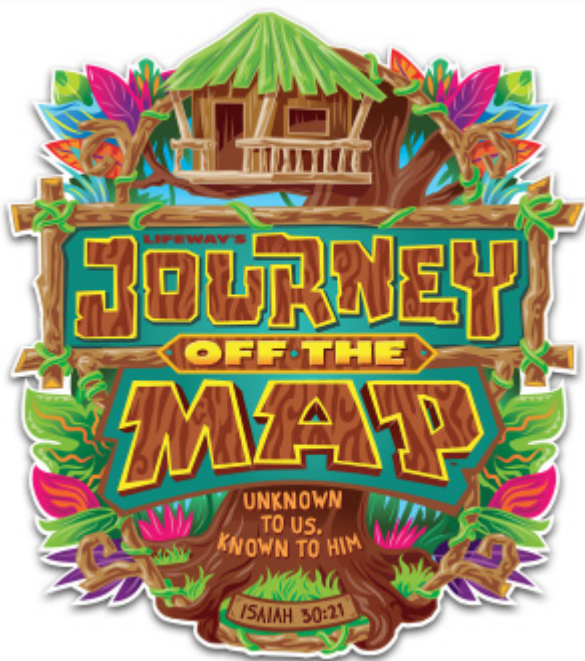


2nd Opinion: VBS 'still a marvelous way of reaching children'

June 18, 2015

I was 11, and it was Thursday. The excitement was building. Not so much for the start of Vacation Bible School the following Monday at First Baptist Church in Abernathy, where I attended and my father was the pastor. But for the VBS parade coming up on Saturday.



I was thrilled: They had announced a contest for the best-decorated bike in the parade. There would be prizes for first, second and third place. I just knew I could win a prize. A dream was born! So, let the decorating begin on my Whites Auto AMF 26-inch, white with molly orange pin striping (molly orange—the color of tomato soup; big on 1950s cars), whitewall tires, dual front and rear lights and a horn. Of course, none of the electronics worked because of

corroded batteries.

With crepe paper purchased at Struve's Department Store, I got started. I cut strips of paper and wound them carefully into the spokes of the front and rear wheels. I used a variety of colors. Then I wrapped the entire frame with the paper. Next came dual signs covering the rear wheel that said,

“Come to VBS!” Catchy, huh? Then I hung very long streamers, first from the ends of the handlebars, then from the end of the buddy seat, and finally, why not, all over the bicycle. Awesome. On Saturday, it won first place!

Life can be good when you are 11

Life can be good when you are 11. Now, some of my contemporaries thought I won because my dad was the pastor. Well, I thought, losers are losers, right?

The parade was breathtaking. It started with the local fire truck covered with screaming kids throwing candy, followed by an array of beautifully decorated bicycles, including you know who. Next came a long line of parents and VBS workers driving their cars, honking their horns and yelling, “Come to VBS!”

This was our vision of going into all the world and making disciples.

On the following Sunday morning, in front of everyone, even my envious friends, I received my first-place prize. It was a book titled *Bible Dictionary for Boys and Girls*.

What happened next was some very good acting on my part. I knew I was supposed to smile and say thank you, so that is what I did. However, I would be less than honest if I did not acknowledge I was a little disappointed. No, I was very disappointed with this first-place prize. *A Bible Dictionary for Boys and Girls?*

This book was cool

At this time in my life, I owned basically one religious book, which was a prized black genuine-leather-bound copy of the King James Bible. I already was reading this Bible, and so with my mom’s help, I soon learned how I

could look up the difficult places and people of the Bible with my new book. My mom is the best! I could even see what the Apostle Paul looked like. Jezebel was interesting with the bright red lipstick. Also, she looked like a woman I needed to stay away from, and Elijah agreed with me.

This book was cool. I still have the book. Today, it sits in my library on a shelf filled with various Bible dictionaries and word studies. This book is now a treasure to me. It was the first of hundreds of books that would shape my faith and ministry. VBS is important.

A lot has changed since the 1950s in how we do church. Some things are gone, and others have come to take their place, but VBS is still here. It is the most-used ministry for reaching children in our communities even today. One pastor recently said, "It is our greatest evangelistic ministry with children." Another layman told me, "It helps us impact our entire community." A lady said, "The numbers attending VBS are greater than anything else we do at our church."

As pastor, I would hear criticism that many of the community's children go from one VBS to another, and some parents simply see it as free childcare. This is true, no doubt. But I also believe for many children, it will make an eternal difference in their lives.

It all comes together at VBS

In 2015, VBS still is a marvelous way of reaching children, helping teenagers experience their first time in ministry and being blessed once again by faithful adults who have vast experience. It all comes together for one great ministry event we call VBS! This summer, children will walk into beautifully decorated rooms, and their lives will be changed.

I am thankful for each VBS. May the one at your church be greatly blessed of God as you continue in making disciples!

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