

Why Kids Need Vacation Bible School Now More Than Ever

Many churches have shut down plans for children's programming this summer because of the coronavirus pandemic. But 2020 may be the year kids—and parents—need it most.

When it comes to vacation Bible school (VBS), Jody Brolsma, executive editor of children's resources at Group Publishing, lives by the motto "Making Jesus Real to Kids." This year, she wants church staff and VBS volunteers to realize the "why" behind this important summer ministry.

"Part of our challenge this summer has just been shifting people's mindset from what they typically see at VBS and really strategically guiding them back to why," she says on the *Charisma Connection* podcast. "Why do you do VBS in the first place? Chances are you don't do VBS because of all the fun decorations and the big sets that you create on stage. You really are doing it for relationship."

Group has seen ministry leaders want to get back to the heart and the purpose behind VBS. That can be a challenge when you're not meeting all the kids in a church setting. But the virtual environment that so many have become used to for church services or work during the coronavirus crisis has its benefits too.

"We can do a lot virtually," Brolsma says. "And we're hearing of churches meeting incredible goals of reaching families in fresh ways they never anticipated that God just dropped in their lap with COVID."

She also notes that there are fewer distractions for families this year.

"The original things that were keeping people busy are now

gone,” she says. “And this is an amazing time for the church to shine because VBS can still happen in a different format.”

Ultimately, Group Publishing is helping churches that are “connecting kids to their friend Jesus,” Broolsma says. “And we do that a lot with emotion. Sometimes the Bible can feel a lot like school. Over the years, sometimes we’ve thought, *Oh, kids need to do workbooks and worksheets and puzzles and things like that. That might help them learn.*”

But Jesus taught with a different approach,

“He really immersed people in thought-provoking experiences,” Broolsma says. “They ate things. They touched things. They felt things. And so our goal is always to bring that down to a kid’s level, whether it’s a preschooler or a preteen, and make Jesus a very real and relevant part of their life so that the Bible isn’t something that’s old and dated, a book of fairy tales. It’s something that is incredibly real and thriving and living and meaningful to them.”

Year after year, Group hears the stories of lives being transformed during VBS.

“The stories flow in every year,” Broolsma says. “It really keeps the meaning of VBS and what God does through this week of ministry in ways we can’t even imagine. And so I think it’s just such an important part of our culture. It’s an important part of God’s kingdom-building work. It also involves so many people in the church, and I think it’s a unifying event.”

Click [here](#) to hear the entire podcast, and find out why parents might want to consider letting their children participate in VBS this year. {eoa}