

# Jeff Johnson: VBS trips lead to ‘service of God and God’s people’

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I went on vacation last week. We planned ours. Are you still planning your summer vacation? Well, pack your flak jacket.

A growing number of adventurous vacationers around the world are opting to vacation in some of the world’s most dangerous places. Think of it: Biking in Baghdad. Eating kebabs in Kabul. Picnicking in Pyongyang. Even tanning in East Timor. It’s not as sanitized as I was in Disneyworld, but the rides, I hear, are a lot more thrilling!

Jeff JohnsonThe travel guide to North Korea has advice like: “You’ll be asked to pay respect to the statues of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il. ... Just do it.” The Afghanistan guide calls Kabul the “hottest city east of Suez,” but be careful, because “land mines are still a roadside hazard.”

Or you could go “less extreme” by undersea diving in an exo-suit, driving a tank (be careful where), street luging or flying a Mig over Russia. I fancy myself as somewhat of a risk-taker, but I really would have to think about buying a ticket to a place where the hotel concierge carries an automatic weapon.

Exercising and eating right are important, but folks who travel and indulge their sense of adventure seem statistically to outlive those who play it safe, according to Robert Pelton, author of [\*The World’s Most Dangerous Places\*](#).

“There are a lot of wiry octogenarians out there who ... stay out of the house as much as possible, fully understanding that the home is the world’s

most dangerous place for people over the age of 75,” he says. “And they don’t let a lot of doomsday books and warnings slow them down.”

That concept keeps surfacing in my life—risk.



I am all about risk. We went on vacations with our kids—spills, far-flung Cheerios, territorial wars, etc. I can’t even imagine hauling along an infant on a desert trek through hostile territory! However, we have weathered a few Vacation Bible Schools. Churches that take the VBS adventure certainly don’t play it safe and, I would surmise, live longer.

We do, however, need lots of help. We find our help through Texas Baptist specialist [Diane Lane](#). Whether your church VBS status is “still considering,” “late planning” or “on our journey,” Diane and her team will help. They are your Texas Baptist leaders to enable, equip and educate on a number of curricula, including BaptistWay, Gospel Light, Group, LifeWay and Standard.

If you think about it, each year’s VBS theme reads like an ad from a travel agency bulletin. This year? Whether your summer VBS travels include a “Blast Off,” an adventuresome “Wilderness Escape,” an exciting “Jungle Safari,” forming an “Agency D3” or boarding “Great Commission Express,” they can help.

One thing about the VBS trip that’s for sure—you’ll lose your life in the service of God and God’s people. But, as Jesus would say, that’s the best way to save it!

*Jeff Johnson is president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and pastor of First Baptist Church in Commerce.*