



SESSION 1

HACKS FOR PRETEENS

MISSION:
DEEP SEA

BY MIKE SHELEY

HOW TO HACK THIS SESSION FOR PRETEENS

In kids ministry, you've got a wide range of ages you need to engage every week, but preteens tend to get overlooked, so here are a few adjustments you can make to this week in order to keep your preteens more engaged.

GENERAL TIPS FOR ALL SESSIONS

Worship time. Unless you have a large enough preteen group to do a separate worship with slightly more "preteen" songs, the best hack here is to involve them in leading worship. Some will be good at actually singing, whether or not you mic them. Others can be really good with leading motions. And then others can be dispersed among the younger kids, leading the others in worship by example.

Bible story time. Preteens would be more engaged if you have them help act out the story or if you have them read it while others are acting it out. Try to bring in props during the storytelling, such as a can of sardines for Jesus Feeds the Crowd, or a mist bottle to spray the kids while telling the Moses or Jonah stories.

ACTIVITY | S.E.A. Agent Badge

Make your preteen badges a little different, perhaps adding in a stripe or a different color. Or you could give them a specific color of yarn not available to the other kids. Also allow them to help younger kids make their badges.

ACTIVITY | Crossing the Sea

If your small groups have mixed ages, have preteens let the younger kids go first. This is similar to how some people run an Easter Egg hunt. Only let the preteens go after the younger children have gone so they don't take all the shells. And have preteens "[crab walk](#)" through this activity. . . if

anyone's going to enjoy a good challenge of picking up shells while crab walking, it will be your preteens!
*Bonus: If you have any gymnastics preteens, they are probably good at crab walking and can teach the others!

REFLECTION | Tentacles of Faith

- In addition to making the tentacle, have some purple paper they can use to write a little thank you note or note of encouragement to that person. Challenge them to take the note home and have their parents help them mail it to the person.



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THE BIG IDEA | My faith grows deeper when I use my gifts.

Preteens might enjoy actually having a puzzle to assemble. You can purchase [blank puzzles](#) in whatever complexity you want. The sample link shows one with 63 pieces. You can use a marker to write out the big idea on the puzzle. For bonus creativity, involve a preteen ahead of time to creatively write and artistically decorate the puzzle before you take the pieces apart. Then bury the pieces in the sand and follow the original instructions.

ACTIVITY | Lunch is Served Craft

Print the printable on [shrink paper](#). Have kids color it in with permanent marker, cut them out, then punch a hole in each image. Heat the items using a toaster oven. Once cooled, add the newly-created charms on to a [leather string](#) to make a bracelet, necklace, or keychain.

REFLECTION | Finger Print Fish

This is going to be a fun and messy activity. Although you can't prevent a mess, you can minimize it. Have preteens who are in charge of each ink pad who can also help the young children with getting the ink on their fingers. Have a different set of preteens who have the baby wipes and are ready to jump in and help wipe off fingers as soon as they are done making their mark!



SESSION 3

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MUSIC | Waves of Worship

An alternative playlist for preteens:

- ["Only Wanna Sing"](#)
- ["Real Love"](#)
- ["We Are Royals"](#)

SNACK | Sandy Shores

Many of the hacks we offer are great for preteens in with the students or up front, but you have preteens who don't want to be up front or with children, but who would love to serve behind the scenes. Recruit a few of these preteens to help make these supplies before this session of vbs. Offer them the opportunity or recruit different preteens to help the children with assembling these during the session.

MEMORY VERSE | Ephesians 3:18

Type out this verse three times on one sheet of paper equally spaced apart. In the second one, delete every other word. In the third one, delete everything except the first letter of every word. When you hand these out to preteens, have them fold it into a tri-fold. They can practice using each of these as a different way to memorize this verse.



SESSION 4

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DISCUSSION

Give each preteen one sheet of plain printer paper. Have them fold it in half. Then have them fold it in half the other direction. Now they should unfold the paper and have a sheet with four different rectangles. Looking at the paper in landscape or horizontal position, instruction them to create four quick sketch notes or comics that summarize their answers to these four prompts:

- Draw a quick sketch of someone God may be asking them to share their story with.
- Draw a quick sketch of someone whom they may not think will listen but who needs to hear their story.
- Draw a quick sketch of someone who shared their story about God with you.
- Write a word or phrase that describes how sharing your story can deepen your faith.

RESPONSE | Sharing Your Story

Help preteens practice telling their story with some simple tools. There is the free "[CIY Tell It](#)" app available on the Apple App Store or for \$1 you can pick up a [set of cards](#) that walk them through the same thing. Either way, this simple method will help preteens practice sharing their story!




MEMORY VERSE | Ephesians 3:18

Allow preteens to use one of their own devices or to borrow one from a leader to record themselves doing this video ahead of time. Then play it back to teach it to the children. When they have seen it a couple of times, hit pause after certain lines to help children keep going and "fill in the blank." Do this a few times until the children can do the whole song, (and verse), from memory.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MIKE SHELEY



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Mike Sheley is the Middle School Pastor overseeing ministries for preteen (5th-6th grade) and young adolescent (7th-8th grade) students at Mount Pleasant Christian Church in central Indiana. He has been in student ministry for over twenty years, with more than twelve of those years in his current position. In his current ministry, preteens participate alongside middle schoolers for weekly programming, but have their own lessons and special events. However, part of the health of the ministry is due to the close friendship and working relationship Mike has with the children's ministry team.

Mike is married and has three kids - one in college,

one in high school and one in middle school. Mike has had the joy and challenge of ministering to all of his kids as their youth pastor during their preteen and middle school years.

Mike's odd jobs over the years have included working at the his local Apple Store, Target, and at a couple fast-food restaurants. He has a weird fascination with presentations and fonts.

If you'd like to chat with Mike about spiritual disciplines with preteens, parent ministry or developing better presentations, reach out! He would love to connect with you!

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