

# VBS WITH the Community

A recent CRWRC webinar on “VBS – Kids and Mission” made me think more about how to be community minded in our summer programs for the children. How do we share the Good News of Jesus Christ with neighbors who are struggling with unemployment, hunger and abuse and are totally overwhelmed about life? How do we see “God’s Kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven?”

## 1. Ask the right questions

- *Why are you doing it?* Because you have always had a VBS(Vacation Bible School)? Because your church wants you to have one? Because you have volunteers? Because you want to help people get to know Jesus? Or why?
- *Who is your target audience?* Is it for the kids in your church? Is it for the neighborhood? The kids across town?
- *What is your intended outcome?* Do you want conversions? Do you want a membership increase? Do you want community connections? Do you want to build long-term relationships in the community?



## 2. Know the neighborhood

- *Do you have a defined area where you want to be?* Is the VBS in your church? In the park or an apartment complex? What do you know about the neighborhood? Who are the families who live there? If it is in the evening is it a safe place for the children?
- *Have you prayed about the area?* Commit to walk the neighborhood and pray for God to open your eyes for the community (do it with just one other person so it does not look so awkward.)
- *Have you asked the community members what they think their kids need?* They might not see Christ as the answer at this point, they might want safety, character skills, or tutoring. Find out what the perceived need of the community is and respond to that.
- *Do you know who else is working in the community?* Don’t compete with other programs, partner up.
- *Who do you know in the community?* Find out who the key people are in the neighborhoods and learn from them.

“Everyone no matter how rich has a need. Everyone no matter how poor has a gift. That is why we build and celebrate community.” LifeLine CDC



### 3. Get the community involved

*God is already present in the community.* Partner with Him and His people already living there.

*Recognize that we are all created in God's image.* Community members have gifts, talents and skills that they would love to share.

*Do it WITH the community.* Ask for their help, get the parents involved, let them be the stakeholders at the event (it is their neighborhood)

*Make it reproducible.* Don't spend an enormous amount of money or technology on a VBS if community members are not able to continue the program or reproduce it.

*Build long-term relationships.* Realize that people are longing for deeper connections and that a VBS can be a great starting point.

*Understand that the people might never come to your church.* You might need to bring Christ and His church to them.

*Don't end it there.* Being God's hands and feet is a 24/7 lifestyle. Commit to being in the community every week with some activities. Homework night? Games? Special events that showcase the skills of the community.

*Let the community members be at the center.* It is their community and they know best what the community wants and needs. Don't come in as the solution to their problems. Christ is the only answer, and it takes long-term relationships to build enough trust to be heard.

*Celebrate and enjoy!* You get to be part of loving God and loving your neighbor.



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