

**Why VBS?
Joshua 1:1-9**

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Text Introduction: One of the stated core values of our church is that we will share the Gospel with the next generation. We are passionate about this in our church's ministry. We are unashamed in pursuit of this passion. We believe that this is a command of God from the beginning. Consider just one passage of Scripture:

Deuteronomy 6:7 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

If we believe in the reality of Heaven and Hell, how could we not be willing to do whatever it takes to make sure we communicate effectively the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

How important is this? Some of you have heard these things before, but I think it is good that we hear them again.

George Barna concluded that, "those between the ages of 5 and 13 have a 32 percent probability [of accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior]; individuals in the 14 to 18 age range have a 4 percent probability; and people between the ages of 19 and death have a 6 percent chance. In other words, we have the greatest window of opportunity for reaching people with the gospel before they reach their teenage years. The chances of seeing their spiritual life change after that point are relatively slim."

We are spending the week investing in the next generation. Using the curriculum of our Convention's Publisher, Lifeway, we are using Colossians 1:15-16 as a theme verse.

He is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn over all creation.

¹⁶For everything was created by Him,
in heaven and on earth,
the visible and the invisible,
whether thrones or dominions
or rulers or authorities—
all things have been created through Him and for Him.

The students are learning this week that as we **Search the Visible (Jesus)**, we will **Discover the Invisible (God)**. These are important truths for all of us to know.

I am thankful for our staff who coordinated this entire week and the maintenance staff who have one of their hardest weeks of the entire year. Both of these groups will be exhausted when Friday comes, but will still have much to do in order to get us ready for Sunday.

Ultimately, we couldn't do this week without a volunteer force of teachers and helpers. The students that will be on our campus this week equates to a large elementary school.

Why do we do it? It's all about the next generation!

To help us to answer that question in a little more detail, I want us to examine the biblical text today of Joshua 1:1-9. This is a text that helps us because in the background of this text is the moving from one generation to the next and how that transition should happen.

Text: After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, who had served Moses: ² "Moses My servant is dead. Now you and all the people prepare to cross over the Jordan to the land I am giving the Israelites. ³ I have given you every place where the sole of your foot treads, just as I promised Moses. ⁴ Your territory will be from the wilderness and Lebanon to the great Euphrates River—all the land of the Hittites—and west to the Mediterranean Sea. ⁵ No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. I will be with you, just as I was with Moses. I will not leave you or forsake you.

⁶ "Be strong and courageous, for you will distribute the land I swore to their fathers to give them as an inheritance. ⁷ Above all, be strong and very courageous to carefully observe the whole instruction My servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go. ⁸ This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to recite it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do. ⁹ Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Introduction: The book of Joshua picks up the story of the people of promise to the Promised Land. With new leadership, Joshua, we see God's continued presence. Joshua is one of the most inspiring books of the Bible. Though there are pockets of disobedience, like Joshua 7, the history of the people of God, under Joshua's leadership is a great example to us today of what it looks like to follow God.

This book opens with God encouraging Joshua. God called Joshua to awaken to the challenge before him. As God issued the challenge, He also assured Joshua of His presence and assured him that the plan is consistent with the past promises. God called on Joshua to be strong and courageous as he assumed this leadership.

Ultimately, God challenged Joshua to align himself with the Word of God.

Here is the background that points us to the importance of Vacation Bible School. The Word of God is the key to success in every aspect critical to life.

Why VBS?

Their Futures

The future of every child begins with a strong foundation.

- Their Salvation

¹⁷ So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ. (Romans 10:17)

- Their Strength
How can a young man keep his way pure?
By keeping Your word. (Psalm 119:9)
- The Success
Joshua 1:8. The success implied are those God endeavors of life.

Our Futures

But, not only their futures, but our futures are tied to the keeping of the Word of God. By that, I mean both our keeping the Word of God and others keeping the Word of God. This is a plan for the nation. This is a plan for conquest and occupation of the Promised Land. This was not just a word for Joshua; this was a word for the entire nation.

Principles: (So What?)

1. **Talk about Word Continually.**
2. **Think about Word Contemplatively.**
3. **Take Word Seriously.**
4. **Trust Word Completely.**

Some of you read that former dictator of Panama Manuel Noriega died this week. He was 83. Noriega, once a CIA informant turned into a brutally repressive dictator and became notorious for aiding the drug cartels of Panama. In early 1990, he was ousted by U.S. forces and brought to stand under drug charges in Miami. While awaiting trial, an evangelist from Longview, Texas, sent Noriega a marked New Testament. According to Noriega's testimony, "I received Jesus Christ as my Saviour the 15th May of 1990 at 11 a.m."

Some years later while visiting another evangelist, Luis Palau, Noriega told Luis, "I've found a new commander in chief: Jesus Christ." He pointed to the Bible in his prison cell and said, "There's the book that tells me what his will is for my life. It has changed me."

Oh, how I pray that we will see lives changed this week. That's why we have VBS!