

7 Reasons to NOT Cancel VBS This Summer

Of all the years I spent going to VBS as a child, I only really have two memories of those flannel-graphed summer days.

The first, and most vivid, is the year that I asked my group leader if I could use the restroom, and then left the church. I walked away and hung out with some friends at a nearby neighborhood pool, without the slightest awareness of the chaos taking place as everything shut down to look for a missing 4th grader. Like most strong memories, the associated sensory connection to the smell of chlorine and the pain of a wooden paddle keep that day in front of my mind.

The only other VBS memory I have relates to what I remember as Backyard Bible Club that a neighbor in the cul-de-sac down the street hosted. I'm not sure what we studied or if there was even a theme, but I do know that I got to hang-out with my primary summertime friend group, the kids on my street, and learn about Jesus at the same time. Maybe there were also sensory triggers in the super sweet lemonade and mailbox balloons that I may or may not have popped (I was an "active" child).

Here's why those memories are on my mind today. As the stay-at-home orders begin to lift and a return to the normalcy found in the rhythms and relationships of the church begins to happen, I am thinking about the implications on VBS. Thinking tends to always lead me to ask, "What if?"

What if instead of trying to gather hundreds of kids in a big room together, which probably won't sound appealing to an unchurched parent anytime soon, we deployed our VBS resources into our neighborhoods and homes?

What if instead of renting an already germ-infested, array of bouncy castles and inflatable slides, we trained our parents to connect with a smaller, socially distanced group of neighborhood kids?

What if instead of one person learning and teaching the lessons each day, tens or hundreds of people received the curriculum and the opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus right in their front, or back, yards?

What if VBS worship wasn't on a stage with dancers and motion lights, but played from a laptop alongside awkward teenagers trying to keep their younger sibling's friends engaged?

What if craft time was on the porch and recreation time was at the driveway basketball hoop?

What if we equipped people to be the church with smaller gatherings in neighborhoods across our city this Summer rather than inviting a crowd-averse community back on campus?

What if 30+ years from now, adults everywhere fondly remembered gathering under tall pine

trees with their neighborhood pals, drinking lemonade, and learning about Jesus from their friends' parents?

I guess I am saying, **don't cancel your VBS this Summer... *deploy your VBS this Summer.*** Put curriculum in the hands of families all across your communities, from cul-de-sacs down the street to apartments and neighborhood pools, and watch what happens when we empower and train people to be the church! 2020 may be the most crucial Summer of programming your church will ever experience.

Just remember to keep an eye on those fidgety fourth graders.