

“Do You Believe in Church Camps & VBS?”

by Kyle Pope

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Bible SCHOOLS” are distinct entities supported by churches. Just as we noted above regarding “Church Camps,” the New Testament never authorizes churches to create institutions and associations as types of para-church organizations.

In some cases Vacation Bible Schools involve snacks, entertainment, and recreation with little emphasis on teaching the Bible. Paul taught the Corinthians that it is not the work of the church to eat meals for hunger (1 Cor. 11:34). The church is to stand as the *“pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Tim.3:15). Its purpose is not to provide entertainment, recreation, or childcare for working parents. Its purpose is to make known *“the manifold wisdom of God”* (Eph. 3:10). So, if by VBS, we mean a distinct institution or a children’s entertainment time, then no the church should not conduct Vacation Bible School.

With that said, some who use this name do not use the term “School” of a distinct organization, but use it as a verb meaning to “train or discipline (someone) in a particular skill or activity” (*New Oxford Dictionary*). Paul commanded Timothy, *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”* (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul told the Corinthians *“Let all things be done for edification”* (1 Cor. 14:26). It is clearly the work of the church to teach and edify all, whether children or adults. Can a church set aside a particular time to focus on teaching the young? Absolutely.

Throughout most of the year, although there may be regular classes for all ages taught by local churches, most of the emphasis in gospel meetings and sermons is on adults. While that is fitting, there is something to be said for devoting some special time to focus on teaching the young. It shows them they are valued. It helps them learn in a way they might not otherwise. At Olsen Park we call this our Summer Bible Study. This avoids any mis-association with denominational uses of the term “School.” We offer classes for all ages, but devote some special focus on young people. It is joyous, and exciting but it does not involve snacks and entertainment—it is a time of learning and edification. We believe firmly it is not only scriptural but it is a great source of encouragement to young and old alike.

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