



tips for youth workers

APRIL 2008

VBS – WHAT STYLE FITS YOUR CALENDAR?

Have you been planning or contemplating running a VBS this summer? Are you unsure when it would fit into your corps calendar or workers' schedules? Is there really only one way to run a VBS? Well read on and we'll highlight a few different schedules that you can consider using in your local setting. But first keep these things in mind:

1. Other church functions – look for weeks with little or no activities planned in the facilities you will need
2. Local school vacations, breaks and camps
3. Normal pattern of family vacations based on previous years summer Sunday school attendance
4. Considering a family VBS or one that includes adults, consider holidays, weekends or weeknights
5. Consider availability of volunteers. If using teenagers or college students consider having it early in the summer before summer jobs begin. If using adults consider evenings or weekends that will fit with work schedules.

Daytime VBS – This is the traditional choice for a VBS because children tend to be both available and alert. Mornings seem to work the best especially because they are cooler than afternoons.

Evening VBS – This time of day opens up more possibilities for recruiting adult staff, but limits the amount of time available because of work schedules, dinner hour and bed times. You may want to consider beginning with a simple meal for casual fellowship and an earlier start.

Summer Sunday VBS – This is always a popular alternative or change to the regular Sunday school format. If you are using a five day curriculum divide all the lesson materials up and spread each lesson's activities over two weeks and review the Bible story.

Backyard Bible School – Take your VBS to your community through Backyard Bible School. Have mini versions of your VBS by hosting it in the backyards of church members' homes. Planning, promotion, enlisting and training staff are important to this style of VBS.

Mission VBS – This type of program takes your VBS on-the-road to communities that are not able to provide their own VBS program. This could mean traveling to inner-city neighbourhoods, housing projects, Indian reservations, nearby small towns or even traveling to another country. This can provide an exciting mission trip for your high school or college students – it provides training for those who participate and a way to reach out to others. Some use this format after they have run a VBS out of their church location using the same volunteers.

VBS Camps – Consider hosting one of these camps using VBS curriculum and camping activities:

Day Camp – Extend your VBS program by having the "campers" bring lunches and then head out on field trips with them. Take advantage of parks, conservations areas and local pools and community centres.

Resident Camp – Camping outdoors provides your students with an adventure of new discoveries. Adapt your theme setting and course materials to provide a variety of activities throughout the day. Use your VBS curriculum to plan decorations, costumes, crafts and snacks.

Weekend Retreat – Plan a weekend retreat either at your church or rent a local camping facility or resort. Invite children or families to participate in an action-packed two day event. Adapt your VBS curriculum for two or three sessions on Saturday morning, afternoon and evening and then one or two sessions for Sunday.

For more VBS how-to information, read VBS Smart Pages from Gospel Light (ISBN 0830716718).