

BY THE SHORE

"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men"
(Matthew 4:19).

Read Matthew 4:1-19.

This week at VBS, you will be inviting boys and girls to accept the forever forgiveness provided through God's Son. You will be a "fisher" of children! Like the Savior, have you spent time praying about what is ahead? Service for Christ must be done in the power of the Holy Spirit, not the flesh.

When we try to minister in our own strength, the result is fatigue or failure, and little to no fruit. Instead of trying to serve on your own, choose to walk in the Spirit. Being led by the Spirit means having God's strength to motivate, empower, and guide you. It means having His help when you sit down with a student to explain the gospel. It means that your effort this week will bring fruit that counts for eternity. Go be a "fisher" of kids in God's power!

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ALONG THE TRAIL

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

As you head into this day of VBS, keep the following thoughts in mind. First, think about two words in today's verse: God is *faithful* and *just*. He is faithful to His character, faithful to those who love Him, faithful to His Word, and faithful to forgive us when we confess our sins. He is also just. His Son died in your place, so "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Wow!

Second, it's an amazing privilege to help children realize that even though they are sinners, they can be forgiven by believing in Jesus (John 3:16). You also get to help saved children understand that they are no longer under condemnation and that when they confess their sins, God forgives them.

These thoughts are encouraging for children *and* adults!

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UNDER THE STARS

"For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You" (Psalm 86:5).

It's the middle of the week and probably the middle of your Vacation Bible School. By now, someone at VBS may have gotten on your nerves. Perhaps something of a serious nature has happened to you outside of VBS. This is a good time to remember today's theme: "We all sin; Peter loved Jesus but failed Him."

If you're struggling with your own shortcomings or disappointment, remember that the Lord is good, ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy. Call upon the Lord for the forgiveness or encouragement you need. And choose to forgive and show mercy to others through the power of the Holy Spirit.



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BEFORE THE DAWN

“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Romans 5:8 shows how real God’s love is for us. God has demonstrated—or proved and exhibited—His love to us by Christ dying for us, even though we didn’t deserve His sacrifice because we are sinners.

In our own efforts, we fall short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23). Not only that, but being sinners made us enemies of God because He is holy (Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:21). But God loves us so much that His Son died for us, accepting the judgment and punishment for our sin in our place. If you want proof that God loves you, there it is!

When we meditate on these truths, they ought to humble and encourage us. There’s no room for pride in our abilities. Instead, remember that God exhibited His love for us—sinners who were His enemies—when Christ died in our place. What He did for you, He can do for your VBS “campers.” Be excited that God loves you like that! Your excitement about God, His love, and His forever forgiveness will catch on.



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AROUND THE CAMPFIRE

“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

Ephesians 4:32 tells us to be kind and forgive others, because in Christ, God forgave us. But before the apostle Paul wrote about being kind and forgiving to others, he wrote that if we have “learned Christ,” we have learned not to act like unbelievers (Ephesians 4:17–24). Rather, we have been taught to “put off . . . the old man,” to be renewed in the spirit of our mind, and to “put on the new man.”

As a way of being renewed in the spirit of your mind, what truths from God’s Word have stood out to you this week? Why? Have you been thinking about (meditating on) them? Are you replacing sinful or useless thoughts with these? When you are actively involved in the renewing of your mind, you will have the Holy Spirit’s power to serve God by loving and forgiving others.