whose by looking for the brand.

Kristin: Oh...well then I am real glad they didn't brand me! I mean I'm not too sure how I feel about that whole belonging to someone thing. I'm a free spirit. A loooone ranger. Independent woman. Free as a bird...

Tom: Well, I hate to break it to you, but that is not quite how God has made us to be. He created us to be dependent on each other, and especially to be dependent on *Him*.

Kristin: Oh. I guess that's a little different...and I can't quite argue with God, now, can I?

Tom: Well, you could, but I wouldn't recommend it...

Kristin: But at least God didn't stamp me with a hot iron brand. Or wait...did He???

Tom: God has called us by name to be His, and has hand crafted us in His image. His stamps and fingerprints and ownership are on our hearts, and all over our being! We bear that out as we live our daily lives honoring and serving Him.

Kristin: Well that sounds pretty painless...and a whole lot cleaner than what I've got here! I'd better see if I can wash it off. But God's brand don't come off!

Continue with prayer, announcements, dismissal...

Day 5

Kristin comes in on a child's wagon, wildly careening around with the horse at her side...

Kristin: Yeehaw!!! Weeee!!! Hi ho silver here we go! This is the real way to ride yahoooo!

Tom: Uh, Miss Kristin, be careful there....

(Bonks into pew and tips over)

Kristin: Oops...phew. I thought I finally had it. I figured I'd give the horse a little rest, and then I found this here wagon...and I remember hearing something about cowboys and pioneers traveling in wagons, so I thought maybe I could switch it up and give the horse a ride! And now, oh golly...what did I do...

Tom: Oh Miss Kristin...you have been learning a lot this week at VBS. I know your cowgirl skills have, well, sort of improved...and you definitely know a little more about our Bible heroes. But there's always more to figure out. And one thing to remember is respecting people. And respecting property. Do you even know whose wagon that is?

Kristin: Ummm....well....I guess it's not exactly MINE...uh...

Tom: And I really don't think that's what that wagon was meant to be used for. I mean, it looks like it's still in okay shape...but what if you had broken part of it or messed it up? That would not be too kind to the owner of the wagon...

Kristin: Oh yeah. I guess that wouldn't be too good. Maybe I should have asked about instructions...and been a little more careful about using it correctly.

Tom: Yeah, you know, in today's Bible story we are going to talk about using things correctly, and why God wants us to be careful how we use things. This applies to our belongings, our earth...even our lives! Everything we have is borrowed because it really belongs to GOD.

Kristin: Oh...that's right, I guess He branded us for Himself just like those cows. We talked about that yesterday, didn't we? And just like I've been learning about Wild West life and horses and Bible characters, I am learning more about God too. There's always more to explore! Wow, I sure am glad I came out here! And I can't wait to hear about today's Bible outlaw...was it another prophet? Or maybe a missionary or a king or warrior or...

Tom: Actually, today we are learning about the greatest Bible outlaw of all...JESUS.

Kristin: Oh yeah, Jesus is a big part of the Bible, and He's...wait. Jesus, an outlaw? A rule-breaker? But He...but, but...how???

Tom: You'll have to listen for today's story to find out. But remember, Jesus is the one who makes the rules for our lives. If we follow HIM, we're always on the right side of the law.

Kristin: Wow, I can't wait to hear about that! And I can't wait to go get my frontier fun action on....I think we're gonna hear about some trains today and it's gonna be awesome! Thanks, Mr. Tom! It's been great!

Continue with final notes on the week...

News from the Ranch...Outlaws for GOD!

Sample Notes Home...

It is helpful to have newsletters or devotional communication for parents to be aware of what is going on at VBS, especially if you have special events like a water day or crazy hat day. Here are some potential samples of notes and words home...

Welcome to Vacation Bible School! In 2016 we are celebrating a Wild West adventure and learning all about cowboys, horses, and life on the frontier! We are also talking about people in the Bible who did things that went against the grain and sometimes even rebelled a bit...but all for God and His purposes. Today we learned about Gideon, a reluctant warrior who trusted God and did awesome things! **Tomorrow** we will meet some friends who didn't follow the rules when a king told them to bow before an idol instead of God. As we hear about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, we will learn that God's rules come first. This is a great opportunity to discuss with your children why it is important to listen to what God says, and how we can know just what that is.

Today we learned about people who are "wandering," both in the Bible and in the world today. After a Biblical perspective, you may want to talk with your child about what refugees are and ways that we can help them. It could also be a chance to discuss how people have different needs and challenges in other areas of the world. Take some time to learn about your own community, too, and how you can help out and serve God!

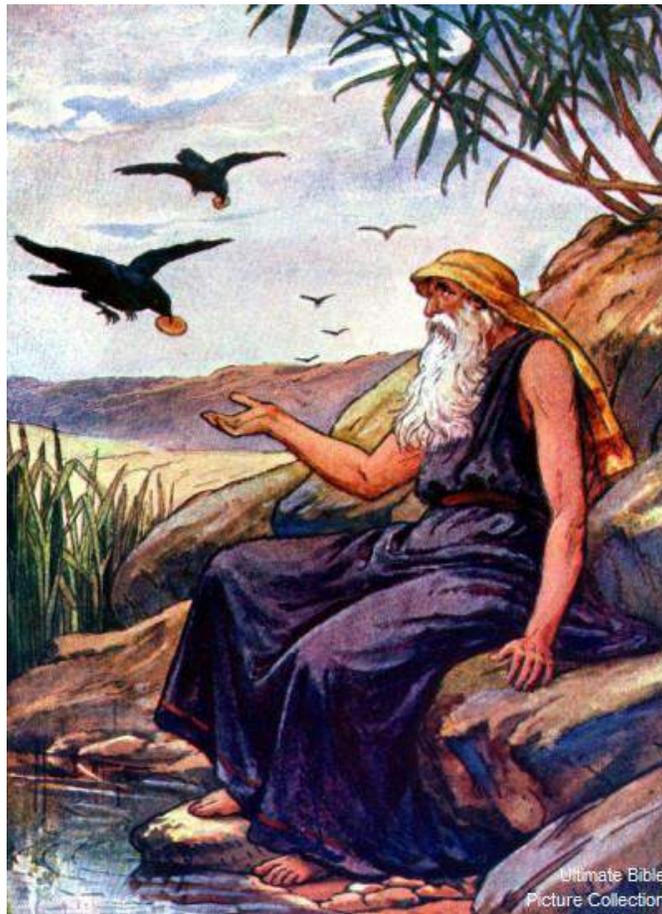
Additional Thoughts to Consider...

Successful programs for Vacation Bible School rely on a lot of things. To direct and implement a quality program, leaders must consider the facilities, audience, timing, volunteers, resources, funds, and so much more. Programs can be longer, shorter, evening, morning...that is all up to you.

The most critical thing to remember, though, is that VBS is a *ministry*. Any program like this exists for the purpose of aiding students and bringing them closer to Christ. The best-planned logistics won't go far if genuine care and concern for the people involved are nonexistent. Make sure your volunteers and leaders engage with the kids. Assign "prayer warriors" to wrap the program in God's love and protection. Above all, do not forget the ultimate purpose and calling of the program. Oh, and make sure to have fun!!! ☺

Elijah

Wanted by King Ahab and Queen Jezebel for defiance of royal power and refusal to worship Baal



Last seen: Kidron Valley, in the company of ravens

If spotted, please report immediately

Reward: Extra water rations!

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Also known under alias Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah

Wanted by King Nebuchadnezzar for failure to obey the law and bow to the super cool idol



Daniel Refusing the King's Meat and Wine, by Del Parson, © 1983 IRI

Last seen: munching veggies in Babylon

If seen, turn in for a hot reward!

General Sisera

**Wanted by Barak for defying the Israelites and persecuting the people of
the living God**



Last seen: Fleeing to Jael's tent for some milk

If spotted, report to Deborah's Palm Tree immediately

Reward will knock you out!

Jesus

Wanted by the chief priests and high rulers, for brandishing a whip in the temple and threatening to destroy and re-build it. Also wanted for name-calling of Pharisees, defiance of social norms, healing on the Sabbath, claiming Messiah identity, loss of swine property, spike in undertaker unemployment, and various other offenses.



Last seen throughout the region of Galilee and in Jerusalem. If found, signal leaders with a peck on the cheek.

Reward: 30 pieces silver (and eternal damnation)