

# Vacation Bible School “Reinvented”

Dub McClish

For several years some have been imitating the denominations in such things as parking lot sales and car washes to fund their programs. A growing number of congregations have become deeply involved in providing entertainment as bait to get people into their buildings. The end justifies the means to these folk.

Two items came to my attention some time ago that seem wild, even for brethren who have lost their way. The first incident was described in a bulletin of the church in Pleasanton, Texas. The back page carried the headline, “New Zealand News,” reporting on a work this church apparently supports in that nation. “Super Saturday!” is the title of the main article, describing a “carnival” conducted by the NZ congregation.

A picture showed some children earning “Bible bucks” by answering questions. They could then spend their sanctified money at the church-provided “carnival.” Another picture showed a young man being doused with a bucket of water in the “Soak the Pharaoh” booth. This was apparently one of the booths in the “carnival” on which children could spend some of those hard earned “Bible bucks.” Barely mentioned in the article is the fact that this “carnival” was actually a one-day “vacation Bible school.” There might have been some “vacation” for the children this party attracted, but I doubt that there was much “Bible” or “school” for them.

Schools, businesses, and cities sponsor carnivals, and it is appropriate for such organizations to do so. I would have no objection to one or more brethren conducting what they might call a “carnival” on private property and for their own recreation and that of others (assuming all the activities were otherwise blameless). However, I cannot see any possible justification for a **congregation’s** sponsorship of such, even if it is called a “vacation Bible school.”

The second item also relates to a “vacation Bible school.” The Southwest Central Church of Christ in Houston, Texas, has long been known for its “anything goes” approach to religion. Their elaborate twenty-page booklet describing a VBS for children, but with every sort of “seminar” imaginable for adults going on at the same time, certainly does nothing to dispel that reputation. This event offered classes on “Herb Gardening,” “How to Document Family Stories,” “What’s Changed in Your Insurance,” “Preparing for a Court Appearance,” “Dispute Resolution Without Litigation,” “Sign Language,” and even “Basic Auto Upkeep.” The one that

really caught my eye, however, was “How to Soar with Eagles Instead of Scratching Dirt with the Chickens” (I certainly want to avoid dirt scratching, even if it itches).

Lest I leave a false impression, there were a few semi-religious “seminars” offered as well (e.g., “The Alzheimer’s Predicament,” “Learning to Rule Feelings,” “When We Can’t Take Care of Ourselves,” et al.). All of this went on Monday through Friday, but Saturday was “Fun Day!” featuring (all free) a “Giant Slide, Moon Walk, Obstacle Course, Sumo Wrestlers, and Food.” (I really hate that I missed the Sumo wrestlers.) For those unfamiliar with the term *Social Gospel*, you have just read a description of it. To their credit, the booklet invited people to attend their worship on the Sunday following, which featured at the evening hour the “Shady Acres Chorus”: “Come to hear this group sing and be prepared for a high-energy evening of worship and devotion.” No further comment needed for those who love the Truth.

[**Note:** I wrote this MS, and it originally appeared in the August 2002 issue of *The Gospel Journal*, a 36-page monthly of which I was editor at the time.]

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