

Dear Friends:

Welcome to the 2009 VBS Fair! For those of you who can't visit our display in Alexandria, Virginia, we are offering this information on the web.

We would like to call your attention to our "**Top Picks.**" These merit serious consideration based on the following criteria:

- Theology: the love of God is emphasized more than the sinfulness of humans
- Unity: a distinctive theme is supported by a cohesive program of stories and activities
- Inclusiveness: text and graphics represent all God's people with respect and stereotypes are avoided.

"**Perennial Picks**" are programs that were "Top Picks" in previous years, and are still being published and available for purchase. If your parish has not yet used them, we recommend you consider them for VBS or other kinds of programs, such as summer and Lenten series.

We understand that there may be other criteria that are important in your parish and may lead you to choose a VBS program other than our "Top Picks" or "Perennial Picks."

Each review provides a brief description, some strengths and weaknesses, and publisher/price information.

Thank you for visiting our website. We welcome your suggestions and feedback.

Sincerely,

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VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL FAIR FEBRUARY 2009

LIST OF PUBLISHERS AND PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CMT Top Picks:

Catch the Spirit: Join God's Work in the World	1
On the Move: God's Grace from Place to Place	2
Rome: Paul and the Underground Church	3
Studio Go! Game Show	4

Perennial Picks:

Aslan is on the Move!	5
Bible Adventures: Sharing the Good News	6
Festival of Faith	7
The Good Life Curriculum: 5 Lessons to Nurture Simplicity within Christian Communities	8
Pilgrimage: Seeking the Kingdom of God	9
Wizards and Wonders: A Hero's Journey with Harry Potter	10

Other reviewed Programs:

Camp E.D.G.E.: Experience + Discover God Everywhere	11
Crocodile Dock	12
Discovery Canyon	13
Gadget's Garage: Jesus Makes All Things New!	14
Museum@12627: The Mystery of God's Great Plan	15
The Pirates Who Don't Do Anything	16
SonRock Kids Camp	17
Wild Willy's Candy Factory: a new look at the Prodigal Son	18
Wildwood Forest: Discover the Untamed Nature of God	19

CMT TOP PICKS

Catch the Spirit: Join God's Work in the World

Faith & Life Resources/Mennonite Publishing Network

1-800-245-7894

<http://www.faithandliferesources.org/curriculum/vbs/>

Cost: \$129.99

Catch the Spirit begins with the story of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came to Jesus' followers, and takes participants on a journey to discover how the Spirit is involved in their own lives. New Testament stories about the early Christian church helps young people explore how the Spirit can help them share the good news, resolve their differences, and do the right thing. Through worship and activities, participants learn how the Holy Spirit works in their lives, in the church, and with God's people throughout the world.

A new addition to the Mennonite VBS offering is a music CD created in conjunction with Bryan Moyer Suderman, creator of smallTall Music. The simple music not only reinforces the theme, but also introduces children to music styles and different languages from around the globe.

With an upbeat and nonjudgmental tone, *Catch the Spirit* offers a strong message of evangelism based on sharing the good news that comes from the power of the Holy Spirit. The theme is supported by interesting activities, some of which encourage outreach efforts, and well-thought-out worship plans.

Ages Levels: Preschool (separate program)

Elementary (Grades 1 – 5)

Junior Youth (Grades 6 – 8)

Includes: — Clip Art/ Reproducible CD — Music Action Training DVD
 X Music CD X Drama/Worship Guide
 X Alternate schedules available in Director's Guide

Strengths:

- The materials in the kit include everything needed for a VBS program
- Separate guides are provided for preschool, primary (grades 1-2), middler (grades 3-5), and junior youth (grades 6-8)
- Ideas for other ways to use materials are provided in the Director's Guide.
- Supply lists are helpful and include suggestions for simple, easy-to-find materials
- Music CD includes music from different cultures with different languages
- Music is simple, supports the theme, and easy to learn and includes songbook.
- Includes developmental suggestions, including ways to work with children with ADHD/ADD
- Includes a mission/outreach component.
- Worship experiences are at the forefront.

Weaknesses:

- Outreach component and supporting posters support a Mennonite program that other churches may not be familiar with. Other denominations will probably need to insert their own national or local outreach programs.
- The theme does not lend itself to glitzy visuals and promotional materials that often appeal to VBS teachers.

On the Move: God’s Grace from Place to Place

Abingdon Publishing

800-672-1789

Starter Kit: \$65

www.cokesbury.com

On the Move: God’s Grace from Place to Place is a “heritage-based” multicultural Christian education resource designed for an intergenerational Vacation Bible School that can also be offered as a children’s program. Using a biblical tie-in, each session explores how belief in God gave momentum to the civil rights movement. Each day participants travel by “freedom bus” to different places across the United States learning about people with “greatness of soul” and events that resulted in justice, blessing, truth and reconciliation. Daily affirmations reinforce the message that all people can work for God’s justice, achieve greatness in God, be a blessing, seek the treasure of God’s truth and be a brother or sister in Jesus Christ.

Ages Levels: Preschool/Kindergarten
Younger Elementary (grades 1-3)
Older Elementary (grades 4-6)
Teen

Includes:

<u> </u>	Clip Art/Reproducible CD	<u> X </u>	Music Action DVD
<u> X </u>	Music CD	<u> </u>	Skits/Drama DVD
<u> X </u>	Alternate schedule		

Strengths:

- Stresses God’s absolute love for all people.
- Provides both original contemporary and traditional freedom music that all ages will enjoy; published words and music available in the music guide.
- Reinforces praying in every situation.
- Connects biblical stories with significant events from the Freedom Movement.
- Introduces little-known African American leaders and tells the story of the civil rights movement.
- Offers daily examples for a variety of settings.
- Suggests snacks and food that complements each day’s theme.
- Encourages movement and dance for participants to connect with previous generations and to express their love of God.
- Provides a variety of outreach and community-building activities that reaffirm the daily themes that can be used immediately and throughout the year .

Weaknesses:

- Even though *On the Move* is suitable for children of all races and backgrounds, the majority of the pictures in resources and people featured in the DVD are African American.
- Recipes could include healthier choices.
- Student books increases the program’s cost but are not essential to the overall program.

Rome: Paul and the Underground Church

Group Publishing
800-447-1070
Starter Kit: \$89.99
<http://group.com/vbs/>

Rome: Paul and the Underground Church is an intergenerational program that immerses participants of all ages in ancient Roman culture, giving both children and adults an opportunity to experience life in Rome when the church was just beginning. Preschoolers through adults are invited to explore new traditions and discover new skills that reflect life during that time period. Throughout the five-day program participants taste new foods, create new craft projects, and learn about the traditions of the early church. Using a rotation format, participants move through the day with their “Roman Families,” visiting the marketplace, Paul’s house, and the underground Church. All participants assemble for the opening and closing ceremonies of the day for singing and worship, which reemphasize the daily Bible focus.

Ages Levels: Intergenerational, preschool up.

Includes:

**	Clip Art/Reproducible CD	<u>X</u>	Music Action Training DVD
<u>X</u>	Music CD	**	Skits/Drama DVD
—	Alternate schedule		

* not in Starter Kit, therefore not reviewed

Strengths:

- Provides entertaining drama script for each daily story: God’s love is a gift, God’s love changes us, God’s love is always with us, God’s love saves us, and God’s love is worth sharing. Dramas are performed in the marketplace, which add reality to the events and characters.
- An authentic connection between the title/theme and the various activities distinguishes this from many VBS curricula.
- Introduces the concept that the early Christians were very puzzling to their Roman contemporaries.
- Offers significant information about the behaviors and customs of the Roman world.

Weaknesses:

- Requires significant planning and execution to set up the marketplace and costumes, and daily drama presentation.
- Potentially expensive with the purchase of the recommended Roman Family Sashes, marketplace projects, Roman guard wear, Roman Family Banners, craft kits, etc.

Studio Go! Game Show

Standard Publishing

800-543-1353

Cost: \$69.99

www.standardpub.com

Studio Go! Game Show is a five day program that challenges participants to lead, risk, tell, obey and serve. Each day's theme is based on a biblical character or Bible story that builds up to the final day's focus, which is centered on serving God at home, in communities and in the world. The program is designed for either age-grouped classrooms or as a rotation model that divides children into "crews." The guides for different age groups and topics are filled with activities and teacher resources; the materials are both colorful and inviting. The game show motif might be disconcerting to some, but the basic messages are sound.

Age Levels: Preschool
 Elementary
 Preteen
 Teen (ages 13+)

Includes:

<u>X</u>	Clip Art/Reproducible CDs	<u>X</u>	Planning DVD
<u>X</u>	Music CD	<u>X</u>	Skits/Drama DVD
<u>X</u>	Alternate schedules		

Strengths:

- Promotes the love of God
- Provides music with motions; music CD includes print downloads and accompaniment tracks
- Provides an opportunity for children to prepare their own snacks that reinforce the daily Bible story
- Offers separate preschool, elementary, preteen and teen programs
- Strong emphasis each day on service; program culminates with a service emphasis
- Offers mission opportunities for children
- Activities include crafts, games, drams and Bible study

Weaknesses:

- Children will learn only one Bible verse during the entire five days
- Most stations will need additional materials, such as a DVD for the service area and a costume kit for the puppet area
- The teen materials are somewhat weak and too simplistic for the age group
- The "Hollywood" theme may trump each day's focal point (lead, risk, tell, obey and serve)
- Suggested questions during the Bible study are all closed ended (there is one "right" answer), not allowing children to wonder about their faith and how they see themselves in the stories

Perennial Picks

Aslan is on the Move!

Leader Resources

800-941-2218

Downloadable at \$59.95

www.LeaderResources.org

This creative intergenerational curriculum uses C.S. Lewis' beloved fantasy *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* to explore theology. A 5-day lesson plan makes it suitable for VBS.

C.S. Lewis wrote the Narnia series "as an unconscious preparation of the imagination" to explore the deep power of faith and belief. Acting in the imagination prepares us to respond in faithful ways when in our real lives we are confronted with meanness and treachery.

Themes of the five days are:

Day 1: Discovery of Narnia: how ideas about reality color behavior.

Day 2: Discovery of the Beavers and the abiding hope that Aslan will return: how values lead to action.

Day 3: Father Christmas and Spring return; Aslan greets the troop at the Stone Table, and Peter wins his first battle: how fear and love affect actions, and the power of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Day 4: Aslan and the Witch strike a bargain: the meaning of a willing sacrifice, abiding belief, grief and joy.

Day 5: Joy of Coronation: how this adventure expresses truth and reality for us and connects to familiar celebrations.

Age Levels: Intergenerational

Includes:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Clip Art/Reproducible CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music Action Training DVD
<input type="checkbox"/>	Music CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Skits/Drama DVD

Strengths:

- Offers opportunity for profound new understandings about life for all ages.
- Creates a magical VBS with the lamppost, the wardrobe door, Turkish Delight, and all the other fantasy elements from the story.
- Includes many active games plus discussion questions.

Weaknesses:

- Does not include the Bible or church history.
- Constructing props calls for creative use of materials and space.

Bible Adventures: Sharing the Good News

The United Church of Canada

800-288-7365

Starter Kit: \$49.95

<http://www.united-church.ca/sales/ucph/1551341425>

Bible Adventures: Sharing the Good News is a 5-session program that encourages all learners to be Adventurers, sailing the sometimes smooth and sometimes stormy seas of faith. This flexible program is designed to help children see that people of faith working together can add Good News of caring, peace, and justice making to their world. The program shares this message through the examples of faithful people like Paul and the early Christians. This curriculum offers children the opportunity to explore biblical stories within a caring, respectful community.

Ages Levels: Multi-age (suggested for ages 5 – 12)

Includes:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Clip Art/Reproducible CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music Action Training DVD
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Music CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Skits/Drama DVD
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alternate schedule: Available in Director's Guide.		

Strengths:

- Promotes a loving God.
- Good for small congregations.
- Is creative and theologically sound.
- Emphasizes a set of clearly defined “key principles” that are designed to create a community of caring and respect.
- Emphasizes that sharing the good news means serving others.
- Provides dramatic storytelling that brings alive stories of Paul and early Christians.
- Provides an open planning concept that prompts leaders to carefully consider which VBS format would be best for their church.
- Introduces learners to praying with movement and activities.
- Easy-to-make snacks partner well with each day's theme.
- Provides simple and lively music.
- Includes all resources in starter pack, eliminating additional costs.

Weaknesses:

- No preschool program offered.
- Mission project is not included in the curriculum.
- Games and crafts may seem childish to older elementary learners.
- Is not gimmicky and glitzy, which may be perceived as uninteresting.

Festival of Faith

Active Learning Assoc., Inc.

Kit: \$39.99

www.alassociates.com

Festival of Faith invites children and their teachers to take part in the story of the Christian faith as it unfolds through the seasons of the Church Year. Each of the five days is devoted to a different season in the Church Year: Advent and Christmas; Epiphany; Lent and Easter; Pentecost; and Kingdomtide, also known as Ordinary Time or Late Pentecost. For each season there is a theme, scripture passage, and memory verse.

Children gain an understanding of the church as a global community through the activities in the lesson plans. Children are grouped according to “Embassies,” representing countries from the Americas, Africa, Europe and Asia. Through the daily crafts and snacks children learn the customs of different countries. In large group opening and closing sessions, children learn the day’s theme and Bible story. The format includes an optional Ethnic Festival and Open House final program.

Age Levels: Children are placed in cross-age groups.
(The program is ungraded; appears suitable for grades Kindergarten – 6.)

Includes:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Clip Art/Reproducible CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music Action Training DVD
<input type="checkbox"/>	Music CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Skits/Drama DVD

Strengths:

- Children learn much about other countries as well as about the church year.
- Enticing range of crafts – from stained glass to boomerangs and decorated eggs.
- Bible stories are told interactively, as “echo stories.”
- Clear and complete instructions.

Weaknesses:

- Considerable advance preparation of materials is required.

The Good Life Curriculum: 5 Lessons to Nurture Simplicity within Christian Communities

Alternatives for Simple Living

800-821-6153

Kit: \$35.00

www.SimpleLiving.org

Based on the “Five Life Standards” of *Living More with Less* by Christine Battjes, this curriculum is designed to teach positive life lessons to counter cultural forces that erode Christian values. Learners are invited to gather and worship with lots of music and a dramatic Scripture presentation. They then move on to participate in indoor games, which are opportunities for learners to experience the lesson in body and soul as well as exploring the reflection questions at the end. Learners will then break into small groups and explore the theme for the day in a more concrete way. Sometimes a story is used, sometimes learners are asked to do a short project; whatever the form, the purpose is to teach the participants the five standards of living simply. Finally, participants are given a variety of options that provide a chance to put the lesson of the day into action. Collecting food, writing a letter for peace and justice, making a recycled sculpture, or creating a family or personal pledge are just a few of the choices available.

Age Levels: Intergenerational

Includes:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Clip Art/Reproducible CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music Action Training DVD
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Music CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Skits/Drama DVD

Strengths:

- Emphasizes a loving God.
- Is creative and theologically sound.
- Provides simple and lively music.
- Created for children or intergenerational gatherings.
- Designed to be used for Vacation Bible School, camps, midweek school, or confirmation supplement.
- Designed to teach positive life lessons based on five standards of living simply: 1. Do justice. 2. Cherish the natural order. 3. Learn from the world community. 4. Nurture people. 5. Nonconform freely.
- Upbeat and entertaining scripture drama is presented daily.

Weaknesses:

- Geared toward older elementary school aged children.
- Snack ideas are not included in the curriculum.
- Craft ideas are not included in the curriculum.
- Requires considerable preparation by teachers.
- Game ideas are not outdoor/active games.
-

Pilgrimage: Seeking the Kingdom of God

Leader Resources

800-941-2218

Downloadable at \$74.95

www.LeaderResources.org

Pilgrimage transports students into the Middle Ages to journey as pilgrims to sites where they learn from the lives of people of faith. The Middle Ages stand out as a time when Christians journeyed in faith to distant locations as a way to deepen their experience of God and others.

On this pilgrimage, participants travel to the ultimate destination for God's faithful people: the Kingdom of God. Over five sessions, children find a road map that helps them to know themselves and others in new ways as they seek to know God as Creator, Savior and Holy Spirit.

Participants travel to five sites that were common destinations for medieval pilgrims: Rome, Italy; Canterbury, England; Santiago de Compostela, Spain; Dumfermline, Scotland; and Croagh Patrick, Ireland. Each day features not only a different destination but a different saint: St. Peter, Thomas Becket, James the Greater, Margaret of Scotland, and St. Patrick.

The heart of the daily experience is the Street Fair. Children become bakers, bookbinders, clothiers, painters, needle workers, stonemasons, woodworkers, and storytellers. As such, they participate in activities that are linked to the theme for the day. Guilds of students then meet to discuss their experiences in the Street Fair. The day closes with community singing, prayer, and worship.

Ages Levels: Intergenerational, Kindergarten and up
(Ages 4 and younger need their own preschool group and some adaptation of materials)

Includes:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Clip Art/Reproducible CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music Action Training DVD
<input type="checkbox"/>	Music CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Skits/Drama DVD

Strengths:

- Children learn about medieval and church history as well as the lives of saints.
- Exciting medieval setting, with shields, street fairs, and crafts from woodworking to bookbinding.
- Important daily themes – such as “The Kingdom of God is within you” -- and memory verses.
- Clear and complete instructions.

Weaknesses:

- Requires considerable advance preparation for street fair activities.

Wizards and Wonders: A Hero's Journey with Harry Potter

Leader Resources

800-941-2218

Downloadable at \$59.95

www.LeaderResources.org

This Vacation Bible Experience uses the popular Harry Potter character to explore theologically life's journey as a path to the inner self and to the Creator. The curriculum connects Harry Potter's experiences and Biblical teachings. For example, the New Testament teaches that the Kingdom of Heaven is all around us and in us, and Jesus advises: "Let he who has ears hear and he who has eyes see." Likewise, in Harry Potter the Mugwump World – representing magic with its possibilities for transformation – is all around and in the midst of the Muggles, but they do not see it.

The five sessions and the daily Bible stories are:

Day 1: Platform 9-3/4

Moses is called by God (*Exodus 2-4*)

Day 2: Quidditch

Jesus calls his disciples (*Matthew 4, 9, 10; Mark 1,2,3; Luke 5,6*); also

One body, many parts (Paul's letter to the Corinthians)

Day 3: A Night in the Forbidden Forest

Elijah and the still, small voice (*1 Kings 19:9-15*)

Day 4: Snares, Dares and Potions

Temptations in the wilderness (*Matthew 4; Mark 1; Luke 4*)

Day 5: The Mirror of Erised

The Resurrection (The Baptismal Covenant)

Age Levels: Intergenerational

Includes:

___ Clip Art/Reproducible CD ___ Music Action Training DVD
___ Music CD ___ Skits/Drama DVD

Strengths:

- Inclusion of resources with direct connection to the Harry Potter books, including a Hogwarts Acceptance Letter for each child, the Sorting Hat, Prof. McGonagall's Invisibility Cloak, Owl Mail Delivery and other wonders from the imaginary world of Harry and Hermione.
- Opportunity for children to learn a lot about themselves (in "identity" exercises) and to gain confidence for the life journey ahead of them.
- Theological background for each day is provided for the leaders.
- Includes lots of active games and the Hogwart Song.

Weaknesses:

- Requires free-spirited leaders.
- Requires advance preparation of space and materials.

Other Reviewed Programs

Crocodile Dock
Group Publishing
800-447-1070
\$139.99
www.group.com/vbs

Group Publishing's Crocodile Dock is a bayou-themed rotation program that teaches a different biblical concept each day. "Bayou Crews" or small groups of mixed-aged children travel together to a variety of different "Bayou Stations" each day where the daily biblical theme is reinforced through scripture, songs, videos, snacks, skits, and a variety of hands-on activities. Participants spend approximately 20 minutes in 7 different stations throughout the day. The five-day program focuses on the following biblical points: 1). God is with us, 2). God is powerful, 3). God does what he says he'll do, 4). God gives us life, and 5). God cares for us.

Ages Levels: Preschool
Mixed Age Elementary

Includes:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Clip Art/Reproducible CD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Music Action Training DVD
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Music CD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Skits/Drama DVD
<input type="checkbox"/>	Alternate schedule		

Strengths:

- Promotes the love of God
- Provides an opportunity for each "Bayou Crew" to be featured in a daily power point presentation
- Features energetic interactive music videos and power point presentations.
- Provides an opportunity for children to prepare their own snacks that reinforce the daily Bible theme.
- Offers a separate preschool program
- Encourages children to look around and see what God is doing in the world every day.
- Emphasizes memorization using easy-to-learn techniques and materials.
- Provides a mission opportunity for all participants.

Weaknesses:

- The cost of the starter pack along with many optional extras may be too expensive for some churches.
- No alternate schedule provided

Discovery Canyon

Augsburg Fortress

800-328-6468

\$69.99

<http://www.thevbplace.org/default.aspx>

Discovery Canyon, one of the few VBS resources that include an Episcopal edition, encourages the wonder of God's creation to bring Bible stories to life. Using a rotation model, the curriculum explores stories from both the Old and New Testaments that illustrate the five daily focal points of rejoice, pray, ask, tell and seek. The evangelism theme throughout the program encourages participants of all ages to share what they learned about god and the Bible with others. While the resources offer many opportunities for inclusion of Episcopal traditions, especially the daily worship guide, only the mission project has a distinct Episcopal identity. The remainder of the materials is identical to the general *Discovery Canyon* curriculum.

Ages Levels: Preschool
Kindergarten-Grade 1
Grades 2-3
Grades 4-6

Includes:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Clip Art/Reproducible CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music Action Training DVD
<input type="checkbox"/>	Music CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Skits/Drama DVD
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alternate schedules		

Strengths:

- Bible stories introduce children to characters such as Miriam and Hannah that may be new to them
- The canyon motif allows children to find beauty in God's creation that might not be immediately apparent
- Program can be set indoors or outside, for groups under or over 50 children
- Alternate schedules and intergenerational settings with youth and adult Bible study are provided.
- Kid-made healthy snack suggestions are available for each day

Weaknesses:

- Music CD must be purchased separately for \$25.99, but is reproducible at no extra cost. The daily worship guide assumes that the song CD is available. The few seconds of each tune provided in the sampler CD from the starter kit were inadequate for the reviewer to assess the quality of the music.
- Tying several ideas into one theme each day requires creative thinking. The theme for Day 1 is rejoice; the Bible story is the Song of Miriam; the memory verse is *Psalm 9:2*; and the "critter" is Liz the Lizard.
- The web tool kit offers scheduling tools, take home newsletters for each day, and web site for registration; however, it costs an additional \$29.99.

Gadget's Garage: Jesus Makes All Things New!

Concordia

800-325-3040

Starter Kit: \$149.99

<http://cphvbs2009.inspirlink.com/>

Gadget's Garage: Jesus Makes All Things New! is a Christ-centered Bible learning experience where children explore a different Bible story each day to discover the wonders of God's world and God's indescribable love through Christ. Children gather each day at the "Power Up!" opening in their G.A.D.G.E.T Group (small groups of five children and leaders) and meet with *Gadget the Teen Genius* who teaches that "God's always doing great exciting things through Jesus, our Savior and Lord!" In addition, children sing, pray, read scripture and focus on a daily theme. The themes are: God made the world for you and me, Jesus transforms you and me, God's work grows in you and me, Jesus shows his power for you and me, and Jesus creates new life for you and me. After the opening, children move to five rotation sites where they further explore the Bible story and main idea. At the end of the day, everyone gathers to sing, pray, and visit Gadgets Garage for a closing skit.

Ages Levels: Preschool
Elementary
Youth

Includes:

<u>X</u>	Clip Art/Reproducible CD	<u>X</u>	Music Action Training DVD
<u>X</u>	Music CD	<u>X</u>	Skits/Drama DVD
<u>X</u>	Alternate schedule		

Strengths:

- An easy-to-use and well-organized program. Opening and closing events, as well as the five rotation sites clearly stress each day's Biblical text and main idea.
- Reinforces Bible verse memorization with recorded rhythm and hand motions.
- Reproducible CD is included in starter pack.
- Expanded starter pack limits additional required expenditures.
- Includes a daily mission component.
- Offers an interactive drama with recorded narration for retelling the Bible stories.

Weaknesses:

- Heavy emphasis on sin overshadows message about God's love.
- Encourages evangelizing friends that may make some children uncomfortable.
- Significant increase in starter pack cost (from \$74.99 to \$149.99) could be prohibitive to some churches.
- Pre-packaged crafts do not allow creative expression.
- Churches that want to prepare children for respectful relationships with people of other faiths may find the theology of this program unacceptable.
- Artwork for take-home leaflets includes images that are culturally inaccurate and inappropriate.

Museum @12627: The Mystery of God's Great Plan

WordAction (Church of the Nazarene Press)

800-877-0700

Starter Kit: \$99.99

www.vbs2009.com

Museum @12627 is a rotation-style program during which helps children discover and solve for themselves how God's plan can make an eternal life-changing difference in their lives. Using a "museum search mystery" theme, children work through daily Ancient Truths (Be God's Friend, Work with God, Choose God's Way, Receive the Savior, and Share God's Plan) to arrive at the final solution to the mystery on Day 5. Children begin and end their day at the "I-Zone" where they watch a skit of the day's Bible story, sing "mystery tunes", and pray. Between those sessions they rotate among "Discovery Lab" (Bible memory work), "Inventor's Workshop" (crafts and community service), "Game Gallery" (active games), and "Café 12627" for snacks and object lessons. Sessions last about 20 minutes.

Ages Levels: Early Childhood
Elementary

Includes:

—	Clip Art/Reproducible CD	<u>X</u>	Music Action Training DVD
<u>X</u>	Music CD	<u>X</u>	Skits/Drama DVD
<u>X</u>	Alternate schedule	<u>X</u>	Bible Memory work & stories

Strengths:

- Emphasizes the mystery of God's transforming power.
- Includes a clear statement of theology and education principles.
- The craft/community service rotation offers either a daily craft about the theme or a community service project idea.
- Stresses the importance of Bible verse memorization
- Daily opening and closing DVD dramas are upbeat and concise, and are included in the starter kit.
- Snacks try to reflect the daily themes, as do the games.
- Music is lively, and includes hand motions; the starter kit includes a reproducible CD.
- Offers a separate preschool program.
- It would not be difficult to substitute a different missionary offering.

Weaknesses:

- Emphasizing "God's Great Plan of Salvation" and the "ABC's of salvation" with children may make some uncomfortable, and could seem exclusionary to Episcopal churches.
- The narrator of the Opening Bible stories may not hold the attention of all elementary students.
- Snack suggestions rely on heavily processed, overly sweet foods. Foods are also used for craft projects.
- Language is not always gender inclusive.

The Pirates Who Don't Do Anything

Tom Nelson Publishers, Inc.

800-933-9673

\$129.99

www.veggiepiratesvbs.com

A Veggie Tale's *The Pirates Who Don't Do Anything: Calling All Heroes* is a Bible-based rotation program that focuses on biblical heroes and is centered on the verse from *Philippians 4:13*: "I can do all things through Christ because he gives me strength." Children in similar or mixed-aged groups called "crews" travel to various stations to explore the stories of Bible heroes. Bible stories are reinforced through scripture, songs, videos, skits, and a variety of hands-on activities. Themes for the five-day program are: true heroes know God is with them, God can make every kid a hero, true heroes do the right thing, true heroes reach out to Jesus, and true heroes share God's love.

Ages Levels: Preschool
Elementary

Includes:

<u>X</u>	Clip Art/Reproducible CD	<u>X</u>	Music Action Training DVD
<u>X</u>	Music CD	<u>X</u>	Skits/Drama DVD
<u>X</u>	Alternate schedule		

Strengths:

- Provides interactive music and movement
- Allows children to prepare their own snacks and activities that reinforce the daily Bible story.
- Offers a website with downloadable resources (which are also found on included CDs)
- Provides easy memorization tasks with short Bible verses and hand motions.
- Offers mission opportunity with suggestions to customize a local project.
- Introduces children to biblical heroes including, Moses, Gideon, Shadrach, Meshach, Abendego, Peter, Paul and Jesus.
- Includes puppets, ship wheel, signs, and publicity materials.
- Offers team support (for a fee) with *Outreach* for direct mail and publicity

Weaknesses:

- Parishes who used the *Pirates Who Don't Do Anything* VBS program last year will find this program familiar as the scripture, themes and characters are identical to the 2008 program.
- The high-priced starter might be cost prohibitive for some churches.
- On the final day, children are encouraged to be "saved" from their sins by simply praying with an adult sponsor.
- The pressure to witness to others might be difficult for some children.
- While the program is based on the film *The Pirates Who Don't Do Anything*, the lengthy clips add very little to the overall biblical themes each day.
- Technologically-savvy children might find the songs on the sing-along DVD simplistic or silly.

SonRock Kids Camp

Gospel Light

800-446-7735

Starter Kit: \$79.99 (Super Starter Kit \$199.99)

<http://gospellightvbs.com/2009/sonrock/index.html>

SonRock Kids Camp is a rotation program that invites children to imagine they are spending the week at an outdoor summer camp. The program is based on the Bible verse "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" (*1 John 3:1*). It teaches children how God's love can transform their lives. Through stories and activities they discover how they can choose to believe, act, forgive, obey and most importantly follow Jesus. Themes for the five day program are: accepted by Jesus, protected by Jesus, saved by Jesus, forgiven by Jesus, and living for Jesus.

Ages Levels: Preschool, ages 3 and 4
Kindergarten, ages 5 and 6
Grades 1 and 2, ages 6 to 8
Grades 3 and 4, ages 8 to 10
Grades 5 and 6, ages 10 to 12

Includes:

**	Clip Art/Reproducible CD	**	Music Action Training DVD
**	Skits/Drama DVD	<u>X</u>	Music CD (songbook not included)
<u>X</u>	Alternate schedule		

** not included in starter pack; unable to review

Strengths:

- Includes entire Directors Guide on CD Rom that allows user to customize all forms and marketing tools.
- Offers multiple class formats and various scheduling options.
- Offers "fun days" and "bonus theme ideas" with additional theme-related activities to help promote and enhance a VBS program.
- Includes a mission center option that has a variety of mission and service project ideas to help design a customized mission project.
- Has a special events section with ideas for expanding the program into the community or beyond 5 days.
- Provides nursery/toddler, youth, and adult age-appropriate curriculum.

Weaknesses:

- Emphasis on sin overshadows the message that God loves and cares for us.
- Takes unnecessary liberties with biblical text.
- Teaches that choosing Jesus as personal savior is the only way to become a part of God's family facilitating an "us vs. them" mentality.
- Salvation emphasis may be inappropriate for some parishes.
- Requires additional purchases that drive up the cost.
- Daily activities are either too esoteric or offer too little connection to the daily theme, and do not reinforce the learning.

Wild Willy's Candy Factory: a new look at the Prodigal Son

Leader Resources

800-941-2218

Cost: \$49.95 (download only)

www.LeaderResources.org

This vacation Bible experience is based on the children's story book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and the 1971 version of the movie, *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. The curriculum examines the five children who are characters in the story and their character traits, which are then related to the sins of Greed, Pride, Envy and Sloth. The story of the Prodigal Son (*Luke 15:11-24*) is the biblical basis for the program. Charlie, the main character who exhibits the traits of hard work, caring, sharing, honesty, and repentance, is compared to the prodigal son at the end of the story when he asks for forgiveness from his grandfather.

Age Levels: Elementary age children.

Includes:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Clip Art/Reproducible CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music Action Training DVD
<input type="checkbox"/>	Music CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Skits/Drama DVD
<input type="checkbox"/>	Alternate schedules		

Strengths:

- Provides opportunity for children to learn character traits from the negative characters and the contrasting character of Charlie Bucket.
- Includes a craft each day which focuses on the character trait of each child.

Weaknesses:

- Biblical connections are tenuous.
- Requires materials to be purchased from specific distributors.
- Candy was given out each day; the "grand prize" was a lunchbox full of candy.
- The movie must be rented or purchased separately.

Wildwood Forest: Discover the Untamed Nature of God

Cook Communications Ministries

800-323-7543

Starter Kit: \$119.99

<http://www.davidccook.com/MRKids/vbs/>

Using a rotational format, *Wildwood Forest: Discover the Untamed Nature of God* explores the many facets of the nature of God's with Bible dramas, games, crafts, and experiments. During the week the children will learn that God is undefeatable, unmatched, uncontainable, unpredictable, and unforgettable.

Ages Levels: Preschool
Elementary
Upper Elementary

Includes:

<u>X</u>	Clip Art/Reproducible CD	<u>X</u>	Music Action Training DVD
<u>X</u>	Music CD	—	Skits/Drama DVD
<u>X</u>	Alternate schedule		

Strengths:

- Promotes a loving God that children can trust and rely upon.
- Promotes the idea that God cannot and should not be limited by only one viewpoint.
- Offers a separate preschool program.
- Offers a variety of examples to customize a VBS program, including several alternative schedules.
- Offers family activity ideas through daily take-home pages called "field guides," which also review themes for each day (available for an additional cost)
- Provides suggestions for children to put their faith in action through "Live It" guides.
- Includes lively music with hand motions.

Weaknesses:

- The scripted skits that open each day and those in the drama rotation do not allow the children an opportunity to express their own understanding of the biblical story or God.

