

VOLUNTEER

Leader Manual

Oikos





DAY 1



DAY 2

BIBLE CONTENT

Bible Point:
God loves us all.

Key Verse:
"The Lord is good to everyone.
He showers compassion on all his
creation." (Psalm 145:9)

Bible Story:
Paul begins his second missionary
journey. (Acts 15:36–16:5)

Bible Point:
God loves us and takes care of us.

Key Verse:
"Give all your worries and cares to
God, for he cares about you."
(1 Peter 5:7)

Bible Story:
Paul and Silas are put in prison.
(Acts 16:16-40)



Bible Point:

God loves us when others don't.

Key Verse:

"The Lord is for me, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?" (Psalm 118:6)

Bible Story:

An angry mob searches for Paul and Silas. (Acts 17:1-9)

Bible Point:

God loves us and sent his Son, Jesus.

Key Verse:

"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

Bible Story:

Paul preaches about Jesus. (Acts 17:16-34)

Bible Point:

God loves us and wants us to share his love.

Key Verse:

"Just as I have loved you, you should love each other." (John 13:34)

Bible Story:

Paul continues his journey. (Acts 18:1-5)



Your Role

Oikos Leaders are the heart and soul of Athens VBS. The time children and adults spend within the Oikos will be memorable, life-changing, and thought-provoking! This manual contains the information you need to lead a successful Oikos. Your leadership is a vital element to the success of this program. Here's what you'll do as an Oikos Leader.

Attend scheduled staff training. Your Athens VBS Director will likely set up training for all staff who will serve. Plan to attend this important meeting so you can get the big picture of how your role fits into this exciting and unique program.

Familiarize yourself with this manual. Read each day's Bible background, Scripture, and activities ahead of time. That way you'll be prepared to give your Oikos members accurate information and not have to refer to the instructions as you're leading each activity. You may want to highlight certain portions so it's easy to facilitate the experiences at a glance.

Use your Bible. It's important for Oikos members to see you looking up Scripture passages and reading them directly from the Bible. This reminds everyone that the stories they're exploring come from God's Word. It's a good idea to mark each day's Bible passage ahead of time so you can turn to it quickly.

Check out Postcards From Athens. Every day, Oikos members will take home a postcard with the key theme, the scripture memory and the Bible story reference. Encourage children to memorize scripture each day and to share the Bible story with their families each evening.

Smile! Be a friendly face that Oikos members look forward to seeing. It's likely that you'll have Oikos members who are new to your church, so be sure to welcome everyone with friendliness and warmth.

Your VBS Director will make sure each Oikos contains no more than 10 members and (ideally) two Oikos Leaders.

Through field testing and customer feedback, we've discovered that larger groups can become unmanageable and cause frustration. Plus, smaller groups maximize important relationship-building time. We've also discovered it's best when Oikos Leaders can attend VBS every day and avoid having to get substitutes. Consistent leadership helps Oikos members get to know each other throughout the week.



Call each person by name. This is one of the easiest ways to affirm and encourage the people in your Oikos. Make sure each member feels valued and welcomed.

Get to know your Oikos members. Ask about their families, hobbies, and kids' favorite subjects in school. Where have they been on vacation? What movies have they recently seen? What pets do they have? What would they pack on a trip to the moon? Take a real interest in your Oikos members' lives.

Keep children safe. Keep your Oikos together as much as possible so children are never alone. If a child needs to use the restroom, take a few kids with you, and leave the rest with your Assistant Oikos Leader. Only release kids to a parent or authorized caregiver. (The exception is when you visit the Marketplace. Here, it's OK to let kids explore in smaller groups. Colorful Banduras help you know at a glance where everyone is.)

Encourage adults to join in the fun! Reassure adults that Shopkeepers have plenty of supplies and that you want them to participate too. The more involved everyone gets, the more meaningful the program will be for all ages.

Be the voice of truth! Greeks worshiped *hundreds* of gods. When Athens became part of the Roman Empire in 146 B.C., Romans adopted much of the Greek traditions and religion. By the time Paul visited Athens around A.D. 50, Athens had become a multicultural city of many beliefs. In fact, Athenians had somewhat of an "all-accepting" philosophy, welcoming many beliefs instead of following a single truth. Scripture points to the presence of Jews, "God-fearing Greeks," and idol worshipers in Athens.

Keep drawing your Oikos members back to the truth of what we believe by saying things like: "Paul isn't the only one in Athens who believes that there's only one God. We do too!" Or "Let's always be ready to share our belief in God."

As you lead your Oikos in conversation, use child-friendly language to point out that Paul was surrounded by people who didn't believe in God. Take the opportunity to talk about what it's like to share God's love with people who don't believe.

Use the response phrase "It's true!" Each day, activities focus on one simple, solid, memorable Bible truth. When participants hear the Bible Point, they respond by saying "It's true!" and making the accompanying motion (see photo). You can help kids and adults tune in and remember each day's Bible Point by using the response phrase. This is an easy, effective way to cement the truth of God's love into our hearts!

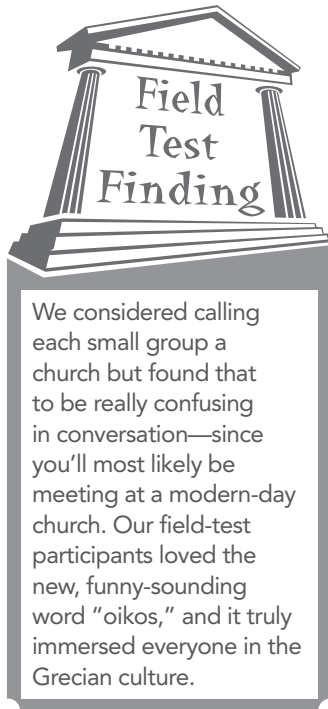
Advice Column

It's a good idea to read the book of Acts ahead of time. Some of Paul's incredible experiences may be new to you, since they're often overlooked in Sunday school or Bible study groups. Look at these adventures with a fresh set of eyes, just as many of the people at your VBS will!



"It's true!"

What's an Oikos?



Oikos is the Greek term for "household" or "family." What a warm, wonderful way to make everyone at VBS feel welcome!

At Athens VBS, an Oikos is a group of up to 10 people, led by an Oikos Leader (that's you) and an Assistant Oikos Leader. Through field-testing and countless letters from churches around the globe, we've learned that this intergenerational, small-group atmosphere allows everyone to participate and learn together. Plus, the mixed-age groups make discipline problems practically disappear!

We've named each Oikos after one of the early churches Paul visited. (Kids and adults may recognize some of these names from certain books of the Bible, such as Ephesians, Philippians, and Galatians!) So participants might be from an Oikos (or household) of Thessalonica or an Oikos of Troas. The information about each of these cities or provinces (on page 11) gives kids and adults an idea of where the first Christians lived, how Christianity spread, and what obstacles the early church faced.



Twelve Mediterranean Oikoí



ANTIOCH (ANT-ee-ock)

The New Testament tells of two cities with the name *Antioch*—Syrian Antioch and Pisidian Antioch. When people persecuted Jesus' followers, some of them ran away from Judea and moved to Syrian Antioch. This city became the "home base" of the early church—in fact, this is the place Jesus' followers were first called "Christians" (Acts 11:25). Antioch is found in modern-day Turkey.



BEREA (buh-REE-uh)

Nestled at the foot of Mount Vermio, Berea (called Veria today) enjoyed lush orchards of peaches, pears, and apples. The church there started because nearby Thessalonica became too dangerous for Paul! The people in Berea listened eagerly to Paul's teachings, searching Scripture every day to see if Paul's preaching was true (Acts 17:11).



COLOSSAE (kuh-LOSS-eye)

A man named Epaphras established the church in Colossae sometime after Paul's third missionary journey—many years after Paul's stay in Athens (Colossians 1:7). Frequent earthquakes plagued the city of Colossae, eventually destroying much of the city. Today, no one lives in the area of Turkey where the city of Colossae once stood.



CORINTH (CORE-inth)

Corinth, a city with elaborate temples, had the reputation as one of the most beautiful cities of its time. But many people there worshiped Greek gods...and some of their worship involved wicked rituals. Paul spent a year and a half in Corinth, strengthening the church and encouraging Christians to be strong (1 Corinthians 1:8). The city of Corinth still stands, now in the country of Greece.



EPHESUS (EFF-uh-sis)

Ephesus, an ancient Greek city, boasted one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World—the temple of Artemis (a Greek goddess). People came from far away to see the temple and to worship Artemis there, bringing plenty of money and trade into the city. The followers of Artemis didn't get along with the Ephesian Christians, causing plenty of riots and public disagreements (Acts 19:23-41). The ruins of Artemis's temple are in Ephesus in the present-day country of Turkey.



GALATIA (guh-LAY-shuh)

A large Roman province, Galatia nearly spanned from the Black Sea in the north to the Mediterranean Sea in the south! Paul traveled through the southern part of Galatia on all three of his missionary journeys. The region of Galatia covers much of the country of Turkey today.



ICONIUM (eye-CONE-ee-um)

Trade roads to Rome and Ephesus passed right through Iconium, making it a busy and important city. Farmers also found the soil rich and fertile—perfect for growing things like grain, plums, and apricots. Paul reached many people there with the message of God's love...but he also found plenty of people who got mad when he talked about Jesus (Acts 14:1-5)! Today Iconium is called Konya and is in Turkey.



LYSTRA (LIE-struh)

Roman soldiers, Greeks, Jews, and mountain tribes all lived in Lystra. This Roman colony had a temple to the Greek god Zeus. In fact, when Paul and Barnabas healed a lame man in Lystra, the Greeks there thought *Barnabas* was Zeus (Acts 14:8-15)! If you want to visit Lystra today, head to the country of Turkey.



PHILIPPI (FILL-ip-eye)

When Philip II of Macedon conquered this city, he took over the gold mines, strengthened the wall, built a theater (that's still in Philippi today), and named the city after himself. Later, Octavian made Philippi a Roman colony, giving all the citizens the same rights as if their homes were actually in Italy. Evidently, few Jews lived in Philippi, because Paul couldn't even find a synagogue when he visited. The city of Philippi is in modern-day Greece.



ROME

As the meeting place of the Roman Senate, Rome hosted frequent visitors from every state in the Mediterranean. The Caesars made sure Rome had all the best—beautiful public buildings, temples, estates, aqueducts, and entertainment. Unfortunately, more than one-third of the population lived as slaves or poor freed slaves. Paul wrote a lengthy letter to the Roman church, encouraging and teaching them. You can still visit Rome today, in Italy.



THESSALONICA

(thess-uh-luh-NI-kuh)

Not only did Thessalonica have a prime location in a harbor of the Aegean Sea but this bustling city was also a stop on the Via Egnatia—the Roman "highway" from Rome to the east! Although a diverse group of people lived in Thessalonica (including Greeks, Romans, Orientals, and Jews), Christians there endured hostility and persecution for their beliefs (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Today Thessalonica is called Thessaloniki and is in Greece.



TROAS (TROE-az)

The seaport city of Troas—or Alexandria Troas, as it was also called—sat on the coast of the Aegean Sea, about 10 miles from the ancient city of Troy. Because of its location, this city saw an abundance of harbor traffic between Asia and Macedonia. Paul must have found eager ears and open hearts there—he visited repeatedly and preached until midnight (Acts 20:7)! The city of Troas would be in Turkey today.

What you'll Do

Before Participants Arrive

- ◆ Plan to arrive *at least* 30 minutes early (40 minutes on the first day of the program), and let the Director know you're there. He or she might have specific instructions or hold an Oikos Leader meeting.
- ◆ Find your Oikos "home base" (blanket where you'll gather for each Oikos Time), and locate your basket of supplies. Check through your supply basket, and be sure it has been stocked (or restocked) with all the necessary supplies for that day.
- ◆ Make sure your Oikos name poster is visible and in place next to your home base.
- ◆ Get a list of your Oikos members from the registrar or Director. (This list may change as participants arrive, since some will not have preregistered, so be flexible!)
- ◆ Look over your daily schedule to see what's in store for your Oikos today and find out which lettered group you'll travel with.



When Participants Arrive

- ◆ After participants register or sign in each day, they'll join you at your home base. Introduce yourself, and be sure your Oikos members know each other's names. Introduce any newcomers to the group. Help each Oikos member feel welcome.
- ◆ Write names on the name badges, if those weren't given to Oikos members at registration.
- ◆ Help everyone put on their colorful Banduras. Tell them this designated color represents their Oikos for the week. Participants can choose how they want to wear their Bandura, such as on their head or as an armband.

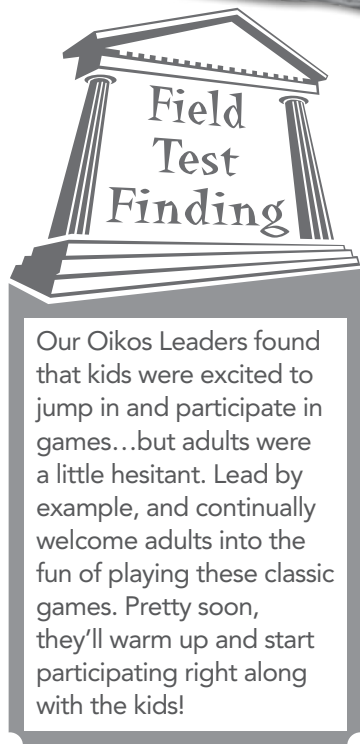
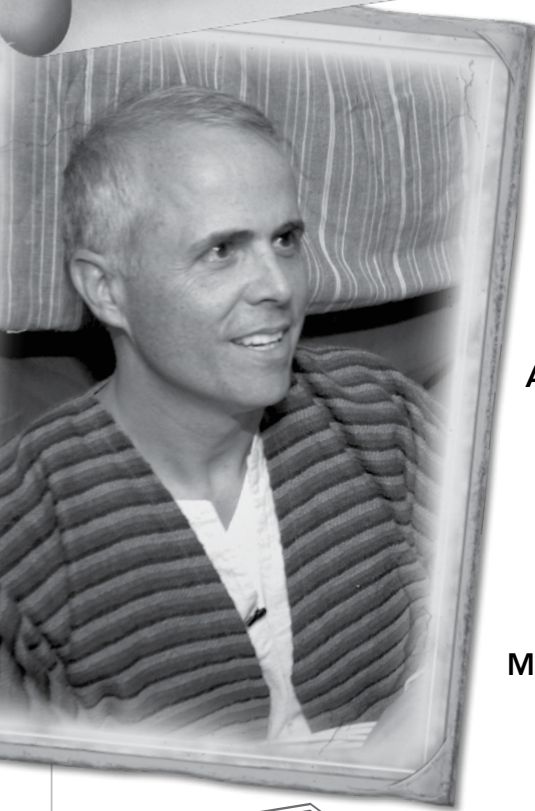
Opening Celebration 9-9:25 (25 minutes)

- ◆ When the Celebration Leader begins, gather with the other Oikoi for opening singing and worship.
- ◆ Participate in singing and getting to know everyone.
- ◆ When the opening Celebration time is finished, lead your Oikos back to your home base (you decide where you want to go each day).

Opening Oikos Time 9:25-9:30 (5 minutes)

- ◆ Prepare Oikos members for their trip to Athens, where Paul is staying on his journey.
- ◆ Help Oikos members get to know each other as they discuss what life must have been like in ancient Athens.
- ◆ If time permits work on scripture memory.





Bible Story Time (30 minutes)

- ◆ Lead your Oikos to Room 109, and wait outside for the rotation leader to greet you.
- ◆ Sit with your Oikos, and encourage everyone to listen and participate.
- ◆ Learn about Paul and what he's been going through on his dangerous journey to share the truth. Your Oikos members will discover the amazing truth that God loves us.

Arena Games (30 minutes)

- ◆ Lead your Oikos to the outdoor Games area, and wait for the leader to begin.
- ◆ Encourage everyone to listen to the Games Leader's instructions.
- ◆ Join in the fun, and help younger children, if necessary. *Participate in the games wholeheartedly.* Your participation will speak volumes to your Oikos members.

Marketplace--Arts + Crafts (30 minutes)

- ◆ The Arts + Crafts tents are positioned on the back (North) wall of the Parish Hall. Both tents may be used for the activity.
- ◆ Have Oikos group wait **outside** the tent area until the leader comes to greet them.
- ◆ Encourage everyone to listen carefully to the instructions given.
- ◆ Oikos Leaders and Assistants will need to assist children--especially younger ones.
- ◆ Once Oikos members are working on their own, feel free to work on the project yourself! Keep an eye on kids who might need a hand with a certain element of a project. And encourage other helpers to participate and create their own projects, too.

Marketplace--Missions + Crafts(30 minutes)

- ◆ The Missions + Snack tents are positioned on the kitchen-side wall of the Parish Hall. Both tents will be used for the activity.
- ◆ Have Oikos group wait outside the tent area until the leader comes to greet them.
- ◆ The Oikos group will first go to the Food Cart for a snack and then will sit on the carpetis/blankets under the tents.
- ◆ After being seated and quietly eating snack, the Missions Leader for the day will tell the children about their mission, relay personal stories and encourage discussion.
- ◆ Sit with your Oikos, and encourage everyone to listen and participate.
- ◆ The children will assist in assembling "Blessing Bags" for the children on Tricounty Family Ministries on Monday and Tuesday.
- ◆ Encourage them to listen attentively to instructions.
- ◆ Oikos Leaders and Assistants will need to assist children--especially younger ones.

Closing Oikos Time (15 minutes)

- ◆ Gather Oikos members for a closing Oikos Time. Help Oikos members connect what they've learned in ancient Athens to real life through simple object lessons, discussions, and experiences.
- ◆ Distribute a Athens Greeting Card each day with the day's key point, Bible verse and Bible story reference printed on it. Oikos members will take these home each day as a reinforcement of what they've learned and how to live out God's Word in everyday life.
- ◆ Gather Bandanas and nametags so you can use them the next day.
- ◆ When you hear the attention-getter, you will know it's time to lead your Oikos members to the closing Celebration.

Closing Celebration (15 minutes)

- ◆ Participate in singing or other activities as directed by the Celebration Leader.
- ◆ Keep your Oikos together until parents or caregivers come for kids in carpool. *Do not* let kids wander off on their own! Remember, you're responsible for their safety.
- ◆ Let Oikos members know you're looking forward to seeing them tomorrow.
- ◆ Be sure participants take home their Marketplace projects and each day's Postcard From Athens.

Advice Column

Use your Oikos Time to reinforce the lessons and encourage kids to learn scripture. Consider having incentives for those who memorize verses.

Advice Column

Some Arts + Crafts projects may need to remain in order to dry. Use your own discretion or ask the leaders of Arts + Crafts.

What Do I Do If...?



What do I do if my Oikos won't stay together between activities?

Work with your Oikos members to develop special routes and fun ways to travel between stations. Pretend to be a galloping donkey caravan, a skipping herd of sheep, or a swimming school of fish. Be creative, and challenge kids and adults to think of new (and cooperative) ways to move from place to place.

What do I do if older kids are unhappy being grouped with mixed ages?

Highlight older kids' helping roles by telling younger kids, "[Name of older child] is really good at that. Why don't you ask him [or her] to help you?" Older kids will enjoy being respected and looked up to, and younger children won't demand so much of your attention. Plus, older kids learn just as much—or even more—when they help lead younger children during activities. And younger children will thrive on the special friendships they build with older kids! **Important for Youth Assistants to do also!**

What do I do if an Oikos member won't participate in discussion? Ask follow-up questions to draw out shy or reluctant Oikos members. Use phrases such as "What do you mean by that?" or "That sounds interesting! Tell me more."

Encourage participation by challenging Oikos members to offer as many different answers as they can think of. If participants offer answers that seem off base or contrary to your church's teaching, take time to follow up with them between activities or after your time in ancient Athens. If you're not comfortable discussing their questions or concerns, refer them to your VBS Director or church pastor.



If Oikos members don't respond to your encouragement, don't force them to participate. You may have introspective people in your group who need time to think quietly about the things you're discussing.

What do I do if an Oikos member is too talkative or too active?

To ensure that each person has a turn to share, try going around the circle and giving each member 30 seconds to share a response. Or occasionally ask children and adults to respond with one-word answers. You can even call on people by their birthdays, such as "I'd like anyone with a wintertime birthday to answer this one."

What do I do if someone asks me a question I can't answer?

Some families who come to your Athens VBS may have never been to church before, so you can expect lots of questions as you help kids and adults learn about God. If someone asks you a question you can't answer, don't be afraid to admit you don't know. Say something such as "That's a good question. Maybe our church's pastor would know the answer. Why don't we ask our pastor later today?"

What do I do if my Oikos finishes an activity early?

Here are some fun ideas if you need to fill a little time.

- ◆ Make up an affirming Oikos cheer that everyone can shout during the opening and closing Celebrations. (This was very popular at our field test!)
- ◆ See who can make the silliest face.
- ◆ Try to name Marketplace items that start with each letter of the alphabet (apple, beads, columns, drachmas, and so on).
- ◆ Think of fun ways to affirm and thank each Shopkeeper, such as giving high fives or a round of applause.
- ◆ Identify Shopkeepers or other staff members your Oikos can invite to the opening or closing Celebrations.





DAY 1

Key Verse: “The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.” (Psalm 145:9)

Bible Point: God loves us all.

Why It Matters

Wow, even great heroes of the Bible had troubles with friends! Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement so strong that they parted ways and went on separate missionary trips. It's not uncommon to have problems with relationships—it's part of life, and kids seem to have more than their share of friend issues. (Who hasn't comforted a child devastated by something a “best friend” did?) But God continued to use Paul and Barnabas to further his kingdom. God even sent another young disciple—Timothy—to help Paul during his second missionary journey. Use today's activities to help kids and adults realize that God is in control, and his love is for everyone. He can use each of us, no matter who we are, to accomplish great things for his kingdom.

Bible Story: Paul begins his second missionary journey.
(Acts 15:36–16:5)

Read the Passage With This in Mind...

- Paul and Barnabas were in Jerusalem to settle a dispute. Believers in Antioch had been telling Gentiles to be circumcised in order to be saved. Paul and others argued that there was no reason to burden the Gentiles with that yoke because all are saved the same way—“by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 15:11).
- Paul and Barnabas went back to Antioch with a letter stating that Gentile believers need not be circumcised. While there, Paul and Barnabas decided to revisit the churches from their first missionary journey. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark along, but Paul strongly disagreed because John Mark had “deserted” them on the previous trip (Acts 15:38).
- The Bible doesn't say why John Mark failed to finish that trip. Some speculate that he was uncomfortable preaching to Gentiles; others think the trip might have seemed too dangerous. Whatever the reason, Paul was *not* favorably impressed with John Mark's behavior, and his disagreement with Barnabas was so sharp that they parted ways.
- Barnabas and John Mark sailed to Cyprus to preach, while Paul and Silas headed to Syria. In Lystra lived a young disciple named Timothy, whose mother was a Jewish believer and whose father was a Greek. Paul invited Timothy to join them on their journey.
- For the record, we know that Paul got over his disappointment with John Mark. In fact, Paul later asked Timothy to send Mark, saying “for he will be helpful to me in my ministry” (2 Timothy 4:11).

USE THIS AS AN EXAMPLE FOR ALL DAYS

Day 1 Opening Oikos Time

1. Welcome your Oikos members.

Gather the Oikos members on your home base blanket, and introduce yourself. Be sure each person receives a Bandura and a name badge with his or her name on it.

Say: **Welcome to Athens—a big Bible-times city! We're going to have so much fun this week as we pretend to go on a trip back to Bible times! We'll get to visit with people who had incredible adventures...adventures that really happened!**

Athens is a city near the ocean. Ask:

- ⑦ Tell about a time you visited the ocean, a lake, a pond, or even a swimming pool; what did you do there?

Let participants share their answers until it's time for Celebration to begin. When the Celebration Leader begins, gather with other Oikoi for the opening time of singing and worship.

2. After the opening Celebration, gather Oikos members again on the home base blanket.

Make sure each person has a name badge and a colorful Bandura.

Say: **Every small group you see around the room is an Oikos. Isn't that a funny word to say? Let kids and adults practice saying "oikos." In Athens, people spoke a language called Greek, and oikos is Greek for "family" or "household." So our Oikos is like a family. Motion around the room. And all of these Oikoi—that's how you say "families"—are from a different city!**

Point to the Oikos name poster, and tell kids and adults their Oikos name for the week. Read the information on the poster to help your Oikos members understand a little bit about where they're from.

These fun Banduras match the color of our Oikos name poster. Every time you see a Bandura this color, you'll know that's one of our Oikos members!

For Day 1 you'll need...

- ☐ map (p. 22)
- ☐ Bible marked at Psalm 145:9
- ☐ Day 1 schedule (from your Director)
- ☐ Day 1 Greetings from Athens (1 per Oikos member)



Advice Column

Have the Oikos members write their names on their coin pouches and Banduras. They'll use them throughout the week.



Asia

Europe

Athens

North
America

Africa

South
America



Italy

Greece

★ **ATHENS**

Mediterranean
Sea

3. Where is Athens?

Say: All week, we'll pretend to go on a trip back to Bible times. Athens was a city in the Roman Empire. Show everyone the map (p. 22). Point to the approximate area of your town, and then point to Athens. We'll visit with a guy named Paul. Paul traveled all over this area, helping people know the truth about God. He wanted everyone to know that there's one God who loves us!

Plenty of people in Athens don't believe in God or Jesus. They serve lots of fake gods. Some people don't think Jesus was really God's Son. We'll have a chance to tell them the truth! That's going to be cool.

4. Learn the Bible verse.

Say: Today we'll learn that God loves us all. (Everyone will respond with "It's true!") Open the Bible to today's verse. The Bible tells us that's true! In the Bible book of Psalms, chapter 145, verse 9, it says, "The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation." Compassion is another word for love and kindness. Ask:

- ① Tell about a time when someone showed you love or kindness; how did that make you feel? Let each Oikos member share, if time allows.

Say: This verse tells us that God showers compassion on his creation. Point around your Oikos circle. You are one of God's most precious creations! God loves us all. ("It's true!") Teach Oikos members the actions shown in the photos to help them remember the Bible verse.

Advice Column

Kids or adults who are familiar with the Bible may recognize their Oikos name from one of Paul's letters in the New Testament. On Day 5, Paul helps kids make that connection!



"It's true!"



"The Lord..."



"...is good..."



"...to everyone."



"He showers compassion..."



"...on all his creation."

5. Look at the schedule.

Say: **Each day in Athens, we'll play Bible-times games, visit the Marketplace and do arts and crafts and as well as have a snack and learn about missions. We will also visit our storyteller and learn more about Paul and his experience on this dangerous missionary journey.**

Bring out the daily schedule tell your Oikos members where you will be going first today. The Marketplace Shopkeepers, the Arena Games Leader, and the storyteller will repeat their activities several times each day, with a different group of Oikoi each time.

VBS DAILY SCHEDULE

ELEMENTARY OIKOS GROUPS

	EPHESUS (K5)	GALATIA (1ST-2ND)	PHILIPPI (3RD-4TH)	THESSALONICA (5TH-6TH)
8:30-9:00	VOLUNTEERS GATHER + CARPOOL + CHECK-IN			
9:00-9:25	OPENING CELEBRATION (PARISH HALL)			
9:25-9:30	OIKOS TIME (PARISH HALL/PARISH BLDG)			
9:30-10:00	BIBLE STORY (RM 109)	MISSION + SNACKS (PARISH HALL)	ARENA GAMES (OUTSIDE)	ARTS + CRAFTS (PARISH HALL)
10:00-10:30	MISSION + SNACKS (PARISH HALL)	BIBLE STORY (RM 109)	ARTS + CRAFTS (PARISH HALL)	ARENA GAMES (OUTSIDE)
10:30-11:00	ARENA GAMES (OUTSIDE)	ARTS + CRAFTS (PARISH HALL)	BIBLE STORY (RM 109)	MISSION + SNACKS (PARISH HALL)
11:00-11:30	ARTS + CRAFTS (PARISH HALL)	ARENA GAMES (OUTSIDE)	MISSION + SNACKS (PARISH HALL)	BIBLE STORY (RM 109)
11:30-11:45	OIKOS TIME (PARISH HALL/PARISH BLDG)			
11:45-12:00	CLOSING CELEBRATION (PARISH HALL)			
12:00-12:15	DISMISSAL + CARPOOL			

VBS DAILY SCHEDULE

PRESCHOOL OIKOS GROUPS

	ANTIOCH (3s)	CORINTH 4s	ROME 4s
8:30-9:00	VOLUNTEERS GATHER + CARPOOL + CHECK-IN		
9:00-9:25	OENING CELEBRATION (PARISH HALL)		
9:25-9:30	OIKOS TIME (ROOM 108)		
9:30-10:00	BIBLE STORY (ROOM 108)		
10:00-10:30	MUSIC (RM 107)	ARTS + CRAFTS ROOM 106)	GAMES + SNACKS (OUTSIDE)
10:30-11:00	GAMES + SNACKS (OUTSIDE)	MUSIC (RM 107)	ARTS + CRAFTS ROOM 106)
11:00-11:30	ARTS + CRAFTS ROOM 106)	GAMES + SNACKS (OUTSIDE)	MUSIC (RM 107)
11:30-11:45	OIKOS TIME (ROOM 108)		
11:45-12:00	CLOSING CELEBRATION (PARISH HALL)		
12:00-12:15	DISMISSAL + CARPOOL		

USE THIS AS AN EXAMPLE FOR ALL DAYS

Day 1 Closing Oikos Time

1. Circle up and review.

Gather your Oikos members on the home base blanket to talk about the day's events.

Say: **Today we met Paul! More than anything, he wanted people to know the truth about God's love. Paul didn't want *anyone* to be left out. Think about a time when you felt left out.** Tell your own brief story about a time you were excluded. Let any Oikos members share their stories, too. Ask:

- ❓ **Why does it feel so bad to be left out?** (It feels like people don't like us; we miss out on the fun; it makes you feel alone.)

2. Bring out the Confetti Cannon.

Say: **The truth is, God loves us all. ("It's true!") No one is left out of God's love. God doesn't just love people with brown hair or people with tennis shoes or people with braces. God doesn't just love big or important people. God loves us all. ("It's true!") The Bible tells us that "The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation." I think it's a little like this.**

Gather everyone into a tight circle—that way the confetti will shower over your group!

Hold the Confetti Cannon in the middle of your circle with the top pointed straight up and away from kids' faces. Following the instructions on the container, twist the bottom in the direction indicated. The container will pop open, sending a shower of confetti on your Oikos!

Set the container aside. Ask:

- ❓ **How was that experience like God's love?** (It went everywhere; it was surprising; it made me laugh; I loved it!)

Say: **God's love "showers" down on us every day!** Tell a way that God has showered his compassion on you or a way that you've seen God's love. Then let each person tell a way they've seen or felt God's love.

No one needs to miss out on God's love. God loves us all. ("It's true!") His love is big enough for everyone!



3. Bring out the Day 1 Greeting from Athens postcard

Say: That verse is so special; I want you to have a reminder of it. That's why each day in ancient Athens, you'll each get a Greeting from Athens postcard to help you remember what you learned.

Our awesome Bible verse is right here, too! Turn the card over, and read the day's Bible verse on it: **"The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation"** (Psalm 145:9).

Paul spent most of his life telling people about God's great love for us. Paul didn't want anyone to be left out, because no one is left out of God's love! As I hand you your special Bible Memory Maker, I want you to remember that you are God's creation, and God loves you.

Go around the circle, give each person a postcard and say: [Name], **God loves you.** After each Oikos member receives the affirmation, have them link arms with the people on either side of them. Once everyone is linked in a circle, say a prayer thanking God for his mighty love.





DAY 2

Key Verse: "Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you." (1 Peter 5:7)

Bible Point: God loves us and takes care of us.

Why It Matters

Paul and Silas are so amazing! After being publicly humiliated—stripped, beaten, and thrown in prison—they spent their time in jail singing hymns and praising God. They loved God and were certain that he loved them. They relied on that. They were comforted by that. They responded to that. What a wonderful example for the kids and adults at your VBS! It's so easy to get caught up in life's daily challenges, which, thankfully, don't often include what Paul and Silas had to go through. Use today's activities to remind everyone at your VBS that just as God cared for Paul and Silas in such dire circumstances, he will certainly care for them!

Bible Story: Paul and Silas are put in prison. (Acts 16:16-40)

Read the Passage With This in Mind...

- It's widely accepted that the book of Acts was written by Luke. In Acts 16:10, the first "we" section of Acts begins, as opposed to the "they" sections. Luke may have joined Paul, Silas, and Timothy on their journey and therefore he wrote this section in the plural first-person.
- In Philippi, Paul preached for the first time on European soil. Normally, he would have gone to the local synagogue. In Jewish law, if there were 10 male heads of households who could regularly attend, a synagogue should be formed. Failing that, an outdoor place of prayer was to be designated. Since Philippi had no synagogue, prayer was held outside the city near the Gangitis River.
- The words of the demon-possessed slave girl are reminiscent of the demons who compulsively acknowledged Jesus' divinity. Here they acknowledged the truth of salvation through faith in Jesus.
- After the earthquake, no mention is made of crumbled walls or fallen ceilings. What is mentioned is that doors flew open and chains fell off.
- Under Roman law, a guard who let a prisoner escape could be put to death. The jailer was so upset thinking his prisoners had escaped that he was preparing to kill himself. But Paul somehow knew what the guard was planning and called out to stop him. Why didn't the other prisoners escape when they had the chance? The Bible doesn't say, but maybe they were too amazed by these men of God.
- By law, it was forbidden for Roman citizens to be sentenced without a fair hearing and subjected to punishment that was degrading—both of which Paul and Silas experienced. No wonder the officials apologized and hurried them out of town!



DAY 3

Key Verse: "The Lord is for me, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?" (Psalm 118:6)

Bible Point: God loves us when others don't.

Why It Matters

Imagine how Paul and his friends must have felt, knowing that an angry mob was rioting in the streets, bent on finding them. Imagine hiding, fearing for your life, and worrying about the welfare of the other believers. While it's unlikely that the adults and kids at your VBS face similar circumstances, they may very well feel alone, ostracized, and unwelcome. Use today's activities to encourage them—to help them realize that God loves them, no matter what!

Bible Story: An angry mob searches for Paul and Silas. (Acts 17:1-9)

Read the Passage With This in Mind...

- Thessalonica was a city of about 200,000 and was central in Macedonia for commerce and government. Paul and Silas must have seen the city as optimal for spreading the Gospel, because immediately after leaving Philippi, they traveled the 100 miles to Thessalonica.
- The Bible tells us that Paul preached in Thessalonica for three consecutive Sabbaths, but he was probably there much longer. We know this because the church in Philippi sent him money more than once while he was in Thessalonica (Philippians 4:15-16), and he also worked to support himself while there.
- Here again, some of the Jews were angry—"jealous," the Bible says—and they started a riot. It's likely that Jason, whose home the mob attacked, was a new convert who had been housing Paul and the other apostles.
- The bond posted by Jason and a few other believers probably guaranteed that Paul and Silas could no longer reside in Jason's home and, moreover, would have to leave town and not return; otherwise, Jason and the believers would forfeit their money. Maybe this is why Paul didn't return to Thessalonica, although he obviously wanted to (1 Thessalonians 2:17-18).
- Despite the trouble faced by this early church in Thessalonica, believers there continued to grow in faith. In later letters, Paul commends them for proclaiming the Gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2:14-16).
- Paul and company did leave town after the riot and traveled on to Berea, about 50 miles away. It wasn't long, though, before Jews from Thessalonica came to Berea to stir up trouble against Paul again. Several Berean believers escorted Paul to Athens, while Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea to strengthen the growing church there. When he arrived in Athens, and perhaps when he saw the idolatrous nature of the city, Paul asked the Bereans to tell Silas and Timothy to come to Athens.



DAY 4

Key Verse: "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

Bible Point: God loves us and sent his Son, Jesus.

Why It Matters

Paul was alone in a new city, surrounded everywhere by pagan thought and practices. Just mentioning Jesus would set Paul apart and possibly put him in danger. After all, he had just escaped yet another mob of angry men. Why risk it? Why not at least wait until his friends joined him in Athens? Because, as the Bible says, "he was deeply troubled" by what he saw. He simply couldn't keep silent. He knew that Jesus and his redemptive work on the cross are the most important things in life. God's love is so incredible that Paul *had* to talk about it. Use today's activities to help the kids and adults in your VBS realize that God loves them so very much that he sent his Son, Jesus, to save them.

Bible Story: Paul preaches about Jesus. (Acts 17:16-34)

Read the Passage With This in Mind...

- Athenians loved nothing better than to debate the latest ideas, so it's no wonder that Paul's teaching caught the attention of the local thinkers. Some called him a "babblers," originally referring to those who picked up bits and pieces of ideas and presented them as their own. Others thought Paul was advocating foreign gods.
- Two main schools of philosophy were popular in Athens—Epicurean and Stoic. Epicureans believed that the chief goal of man should be pleasure and happiness, both attained by avoiding excesses and the fear of death. They didn't deny the existence of gods but didn't believe gods involved themselves in the affairs of men. Stoics believed in living in harmony with nature and emphasized man's rational abilities.
- The Epicureans and Stoics took Paul to the Council of the Areopagus in Athens, where he gave what has become known as his sermon on Mars Hill. This council was the chief judicial body of the city, and it exercised judgment over religious and educational matters. Their ruling would determine whether Paul could continue to preach in Athens or whether he must remain silent.
- Paul began his address to the council by trying to find common ground with the Athenians. He mentioned their altar to an unknown god and from there attempted to show them that God could be known in the redemptive person of his Son, Jesus.
- Some members of the council sneered at the idea of resurrection of the dead, but a few others became believers. Then the council decided to defer a decision on Paul's case.

THURS PM DAY 5

Key Verse: "Just as I have loved you, you should love each other." (John 13:34)



Bible Point: God loves us and wants us to share his love.

Why It Matters

Imagine how Paul felt after speaking to the council in Athens. Although a few became believers, many sneered at him, and the rest were apathetic. Before Athens, he had to flee an angry mob in Berea; before that, an even angrier mob in Thessalonica. And yet, here he was, preparing to go to Corinth to share the good news of Jesus. In his first letter to the church in Corinth, Paul says of his original trip: "I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling" (1 Corinthians 2:3). He may have been discouraged and even afraid, but he didn't let that stop him from spreading the Gospel. Use Paul's courage and determination to encourage the kids and adults at your VBS. God will strengthen and lead them, just as he did Paul!

Bible Story: Paul continues his journey. (Acts 18:1-5)

Read the Passage With This in Mind...

- Since Paul couldn't legally preach in Athens, he could wait for the council to give him permission or he could move to a more receptive area.
- Both Athens and Corinth were in Greece. Under Roman rule, Macedonia and Achaia were the two provinces that made up the whole of Greece. Athens was in Achaia, as was Corinth, where Paul traveled next.
- While Paul doesn't seem to have had tremendous success in converting Athenians to Christianity, we do learn that after his speech before the council, at least a few people became believers. One believer that the Bible mentions was Dionysius, a member of the council, and another was a woman named Damaris. The Bible says there were "others with them," as well.
- It seems odd that Paul says in 1 Corinthians 16:15 that Stephanas and his household in Corinth were "the first of the harvest of believers in Greece." Perhaps the distinction for Corinth had to do with the establishment of an actual church. There's no record of a church being founded in Athens.

After your Trip to Ancient Athens

Thanks for bringing God's Word to life in new and unforgettable ways! Your love and time added so much to this awesome program. Here are a few tips for wrapping up Athens VBS and carrying the excitement beyond this week!

Return your basket to the Athens Director. It should contain all of the Oikos items, your Oikos poster, your home base blanket, and any other miscellaneous items left from your final Oikos time.

Write down any great stories or insights about your Oikos members. Share these with your church and your Athens Director so they, too, can see how God worked in your Oikos.

Follow up with your Oikos members. Send a postcard letting each person know how much you enjoyed getting to know him or her. If you see families at church or in your community, be sure to offer a friendly hello or even a hug. If you took pictures of your Oikos, drop them in the mail with a note thanking everyone for a wonderful week.

Fill out an evaluation form. Your Director may have evaluation forms for all staff members to fill out. Your feedback is important! Help us make next year's Holy Land Adventure even more exciting!

