



Step Right Up

Standalone Sermon • June 14, 2026

Opening

You wouldn't know it by looking now, but if you had been here 48 hours ago, the carnival would have been in full swing!



"Come one, come all!!! Step Right Up!!!!"

Tonganoxie Christian Church has a history of doing great Vacation Bible School, and this year we upheld that tradition with a carnival-themed VBS. Throughout the past week, we had between 70-80 kids from preschool through 5th grade attending. And we had 60 volunteers who served those kids (some daily, some at different times) throughout the week!!!

Before we go any further, in case you missed out, let me give you a little taste of what happened during the week!

"DJ, hit it!" [PLAY VIDEO – Slideshow with "Goodbye Yesterday" or "Lemonade"]

VBS is always one of the biggest events we do as a church (in terms of preparation, coordination, and investment). It is also a microcosm of what matters to us as a church – there are elements of VBS that showcase who we want to be, who we want to impact, and who we want to honor.

We will get back to our sermon series on 1 Peter next week...but this morning I'd like to share a few VBS stories with you **to celebrate** what we've done...and also **to remind you and to encourage you** to carry those things forward in the life of our church.

Expend Yourself (Like "Bobby")

Every year at VBS there is a character that the kids just love. Whether it's a construction worker, a super-hero, a robot, a chef, or something else...kids love a good character. This year, that character was Bobby.

[Bobby video – what you loved about VBS. Show off the character, stuffed animals]





“Bobby” showed up for the skits each day. As my young “son,” I had promised him that we would do a carnival game each day. The kids helped me call him in (by yelling something like his favorite food – “Corndog!”), and then we would get ready to try out one of the carnival games that “Casey” (Chaynee) was running. We did games like “Fishing,” “Ring Toss,” and “Ball Toss.” Sometimes there was physical humor, sometimes there were funny jokes or situations. But every day the skit gave the kids a chance to see one of the main points played out (“Use the gifts God gave you,” “Show God’s love to someone new,” “Thank God for forgiveness”). “Bobby” just made the experience more fun!

“Bobby,” of course, is just a character. In real life, you know him as Jordan Teghtmeyer, our Youth Minister here at TCC. Jordan has enthusiastically been willing to be part of VBS on stage every year he’s been here. For the past couple of years, he has taken a back seat in popularity to my daughter Chaynee and her characters like “Miss Friday” and “Wonderbot.” But this year, “Bobby” was the star! The kids loved his energy and goofiness and (despite an abundance of facial hair) they liked him being a kid – being one of them.

Here’s what you need to know about Jordan. Like myself, Jordan is an introvert. Some people misunderstand “introverts” as people who just want to be alone, or people who don’t like others. But that’s not quite the case. It’s really a matter of energy. Extroverts are charged up by being around people; introverts love people, but interactions drain their batteries faster! *(In fact, we talk about Day 1 energy [PEPPY] versus Day 5 energy {DRAGGING}. LOL)*

So, if it’s draining, why do it? It’s because Jordan (and the rest of our folks at VBS) want to do whatever it takes to minister to these kids. It’s an embodiment of what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9.



*“For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. **I have become all things to all people, that by***

all means I might save some.

(1 Corinthians 9:19–22, ESV)

Or... “to those who are kids, I become childlike”...so that by all means we might save some.

Challenge

Do you expend yourself like “Bobby”? Are you putting your energy into people and stepping out of your comfort zone to share Jesus with others? Are you willing to have a conversation? Are you willing to be in environments that are uncomfortable? Are you willing to eat food you don’t love? Are you willing to put up with music that is nowhere NEAR as good as yours? All for the sake of building relationships and trying to win those who need Jesus?

This is what we mean by **sacrificial** love. We offer up something of value (like our energy) to God because HE is of greater value to us.

I want our church to focus on that kind of sacrifice and evangelism. Because it isn’t the program that will win others...it is YOU, and your willingness to be all things to all people.



Praise Jesus (Like Ted)

Can I talk about someone else? He might not like getting the attention...but too bad.



I want you to think of the most unlikely preschool worker you can imagine. To work with little kids, would you pick someone who is...

- A man...who gives kids candy
- Older (grandpa age)
- Loud
- Gruff...who jokes about violence
- Physically limited, almost always in pain????

If that’s your ideal preschool worker, I don’t know what to say to you. But what sounds terrible on paper is awesome in real life! Ted Swang, the husband of our Children’s Minister (April Swang) is beloved by our kids in preschool... and has been for almost a decade.

And during VBS (just like in worship, just like in Sunday school), he is in the thick of things, praising Jesus! Ted has a good voice, and he loves to sing

(I've listened to him belt out 90s country or yacht rock. It's all in his wheelhouse). But he always has a song of praise, in between yells, in between Garth Brooks and Christopher Cross.

That constant heart of praise is an embodiment of what we read in Colossians 3.



"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." (Colossians 3:16, ESV)

He is in the mix with the kids, singing loudly, dancing (-ish) to the songs, putting joy on display. He models his praise of Jesus to the kids. They know they are loved by Mr. Ted...they know they will get treats and suckers from Mr. Ted... but they also know that Mr. Ted loves Jesus!

Challenge

Do you praise Jesus like Ted? I don't need you to necessarily sing as loud as or be as exuberant as Ted. But I want you to ask, *"Is my heart on display for others to see?"* Is there any doubt about your faith?

You don't need to show perfection; I'm just asking you to *show*. I want your praise to be uninhibited and known. I want your love to be evident.

People should look at our church (which means YOU) and have no doubt that our focus is Jesus, above everything else. I want our church to be known for its praise of Jesus!



Be Flexible (Like Cindy)

Can I tell you about someone else? She also might not like getting the attention...but (again) too bad.

Cindy Lindsay was recruited by April to be a helper with the kids' Small Group time – one of the stations that the kids rotated through during the day.



The kids went to different locations at different times for Crafts, Bible Time, Games, Small Groups, and Snacks, in addition to the opening and closing sessions.

But on Thursday, Cindy showed great flexibility.

Early in the morning, “Bobby” and I needed some extras for the morning skit. “Casey” needed more customers or else the carnival would shut down; “Bobby” shared his great experience at the carnival with others and they all showed up to support it. But for that to happen, we needed people to come on stage. So we grabbed our kitchen crew, random church secretaries, t-shirt vendors, youth helpers and more...including Cindy...to be on stage.

They were all flexible in helping out for a minute.

But Cindy didn’t stop there. Later in the morning, we needed help with some kids outside of a main session. She didn’t look at her watch and say, “Oops, gotta go.” Instead, she and her husband took extra time and hung out to love on these kids and keep them safe.

She didn’t sign up to be on stage. She didn’t sign up to provide extra childcare. But she remained flexible, like Cindy always does.

There is something godly about being flexible and responsive to what the Spirit needs! I think about the apostle Paul on one of his missionary journeys.

Be Flexible

“And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.”
—Acts 16:6-7, ESV

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(Acts 16:6–7, ESV)

They were flexible! They were responsive!

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.”

(Romans 8:14, NLT)

God’s people are ready to go wherever God leads and do whatever He asks. That flexibility was on display with Cindy, and it matched what we see in Scripture.

Challenge

Are you flexible like that? Are you okay having your day disrupted by the needs of others? Are you content to go the extra mile when you’re in a rush? Are you sensitive to conversations that need to happen and prayers that need to be offered?

I want our church to be always attentive – knowing where God is leading – and always receptive – willing to do what He says.



Who Will We Be?

Cindy, Ted, “Bobby”... These are just a few of the stories on display amongst our volunteers and our kids. There were other examples of kindness. There were other examples of growth. There were other examples of service. There were other examples of love.

Like I said earlier, VBS is a microcosm of what matters to us as a church. There are elements of VBS that showcase who we want to be, who we want to impact, and who we want to honor.

As a program, VBS ties in with our church’s current strategic plan. The “Rise Up” plan we have previously talked about has us focusing on ways to improve our church’s focus on:

- **Evangelism**
- **Discipleship**
- **The Next Generation**



Isn’t VBS a perfect place to show all three?

We reach out to the community, bringing in kids who are churched (ours and neighboring), but also kids who don’t have a church home. For some of these kids, VBS is one of the few places where they hear the name of Jesus proclaimed! **It is evangelism!**

We also help these kids grow deeper in their knowledge. We teach basics (“The Bible is...God’s Word; God’s Word is...The Truth”). But we also have the chance to talk to an “overly kinetic” kid (as someone called him) and answer his questions about why God allowed Jesus to die on the cross! That’s a deep conversation that moves faith forward. **It is discipleship!**

And the cross-section of people at VBS is the most intergenerational thing you’ll see! In one row of chairs, I have preschoolers, elementary kids, middle school helpers, high school leaders, moms taking photographs, and grandpas standing and singing (so many volunteers over age 55, especially men – what a blessing!!!!). This is a beautiful cross-section of our church, and it shows all generations uniting around Christ. **It shows a focus on the next generation.**



But today's stories of PEOPLE in VBS show an additional focus. The church isn't just about tasks and goals; it is about transformation and love. It is about a commitment to Jesus that shows up in daily encounters!

- **It shows who we want to be** – a church full of people who are sacrificially loving others, responsive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, full of praise for Jesus that can't be contained!
- **It shows who we want to impact** – those around us who do not yet know Jesus...or who don't yet know Him well enough.
- **It shows who we want to honor** – our incomparable Father; our perfect Savior; our indwelling Spirit. We want God to get all the honor and glory!

You might not want to be included as an illustration in a sermon, but I want you to be the kind of person I COULD put in here!

As we celebrate what happened this week at VBS, I want it to remind you and encourage you to “**STEP RIGHT UP**” in your own faith. Continue living for Jesus and being the right kind of church so that others can see Him and be changed, just like these kids were!

Prayer

Invitation

Sermon Notes

Expend Yourself

Praise Jesus

Be Flexible

Who Will We Be?

Sermon Discussion Questions

- Have you ever experienced Vacation Bible School at TCC? Share your experience as a child, parent, or volunteer.
- Read the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). What are the key tasks that Jesus calls us to do? For each one, list a program or activity of the church, besides VBS(!), that helps accomplish it (ex: *Evangelism* could connect to “Trunk or Treat” at the church)
- Who are some people in our church you would highlight that show what it looks like to follow Jesus? Take a few minutes to call, write, text, or encourage that person.
- Are you putting energy into people and stepping out of your comfort zone to share Jesus with others? If so, how. If not, how could you start?
- Is your heart for Jesus on display for others to see? How would people know that you are His follower?
- What is your reaction when your day is disrupted by the needs of others? Are you content to go the extra mile when you’re in a rush? Why or why not?
- **Prayer Challenge:** Please be in prayer for our church to show sacrificial love, sincere praise, and godly flexibility as we evangelize and disciple the next generation. Pray for God’s direction and provision, knowing that we will not succeed without either. Pray for us to be faithful and transformed as He keeps us on this path.