Online VBS Guide
Adapting Rocky Railway into a VBS-at-home experience

ROCKY RAILWAY
Jesus' Power Pulls Us Through

Group
Real Bold Love
During this time of social distancing and less-than-fashionable face masks, the kids you serve need to be reminded: It’s Jesus’ power that pulls them through! So thanks for sharing these Bible stories with your kids. You’ll introduce kids to adventures that are carefully crafted to be engaging, memorable, and centered on the remarkable power of Jesus.

Because you’re reaching out through a screen rather than in person, we’ve provided some quick suggestions about how to crank up the fun meter even though you’re not in the room with kids and, hopefully, their parents.

And that’s important: Involve family members. As you lead these adventures, remember that you’re not just providing entertainment—you’re providing a time of family spiritual growth. Having parents and siblings involved allows for discussion, and that’s where connections and deep discoveries are made.

Ready? Let’s help kids discover that Jesus’ power makes all the difference! Let’s trust Jesus!

General Guidelines

› You’re the face of your church to your community, so have fun!
› While the activities in the manual were created for a 20-minute station, keep things a bit shorter for an online, at-home version. The following modifications will shorten your program. With a little less moving around—and fewer kids to move around all at once—things should move more quickly.
› Your VBS Director will be sending home a Rocky Railway VBS student pack for kids to use throughout VBS at home. This includes the Tracking With Jesus Bible Book, which features each of the daily Bible stories with eye-catching illustrations.
› Create a simple “set” for your videos or livestream. You can use the Rocky Railway Fabric Wall Hanging (super simple) or decorations your church had already created for VBS. Another easy option is the Giant Train Poster Pack, which allows you to create a 3D train in a snap!
› As you present, it’s a good idea for kids to be able to see all of you, not just your head and shoulders. This will allow you to lead kids with more drama and action.
› Use the materials in your Bible Adventures Leader Manual, combined with the following tips and modifications as you livestream or pre-record your session. You’ll find that most of the curriculum you already have will work well for this innovative setting!
When kids would normally talk about a question with their Crew, simply have them talk about it with any family members joining them for VBS. To make discussion time even easier, put the question onscreen so kids remember what to talk about.

If you’re pre-recording your sessions, hold up a fun “Pause” sign and have kids pause the recording while they talk about the questions. Interactions and discussions keep VBS from being just a video that kids watch. Plus, it helps build relationships at home and cement the daily Point.

Day 1

You can create the Bible-times home for your backdrop, following the instructions on page 5, but since kids won’t be in the setting, it’s not necessary.

Ideally, try to find a willing friend to take part in the drama with you as Ananias. You may even have Ananias join you on a Zoom call! If not, your biggest modification will be playing the role of the leader and Ananias. Because of kids’ big imaginations, it’s easy! When the time comes, tape your paper mustache to a straw and raise it to cover your lips when you’re speaking for Ananias.

Begin with the “Welcome Kids” section, starting by saying “When people come to see me, I want them to be comfortable.” Remember, if you’re pre-recording your station, direct kids to pause the video while they talk about the questions with whoever is “doing VBS” with them.

During the “Surprise!” section, instead of Ananias hiding behind the leader, have him duck behind a chair or potted plant—anything that won’t cover him.

For “Try a Trust Fall,” kids can pause the video (or you can pause while they try this if you’re livestreaming) and try it with someone in the room. If kids are watching alone, have them replace the trust fall with standing on one foot with their eyes closed.

As kids “Talk About Hard Things,” omit the activity where they share about the hard things aloud. Instead, direct kids to pages 6-7 of their Tracking With Jesus Bible Books. Pause while kids draw the hard thing they think of on a small piece of paper, then tape it over the thought bubble of angry Saul. Having them draw the hard thing that happened to them will pull kids in and help them focus.

Omit the Crew prayer time, replacing it by praying for all kids.

Since Ananias makes a return in the Rocky Wrap-Up, have Ananias (or you) record his script so the Rocky Wrap-Up leader can play the message for kids later. (Check with your VBS Director to see if you’ll be including the Rocky Wrap-Up as part of your online VBS experience.)
Day 2

- In the “All Aboard” section, in place of hauling boxes on a gangplank, have kids walk heel-to-toe while carrying sofa or chair cushions across the room and back to where they’re gathered (at the computer or TV).
- Guide kids through the “Set Sail” experience, demonstrating the actions yourself.
- At the end of the “Talk About Feeling Powerless” section, you can turn on a fan so kids see your clothing or hair move. You may ask them to fan themselves to create “wind” where they are!
- Omit the second question about Paul’s punishment from the “Hear From Prisoner Paul” section.
- When the storm begins at the end of “Hear From Prisoner Paul,” you can have an off-camera assistant mist you, or omit the mist. Omit having Crews come up with a plan while you visit Paul. Instead, quickly duck off-camera to “talk with Paul” and come right back.
- As kids “Sail a Stormy Sea,” rather than creating a storm with a spray bottle, have kids go to the kitchen sink, wet their fingers, and flick water into the air above themselves.
- During “Swim for Shore,” ask kids to head to the kitchen and come back with their own “sea biscuits,” which can be rice cakes, cereal, saltines, or graham crackers—whatever is on hand.
- Later during “Swim for Shore,” omit the question to kids about letting Paul live.
- Omit the last Crew question on page 17. Instead, ask kids and their families to pull out their Tracking With Jesus Bible Book. Direct them to look at the expressions on the faces of the disciples on page 14. Then have kids and parents tell about a time they looked like that. When have they felt that afraid? And in what ways did Jesus’ power give them hope?

Day 3

- For your set, the Temple Gate can be any doorway in your home or where you’re filming.
- For “All Aboard,” ask older kids or parents to carry the youngest person across the room and back. If kids are watching alone, direct them to find the largest stuffed animal or pillow they can and carry it across the room and back.
- Omit the use of the jingling coins, as well as the question about which gift was better.
- During the dance celebration in “Set the Stage,” turn up the music as you move and praise God. Be sure to give at-home viewers a soundtrack!
- When kids “Make a Jail,” ask kids and their families to make a jail out of easily tipped chairs and a blanket and then crawl inside.
Omit the Crew Leader question during “Make a Jail,” but have viewers imagine how Peter and John felt about being locked up.

Omit the “Share Faith Stories” section. (Kids may not be at home with someone who has a faith story. However, if you want to share your faith story, this would be a good place to do so.)

Before your closing prayer, direct kids to open their Tracking With Jesus Bible Books to pages 23-26, focusing on the people’s faces. Have viewers point to the faces and say out loud what they think those people are thinking. Ask kids to talk about these questions:

How do you think those people felt about Jesus?

How do you feel about Jesus, and why?

Day 4

For this experience today, omit any use of Velcro. You’ll have kids use tape instead.

Before beginning, have kids pause the video while they round up some paper, scissors, a pencil, and some masking tape.

For “Celebrate God’s Creations,” ask kids to quickly cut a heart from paper and write on it. Then have kids tape the heart to their clothing. Omit the reference to the soft Velcro, and the part where you call kids by name. Instead, have them say their names out loud. Or if they’re watching with family members, they can say family members’ names aloud.

During “Separate From God,” motion to the heart you taped to your clothes. Rather than tearing the heart from the Velcro, have kids pull the tape away from their clothes and put the heart as far across the room as they can.

Omit the question “What did you hear?”

Before you begin “Gather at the Old Rugged Cross,” ask kids to create a paper cross to attach to a wall. It can be large or small, drawn with markers on a large window, or simply masking tape on a wall. Tell kids to have an adult do the attaching so no paint or wallpaper is injured in the making of this session.

During “Gather at the Old Rugged Cross,” omit shining the light and feeling the rough Velcro.

For the “Experience Separation” experience, follow the curriculum as written, but omit the Crew Leader affirmation. Instead, affirm everyone and let them come back to your “meeting space.”

During the “Lay Down Our Trophies” activity, have kids go collect any trophies they have and lay those at the foot of their cross. No trophies? How about framed college degrees, prize ribbons, or “A+” papers taped to the refrigerator door?

At the end of “Celebrate the Hope of Heaven,” have kids bring the heart from the beginning of the session and put it on the cross.
Day 5

As you begin the “Play a Party Game,” first invite kids to spend one minute decorating their area for a party. Kids can use whatever they have around—scarves can become streamers draped over chairs, aluminum foil can make shiny decorations, and cereal boxes can represent gift boxes!

For “Play a Party Game,” rather than have kids squeeze into a circle, have one child try to get past another person in a doorway. It’s hard to do! Modify the question to:

❓ How did it feel to be kept out?

❓ Tell about a time you felt left out in real life.

Be sure you tell your story first, then have kids pause the video to talk with whomever they just played with.

In the “Hear About the First Christians” section, after you read Acts 2:42, direct kids to open their Tracking With Jesus Bible Books and look at pages 42 and 43. Ask:

❓ How would you describe what you heard and what you see in this picture?

Modify the “Figure Out Clues” activity by opening the gift boxes on camera and asking kids to think what these might be clues about. If you’re livestreaming on a platform where kids can respond, let them reply with guesses.

During the “Figure Out Clues” section, due to copyright limitations, replace “Everywhere I Go” with “Power Shuffle.”

⚠️ Omit the paper heart Crew affirmation in “Figure Out Clues” and instead ask kids to grab paper and pencil and write a short affirming note to someone in their house or neighborhood.

⚠️ Omit the “All Together Now” section, but lead kids in the theme song as you wrap up.