

“ Vacation Bible School Memories”

Matthew 19:13-15

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Vacation Bible School was an important part of my childhood. Some of my fondest memories revolve around VBS. I recall the parades that went through our town, including fire trucks and sirens promoting VBS. I remember the hot pads I made out of small square tiles and pencil holders made out of Popsicle sticks. Even now, I can hear mission stories told by Mrs. Francis Cisney, the greatest storyteller in the world. However, the most vivid memory I have of Bible School was the time I got married. I better explain.

When I was in middle school, or junior high as we called it then, our class put on a mock wedding for commencement. It was complete with bride, groom, attendants and decorations. The purpose of the skit was to show why young people should not marry at an early age. At the point in the wedding when the preacher asked if anyone objected, young people stood up in the congregation and stated reasons why this couple should wait and get married later. It was really a good skit with a relevant message.

To select the bride and groom for the mock wedding, names were placed in a hat and drawn out at random. My name was drawn as the groom and guess who was drawn as the bride? You got it. Jackie! Can you believe it? Six years later, the “real” wedding took place.

There is more to this story. About three years later, I asked Jackie to go on a date. Among many things, we talked about memories from our junior high days. I asked her if she remembered the mock wedding that occurred during the VBS commencement. Of course, she said yes. I told her that I remembered being the groom but for the life of me, I could not remember who the bride was. I wish you could have seen the look on her face. Well, actually, I am glad you didn't. I'll never forget it nor will I forget how I felt when she told me that she was the bride. To my credit, I've not forgotten it since then.

Vacation Bible School begins tonight. I don't know if we will have a mock wedding or not, but I do know that we will have a lot of wonderful programs and activities. As I listened to our leaders prepare for Bible School, I asked this question. What is the message that VBS sends to our children? What does it say to them? There are several ideas I want to share with you.

First of all, it tells them that they are important to our church. Bible School, along with many other children's programs, tells our children that we want and need them. They are good for our church and add a dimension of joy and excitement that would be missing without them.

I think children were important to Jesus. He needed them, too, and wanted to be around them. Even when he was tired and under a lot of stress, he opened his life to children, sometimes over the objections of his overprotective disciples. I think it made him feel better and kept his mind focused upon his mission and purpose for being here.

Secondly, VBS tells our children that they can have a relationship with God. Religion is not only for adults. Faith can be developed in children, too. As a matter of fact, the soil for growing faith may be more fertile in a child's heart. Children understand the need to look outside themselves to fulfill their deepest needs and instinctively know

how to trust. Children can teach adults a lot about overcoming pride, submitting to authority and trusting a loving God. Evidently, Jesus believed this and used children to inspire and motivate adults.

Thirdly, VBS tells our children that the Bible is a book they need in their lives. I recall citing the pledge to the Bible in open assembly. “I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God’s Holy Word, and will make it a lamp unto my feet, a light unto my path and hide its words in my heart that I might not sin against God.” I’m not sure I understood all that pledge meant years ago, but it told me that the Bible was a special book that needed to be read and studied. I still believe that today.

Bible School teaches our children that the Bible can tell them more about life and relationships than any single book. The Bible can be a valuable aid in helping them to know more about God, arrange their values and priorities, discover how to handle problems, challenges, temptations and relate to people. Bible school reminds them that there is no better resource to consult when making decisions or clearing up confusion. How important that they learn this lesson early.

Fourthly, VBS tells children that learning and faith go together. It reinforces the idea that a disciple is a learner, a life-long learner.

One reason I am glad we are having adults attend VBS this year is to show children that they never outgrow the need to study the Bible. It speaks to every situation in life whatever a person’s age. The more you study it and apply what you are learning to your life, the wiser you will become. That’s an important message our children need to hear.

Fifthly, VBS tells our children that they need Christian friends. Bible School is a group activity. It is a time for people to learn with others and from others. It is a time for children to make friends and be friends. It is a time for cultivating relationships that can last for a lifetime and beyond. That’s important, too.

Yes, VBS is important and the message it sends is, too. I am glad we have Bible School every summer and am excited about the days that lie ahead. I hope that everyone who participates will make a lot of good memories and learn valuable lessons. Pray that both will occur.