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## Forward

Teaching Sunday school has turned out to be one of the biggest blessings I've ever had. Before I started, I really didn't feel comfortable being around kids, I didn't have a clue as to how to have a conversation with a child, and I didn't know how to relate to them. So what made me get involved in Children's Ministry? The Holy Spirit!

For years I'd been a "pew potato." As a new Christian, I soaked up teaching like a dry sponge. I didn't want to pry myself away from the adult services, but all the while, the Holy Spirit kept tapping me gently on the shoulder and encouraging me to give back a little of what I was receiving.

At first I had the idea that it wasn't my responsibility; I don't have kids. Watching the kids was the parent's job, wasn't it? But the Holy Spirit kept telling me in His soft, gentle voice, "You can do *something* to help." Then one Wednesday night, the teaching focused on being a servant. My spirit was so convicted that I showed up the next Sunday and said, "I'm here to help out wherever you need me." As is so typical in many churches, they handed me a curriculum and left me to handle a class of twenty-nine 4 and 5 year olds without a helper! Without any training or guidance of any sort!

That was in 1983. Since then, I've made a lot of mistakes, but I've also learned a great many things. First of all, it's not hard to relate to kids. They are just little people who are a joy to be with. I have also learned that anyone can serve. It doesn't take any experience or impressive credentials. All you have to do is make yourself available and God will show you what to do.

I've also come to know that giving is much more rewarding than receiving. But most of all I've learned that it is an awesome privilege to play a small part in a child's spiritual growth.

It's a tremendous blessing to know that God can use someone like me as His instrument to help children know the love of their Lord and Savior!

This little handbook is a collection of Tips and Tricks that I've learned over the years from various teachings, books, workshops, and magazines. Child Evangelism Fellowship and the Children's Ministry Resource Bible were invaluable resources to me. As a new Sunday school teacher, I would have given anything to have the kind of information contained in this guide. I pray it helps to make your calling to the Children's Ministry a truly rewarding experience.

*Why is it that He (Christ) gives us these special abilities to do certain things best? It is so that God's people will be equipped to do better work for Him, building up the church, the body of Christ, to a position of strength and maturity." (Ephesians 4:12 TLB)*

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## Committed to Children Committed to Excellence

The purpose of having a Children's Ministry is to facilitate youngsters to grow into mature Christians who want to live for Jesus.

### Vision

As a Children's Ministry worker, you should earnestly desire...

- That all activities in each Sunday school class are done in humility (Philippians 2:1-8)
- That every adult involved with children is an example of Jesus and a minister of His love (Matthew 18:5-6)
- That every child has a positive experience at Sunday school so that he or she will want to come to church when grown up. (Mark 9:42)

### Objectives

Christian education for children involves teaching and training both at home and in the church. God has commanded parents to be responsible for their children's spiritual growth. It is they who will one day have to give an account for how well they handled the task. We realize that this is a hard job, but we are committed to coming along side of parents in helping them train their children in the Lord. The role of the Children's Ministry team is to assist parents in the task of bringing up their children in the ways of the Lord. As children's ministers, our objectives should be to have the children...

- Fall in love with Jesus
- Learn how to pray
- Trust in the Bible (Know it's the truth)
- Tuck God's Word into their hearts
- Learn how to truly worship God
- Enjoy the fellowship of others in the class



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## Classroom Roles

There are a number of specific jobs to do in each Sunday school class. Your church might be large enough for each of these positions to be filled by a different person, or you may be a "one man band." Whatever the case, the following describes various roles a Sunday school teacher plays:

1. *The Greeter* — Warmly greets the parents and the children as they arrive and assists in the sign-in or pick-up procedures, making everyone feel welcome and comfortable.
2. *The Teacher's Assistant* — Stays behind the scenes helping the Lead Teacher with the day's activities.
3. *The Worship Leader* — Teaches the children how to worship and praise God — a key to a well-balanced learning experience at Sunday school.
4. *The Lead Teacher* — Presents the Bible lesson from the Word of God in the vocabulary and understanding level of the child.
5. *Crafts Leader* — Plans hands-on activities that reinforce the day's lesson objective and memory verse. (See *Craft Corner*, page 13 for details.)
6. *The Games Organizer* — Prepares activities that not only review the day's lesson, but provide opportunities to practice Christian ethics — a fun way to keep the learning spirit alive. (See *Game Center*, page 15 for details.)

Every position is an important function. To avoid burn-out, it is a good idea to rotate duties from time to time.

*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the Word of Truth. (II Timothy 2:15 NAS)*

## The Greeter

The Greeter's job is probably the most important job of all. The first person the child comes in contact with is the adult at the door who should be modeling the love of Jesus. Remember you are at the door primarily to meet the children, not the adults. Do not tower over the children as they arrive, get down at their eye level. Give them hugs and smiles and warm greetings. Assure them that Sunday school is a warm, safe place to be.

Be sensitive to new children who are afraid of the unknown or those kids who have had a rough time at home that morning. Some will need extra special attention. "Bait" these children for today's lesson by sparking their interest in what's in store for them this morning. For example, if the lesson will be about how Jacob tricks Isaac into giving him Esau's blessing, you can say, "Today we'll learn how Jacob plays a trick on his father. Have you ever played a trick on anyone?" Whet their curiosity; make them eager to come in the door.

After the children have arrived, help with "crowd control" until it's "Going-Home Time." At the end of class get the "Going Home" papers ready for each child. Send each child off with a warm "good-bye" and "come again."

Some other important tasks for the Greeter are as follows:

1. Get information on the new children: their full names, addresses, phone numbers, ages, birthdays, grade levels and parent's names.
2. Send "Thank You for Coming" cards to the new ones, saying how nice it was having them visit us at Sunday school and how you're hoping they'll come again sometime soon.

3. Send "Get Well" cards to any that missed Sunday school due to sickness. Enclose any papers they missed receiving.
4. Send cards to those having birthdays in the up-coming week.

## The Teacher's Assistant

Especially in large classes, it's great to have a "helper." Here are some ways you can really be of assistance to the Lead Teacher:

- ♦ Be in charge of both the Pre-Session and the Closing activities, and possibly an Object Lesson, depending on the teacher's needs.
- ♦ Take a posture of submission to the Lead Teacher who is the head of the classroom. That way the children won't be confused as to who's in charge that day. Stay behind the scenes and help children pay attention to the Teacher.
- ♦ In a large class, move around and do "crowd control." Often a discipline problem can be avoided if you just move into the child's sphere, give the child "the look" or a hand signal.
- ♦ Be interested in the teaching. You are an influence on the children. If you're not interested, they will think it's boring, too. Ask questions, if you think the children aren't grasping a concept or the meaning of a word the Lead Teacher used.
- ♦ Help children with learning disabilities; spend one-on-one time with those that have a difficult time.

## The Worship Leader

Teaching children how to worship and praise God is one of the keys to a well-balanced learning experience at Sunday school. However, children don't naturally know how to worship God. They need to be taught. The Worship Leader needs to be more than just a song leader.

You must verbally teach them how to worship. For example, lead them along by saying something like, "Ok, boys and girls, now close your eyes and sing this song to Jesus." It's also important for the children to learn *why* God deserves our worship. Remember, young children can't yet think abstractly; they are very literal, and God is invisible. The concepts of worship need to be reinforced week after week. It's also very important for the adults in the class to demonstrate how worship is done.

While we should be modeling proper worship, having all adult worship songs is not necessarily the best way to teach the children *why*, *how*, and *what* to do to please God. Worship is to be a fun and joyous time as well as serious and reverent. Keep the songs appropriate for the children's age level; have songs that make the kids want to clap their hands and stamp their feet and sing unto the Lord.

Very young children relate well to songs that have hand motions. Repetition is good, too. It's easier to draw them into a place of real worship to God if they are familiar with the tunes and know the words. Introducing new songs every week is hard on the teachers and children alike.

It is important that the children have a good time worshipping the Lord since they are forming concepts about God and the church that will influence their future desire to follow the Lord when they grow up.

## The Lead Teacher

Organization is the key to an effective Sunday school class. It's important to have a specific and predicable plan for the day as well as specific and well thought out lesson objectives. It's a good idea to be flexible and offer the children a variety of interesting things to do. But, by keeping the routine consistent, the child will feel secure and safe. They'll know what to expect and be comfortable in the Sunday school environment. But you don't have to be boring, always doing the

same old activities. They get sick of always coloring pictures, for example. They'll lose interest and not want to come to Sunday school. So be creative and innovated within the routine. Start planning early in the week so that the Holy Spirit can work the Bible lesson into your own heart. That way the lesson will flow out of what the Lord has already accomplished in your heart. Besides, when you're really organized beforehand, you'll be more relaxed.

### **Coming-In Time**

While you're waiting for all the children to arrive, you can use that time to get to know them. Make a circle and do some "ice breakers." For example, toss a beanbag round and have each child state their name, or age, or pet's name, or favorite color. Develop a relationship with each child so that each one feels special. If you are tall, squat down or kneel to get down on their level. Don't tower over them like Goliath, the mean giant!

Coming-In Time is also a good time to see if anyone knows their memory verse from last week. Give positive affirmation to those that know the verse, but be sure not to make anyone feel bad because they didn't know the verse. Give lots of hints and chances to get it right. If you are awarding prizes, candy or Memory Points for memorization, as an added bonus, let the child earn an extra reward if he or she can explain the meaning of the verse and how it can apply to his own life. Please take time to talk to the children about what the verse means and how it applies to our lives. This is the real reason we give a large place to scripture memorization.

### **Circle Time**

Do not *read* the lesson to the kids. It's much more interesting for them if you *tell* the lesson in a conversational style. It's better to keep eye contact with them. You'll be able to tell when they aren't tracking with you so you will know when it's necessary to explain hard concepts

and vocabulary. Plus, it's easier to stay on top of potential discipline problems. If you are paying more attention to your notes, they'll think you're not paying attention to them and start to do something else while you're not looking!

Make sure the children know your lessons are out of the Word of God. Put your teaching notes right inside your Bible and hold it as you teach.

After teaching the Bible lesson and memory verse, spend some time in prayer. You can use a bulletin board or a prayer notebook to keep track of the children's prayer requests and the answers God gives them. Then, before they leave, "bait" the children for next week's lesson. For example, say, "Next week we'll find out how Jacob gets tricked." Entice the children to want to return to Sunday school.







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## Lesson Preparation Techniques

There is a big difference between telling children a Bible story and teaching them a Bible lesson. A bible story is certainly interesting, but a bible lesson can have real and lasting impact on a child's life. However, you must have good storytelling skills to make it a good Bible lesson.

To be a good storyteller, you must first be very familiar with the story. That's why it's essential to start your lesson preparations early in the week.

### How to Tell a Good Bible Story

What are the elements of a good story? Taking the text of 1 Kings 21:1-29 as an example, let's discuss the components of an exciting story. There are four parts to a good story.

#### I. The Introduction

Here are four examples of ways to make an exciting, attention-grabbing start:

1. With a question, such as:  
*Have you ever wanted something someone else had?*
2. With an exciting portion from the story (not revealing the climax), such as:  
*Near the palace of King Ahab was something he wanted very, very much, but it belonged to someone else.*
3. With a brief illustration that relates to the lesson, such as:  
*If you were a king, think of all you would own. Think of all the power you would have. Why you could...*
4. The direct approach, beginning the story from the Bible, such as:

*Large luscious grapes hung on the vines of the vineyard near the kings' palace...*

#### II. The Events

This is the body of your lesson, the essential story facts in sequence.

A good story always poses a problem that has a solution. Like a mystery, you want to make it exciting. Don't give away the climax too early. Build suspense.

#### III. The Climax

This is the high point of the story where the outcome is obvious. Everything you want to say about the events needs to be said before you get to the climax because after that, you lose the attention of your audience. The Climax and the Conclusion need to be short and to the point; one or two sentences at most.

#### IV. The Conclusion

This is the moral of the story. Keep this short and direct. The lesson you want the children to learn should be summed up in the memory verse.

### How to Make a Good Story into a Good Bible Lesson

When you bake a cake, you must not leave out key ingredients, like the eggs. In the same way, when you tell a Bible story, don't leave out the sweetness of Jesus. Stir in the message of salvation into the story.

Ask yourself why am I teaching Sunday school? What is my primary goal? You want the children to...

- Fall in love with Jesus
- Learn to pray
- Know they can trust the Bible
- Tuck God's Word into their own hearts

If you start preparing your lesson early in the week it will be easy to weave the message of God's love right into your telling of the story.

### **How to Get Started**

If you spend a little bit of time every day preparing for your lesson, you can break your task into manageable pieces:

#### **Day #1: Sunday - Read the Scripture Text.**

On Sunday afternoon, while the last lesson is still fresh in your mind, get the memory verse and Scripture reference for next week. If you're using a commercial curriculum, set the teacher's manual aside and simply read the lesson from your Bible (use several translations, if possible). Look up cross-references; meditate; listen for God's voice. Let the Scriptures minister to you. The Holy Spirit can show you an important thought or application that the publisher of your curriculum may have missed. You know your students better than the publisher does!

#### **Day #2: Monday - List the Story Events in Sequence.**

First make a short, simple statement about each story event. You can put them on 3 X 5 cards that will fit into your Bible. State your climax and then go back and write your introduction - your attention-grabbing opening!

#### **Day #3: Tuesday - Plan to Reach the Unsaved Child.**

Look for natural places in the story that would apply to the child's need for a Savior; where the problem of sin is evident in the lives of the characters in the story. You also want to find places in the story where you can teach about God's solution to man's problem of sin: the gospel. Then, look for places in the story where you can teach about God's character. (He is holy, just, longsuffering, omnipresent, loving, etc.) You want the children to get to know God.

Notice in the following examples, the natural progress of the lesson comes straight from the main story line. You can suspend the narration to draw their attention to the things you want to teach the children about God, and then resume telling the story.

#### **Example #1 - Message about Sin**

Verse 4, "*So Ahab went home, sullen and angry...He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat.*" Ahab pouted. He couldn't have what he wanted. Have you ever acted like that when you couldn't have what you wanted? God says that is sin when you act like that. Do you know what God says about sin? The Bible tells us in Ezekiel 18:4 that the soul that sins shall surely die. (When teaching about sin always tell them about the consequences of sin, too.) But Ahab didn't think it made any difference how he acted. He thought he could get away with anything. (Now go back to the story line: His wife came in and...)

#### **Example #2 - Message of Salvation**

Verse 13, "*So they took [Nabath] outside the city and stoned him to death.*" How sad, he died and he didn't do anything wrong. He didn't deserve to die. Who does that remind you of? Yes, God's only son, the Lord Jesus Christ, died for all the sins of the world and He never, ever sinned. The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 that "*Christ died for our sins...and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day.*" Queen Jezebel thought she got away with it. (Now go back to the story line: As soon as Jezebel heard that Nabath had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, "Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Nabath...")

#### **Example #3 - Message about God's Character**

Verse 17, "*Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah...*"

God spoke to Elijah! God knew all the time exactly what was happening. Nothing is a surprise to Him. God is everywhere and knows everything that is happening. He knows everything you do, even when you are naughty. The Bible says in John 3:16 that *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* God loved Ahab, too. But Ahab didn't love God in return. Ahab thought he could do anything he wanted and no one would know what happened. (Now go back to the story line.)

No matter what the story is about, there should be a place to get in the Good News. Your interruptions to the narrative should be brief, but to the point. Always use the Bible as your authority. These concepts need to be in every story, every week. You want the unsaved child to learn to trust Jesus as their personal Savior and you want the saved child to grow in his or her relationship to Jesus, too.

#### **Day #4: Wednesday - Plan to Reach the Saved Child**

You want the child who has already asked Jesus into his or her life to learn to apply God's Word in everyday circumstances. Find the main thrust of the lesson - the lesson objective or the conclusion to the story. It should be summed up in a simple but positive statement that applies to the memory verse. It should be something that will challenge the believing child to live more earnestly for God. For example, "You need to be content with what you have, not greedy like King Ahab was. Here he was the King. He had everything, yet he wanted that vineyard. Our memory verse this week is Hebrews 13:5 *"Be content with such things as you have."*

#### **Day #5: Thursday - Capture the Emotions of Your Students**

You want the children to live this story. If the people in the Bible story were hungry or tired, find word pictures to describe these feelings, so the children can be there feeling what the Bible characters felt.

Use an illustration out of your own life or ask them a question. For example, "Have you ever gotten in trouble for something you didn't do?" Let the children talk and share.

Make the Bible story come alive. You not only want the children to know the facts, but to feel the emotions. If these stories are real to them, the outcome is that they will learn to make right choices in their own lives.

#### **Day #6: Friday - Prepare your Visual Aids and Activities**

Get your visual aids ready. You want to be sure they are in the right order and that using them doesn't become a distraction to you. Then, think of songs, crafts, games, and object lessons that will help reinforce your lesson objectives.

#### **Day #7: Saturday - Practice**

Do a dress rehearsal. Get your visual aids out and tell the story in a conversational style as if the children were listening. Fine tune how you will use your voice.

When you practice telling your lesson at home first, you will be confident in the classroom.

#### **Don't Forget the Invitation**

Once you have told your story and your students have clearly heard the message of salvation, don't stop there! Be sure to give them an invitation to accept Jesus as their personal Savior. You've made their need known, the problem is clear; now offer them the solution, Jesus Christ.

Use a condition/promise verse to give the invitation. For example, you could end your lesson by saying, Acts 16:31 says, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."* God punishes sin, but you can be saved if you will just believe on the Lord Jesus.

If anyone wants to receive Jesus, just have them raise their hand to identify themselves and you can pray with them after class.

Remember, your Bible lesson should be life changing, so don't leave out the sweetness of Jesus.

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## Lesson Presentation Tips

You want to make your lesson interesting so that the children will listen and God's Word will penetrate their hearts. How you feel about the story has a lot to do with how you tell it. The more you believe in what you're teaching, the better you'll be at it. The following are some tips and tricks to help you teach your lessons more effectively.

### ***Be Prepared***

Preparation is the key to success. Plan to spend some time every day preparing for your lesson. To truly believe that what you're teaching is the living Word of God you must keep the Word of God alive in your own life.

*Not that we are sufficient in ourselves...but our sufficiency is from God. (II Corinthians 3:5)*

Start at the beginning of the week. The Holy Spirit knows things about those kids you don't know. He also knows things that you need to learn, too! He brings things to your mind of which you'd never have thought! The children will be more impressed by the relevance of the Word to their own lives if they see that you're learning from the Word right along with them.

If you're using a curriculum, study your lesson from the Bible, not from the teacher's manual! Use that only to get background facts about the culture and the historical setting, etc. as you would a Bible commentary. The teacher's manual also gives good ideas for games, crafts, and songs, etc. Spend time studying the passage for yourself. Look up the cross-references, meditate on the Word. Give the Holy Spirit time to work your lesson for the children right into your own life, too.

### ***Check Your Attitude***

You need to believe that the lesson is valuable for the children. The Holy Spirit will anoint you if you believe what you're teaching with your whole heart. Then, teach it accurately and with creativity. Be enthusiastic. Tell the story with as much fervor, excitement, and belief as you can, then let the Holy Spirit do His job. Make sure the children know the Word of God is your source.

Don't get too caught up in trying to cover everything you've got planned. Remember that your goal is not to cover your agenda, but to get the living Word of God into the children's hearts so that the Holy Spirit can create change in their lives. So, leave your teacher's manual at home and while you're teaching, hold your Bible with reverence.

Be committed to improving. Always look for better techniques to communicate God's truth. Find more effective ways for children to learn and remember. Tap into the many resources available to you, such as teachings, books, workshops, and magazines, etc. Keep yourself fresh as a teacher.

### ***Be Accurate***

We are responsible to teach truth - interestingly - but accurately. You can project feelings, but don't fabricate or add inaccuracies to make it more interesting. Kids love fantasy, but the Bible is not fantasy; the Word of God is the truth.

The following are some *Do's* and *Don'ts* for presenting your lesson:

#### **Presentation:**

- Make eye contact with the children. Don't look at your notes.
- Organize your visual aids. Pull them out of your Bible; it reinforces the fact that the lesson is coming out of Scripture. But, be sure they're in the correct order!
- Make sure the children can easily see the visual aids.
- Be sure your appearance (jewelry, glasses, etc.) isn't a distraction.

- Be confident.
- Use your voice, facial expressions, and physical gestures to be expressive. Pauses are very powerful, too. Have a variety of pitches to use for people in the story. Use your personality. Shout, talk slow or fast, make your voice march.
- Create visual or mental images. Word pictures are very effective.
- Make your words clear. For example say, "Balm" of Gilead, not "bomb."
- Don't talk "Christianese;" look up definitions of terms. Use the appropriate vocabulary for your students so they can understand what you're teaching them.
- Don't tell the story too quickly. Slowing down can make a great emphasis.

### Introduction:

- Set the mood, or atmosphere, for the lesson.
- Start with an attention grabber or object lesson to make the story relevant to the kids. Make the story live from the first line. Get into action.
- Bring the author to life - tell something about who he was.
- Get the kids excited about your teaching the lesson; make them look forward to it.

### The Body:

- Get the facts straight, but don't worry if you leave something out.
- Be expressive. Try to put yourself in the place of the Bible characters. Make them real (hungry, tired, etc.) to the children.
- Be descriptive. Try to get a real sense of what actually happened. Be enthusiastic - if you're not, the children won't be either!
- Act out the different characters. Do a dialog using different voices for each person in the story.
- Involve some of the other senses. For example, if you're teaching about Palm Sunday, bring in some palm branches to wave around.
- Be sensitive to the children's emotional level. If there is a morally

sensitive issue in the text, ask yourself if the children will come to know the Lord Jesus better by including it. For example, if you are teaching very young children, you do not need to mention that someone was killed for being disobedient. You can tell them he was punished. Ask them if they receive consequences when they are naughty. Remember young children are very literal and are not able to think in abstract concepts. Make the lesson applicable to their lives.

- It is said that the attention span of a child is one minute per year of age. Keep your lessons short and to the point; the tighter the better.
- Don't start a story if you don't have time to do it justice.
- Don't be unnerved by irrelevant questions during the story - particularly from very young children.

### Application:

- Weave personal application right into your lesson; don't wait until the end. You can suspend the story to ask a personal application question, then go on to find out how the Bible character handled the situation.



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## Discipline in the Classroom

Most behavior problems are children's attempts to be social. There are three elements to keeping children "on task" in the classroom: *curriculum, control, and motivation*. To the extent you are weak in one area, you have to be strong in another.

### Curriculum

A strong curriculum is your best assurance of keeping children "on task." The more interesting and challenging your lesson is, the less you have to depend on *control* and *motivation*.

To have a fascinating lesson, you have to be well prepared, organized, and have decent visual aids. Your timing has to be right, too. Monotony, boredom, and disruption are first cousins. The enthusiasm you show rubs off on the children.

It's a good idea to start each class by explaining what you're going to do today. You can write it on the board. For example:

1. Pray
2. Lesson
3. Game
4. Craft

This gives the children an idea of what to expect. Furthermore, you need to know ahead of time how you can expand and contract your use of time as you go along, too.

No matter how great your curriculum is, however, it is no replacement for the Holy Spirit. Pray for your own heart as well as the children's hearts to be in the right place before the class begins. Pray for each child by name, binding the enemy's attempts to thwart your efforts.

### Control

One of our jobs as Sunday school teachers is to teach the children respect for authority. Rules have to be established and have consequences. Boundaries and limits comfort children. They need clear expectations of what "OK" behavior is.

Don't just say, "I want you to be good." Spell out the things you want them to do.

The rules should be no different than what they have in school. Be careful, though, since you'll have to enforce them! Kids are compelled to test limits you place around them. Never make a rule that you're not willing to enforce. It is also important not to have a rule that causes you to interrupt your lesson constantly to enforce.

Consistency on your part is vital. Don't depend on your own patience, which is short one day and long the next.

1. No talking when I talk
2. Sit in seats
3. Keep your hands to yourself

You can boil this down to one rule: *You must be kind*.

You might consider letting the children help you develop the rules and consequences for the class. They will take more ownership in them.

There has to be consequences to breaking the rules. Clearly explain the consequences for specific offenses ahead of time. For example:

- 1<sup>st</sup> distraction = warning
- 2<sup>nd</sup> distraction = "Time Out" for 3 minutes
- 3<sup>rd</sup> distraction = "Time Out" again + loose snack
- 4<sup>th</sup> distraction = "Time Out" again plus a talk with the parents

"Time Out" is removing a child from the positive environment so that he's missing out. When a child is in "Time Out" make what you're doing really good; pour it on thick! If s/he misbehaves in "Time Out," make the 3 minutes start over again.

When s/he gets to distraction #4, have him or her stay after class to pray with you. Thank God for bringing him into your class: ask God to bless him in his relationships and to give him a heart to draw closer to Jesus. This way he'll know that you really do love him.

You must enforce the rules or you will lose their respect for your authority. Try to avoid power struggles at all cost. Give the children options, for example, tell him he can do *this* or he can do *that*. Arrive at an agreement. Never shame or embarrass him.

You have a "hoop skirt" effect that is useful. As your presence moves into their presence, you get their attention. Sometime you only need to reach over and touch him on the shoulder. You don't even have to interrupt your lesson. You can also talk to a child about a problem that he knows he has. Make a deal with him. Every time he starts to offend the rules go over and touch his arm and he'll know the signal and what it means. It can be your little secret between the two of you.

Remember, you do not have the right to dislike a child. The child deserves better than that!

### **Motivation**

First, the children really respond to you when you're their friend. They perceive whether you like them or not. So, write letters to them or phone them up during the week. Their concept of the teacher will grow tremendously if you do extracurricular activities with them. They'll be more likely to listen to what you have to say if you establish a good rapport with them.

Second, children love to be rewarded. Candy, prizes, or stickers are great motivational tools. (Bribes?!)

Behavior that is reinforced is likely to be repeated. Increase the number of positive statements that come out along the way, such as:

- "Good job!"
- "Nice Going!"
- "Great!"
- "I like the way your eyes are on me, that tells me you're paying attention!"

There should be 9 positive statements for every negative statement you make.

You could have "You Were Caught Being Good" tickets to give out during the lesson to children who get right answers or behave properly. Then at the end of the lesson everyone who has a ticket gets to throw a beanbag onto a bull's eye for points for their team. The team with the most points gets stickers, or seconds on snacks, or some other privilege.

Games are a great way to get children to pay attention during the lesson. If you begin by saying, "You need to listen very carefully to the lesson this morning, because we're going to have a game afterwards, and you will need to answer the questions correctly..."

The next section contains some ideas on activities that will enhance your lessons.



## Activities

The Bible lesson should be the central focal point of your Sunday school class. All other activities - worship, the memory verse, craft, or game - should reinforce the main Bible lesson concept.

This section gives you some ideas on how to keep the learning spirit alive in your Sunday school students. Here are some tips and tricks on the following topics that will make your Sunday school class an exciting, loving, learning place:

- Creative craft ideas
- Games that teach
- Fun Bible memorization methods
- Object lessons to make your point come alive
- Puppets that teach children and make them feel special
- Visual aids (bulletin boards, flash cards, etc.) that decorate, motivate, and instruct

### Craft Corner

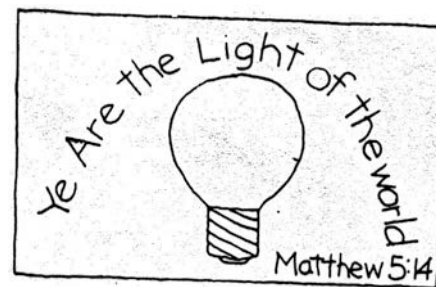
There are loads of craft and activity books available to inspire you with project ideas. When possible, select an activity that supports the lesson objective, which is usually summed up in the memory verse. For example, if the lesson is about Jacob's ladder dream, make ladders out of craft sticks. If you can't find a craft idea that reinforces the main theme of the lesson, have the children make something to take home that will help them memorize the memory verse. For example, make pencil holders or place mats using the memory verse as the main decoration. Some of the following ideas make great gifts, too.

#### Collage —

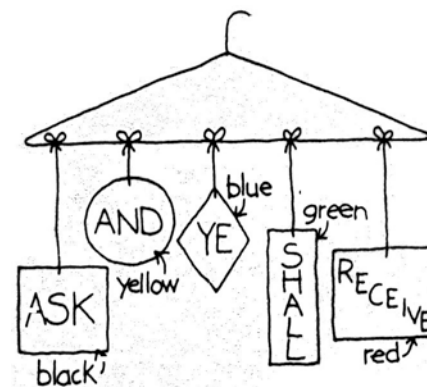
Supplies:

- Old magazines
- Construction paper
- Glue

Have children find and cut out individual letters or words from magazines to make the verse. (With small children, you should do this before class, sorting them out in small containers like muffin tins.) Glue the words on to paper. Decorate with stickers or with a picture representing the main idea, as depicted in the following example:



**Mobile** — This easy to make mobile can be used to teach a preschooler's condensed version of John 16:24. As they build it, reinforce their colors and shapes. (Tommy, can you tell me what color the word "ask" is on? This card says "receive." Can anyone tell me what shape this is?)



**Paper Plate Reminder —**

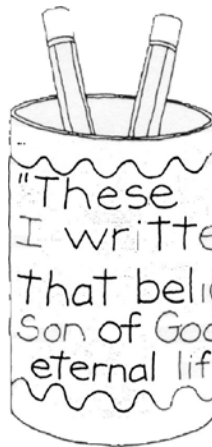
Supplies:

- 9" paper plates
- White glue
- Glitter, colored sand, or colored salt
- 6" piece of yarn per child
- Hole punch



Provide a solid-color paper plate for each child. Write the verse on each plate with white glue. (Use the tip of the bottle as you would a pencil.) Sprinkle glitter or colored salt on the glue. Salt may be colored with powdered tempera paint. Shake off the excess onto the next child's plate, or onto paper so it can be used again. Punch two holes near the top. Use the yarn to make a hanger.

**Pencil Holder —** Measure an orange juice can. Have children cut paper to wrap around the can. (Writing the verse on the paper will reinforce it in their minds as they work.) Decorate the space around the words with bright stickers. Wrap around can and glue or tape in place. Provide one or two new pencils to put into the holder.

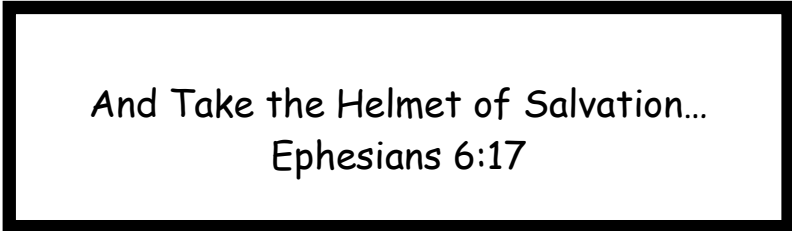


**Place Mat —**

Supplies:

- Construction paper in various colors
- Rubber cement or glue
- Scissors
- Clear vinyl (contact, self-adhesive)

Write memory verse on a place mat and decorate around it. Cover with clear vinyl.



**T-Shirt —** Wild colors of fabric paints are available at craft and fabric stores. They come with glitter in them, and some even write "puffy" letters. They are machine washable.



Decorate a T-shirt with next week's verse. Go all out with colors and designs, making it a work of art. You may wish to decorate a child's size T-shirt, giving it as a prize to the first one to memorize the verse.

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## Game Center

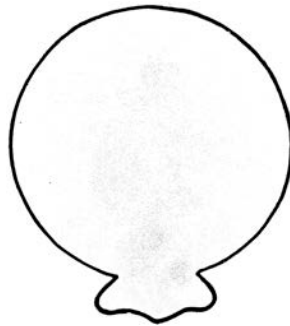
Games are a great way to review knowledge and learn social skills, such as sportsmanship and team play. Games also teach vocabulary, as well as clarify values, attitudes, and character. There are two basic types of games: Lesson Review games and Verse Memorization games.

### Lesson Review Games

With a set of lesson review questions, you can make a game with any challenge, such as a bean bag or ball toss. For example, you can divide the children into two teams (boys against girls) and play one of the following games:

**Ask-It-Basket** — Write the review questions on separate pieces of paper. Wad them up into balls and put them in a decorated basket. Ask each child to choose a question to answer.

**Balloon Game** — Make 12 balloons from different colors of felt. Place point values on the back of each piece (100, 300, 400, etc.) Divide the class into two teams. For a correctly answered review question, the team may choose a balloon. The number on the back is credited to that team. The team with the most points wins.



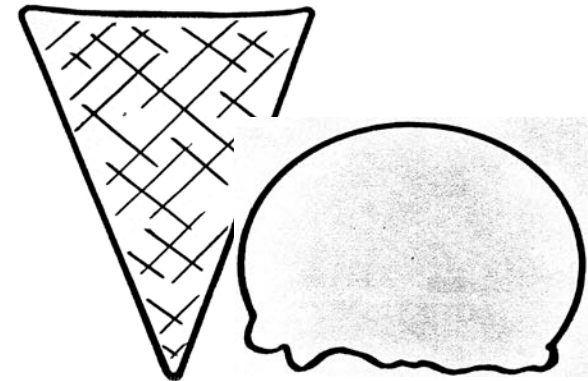
**Concentration** — Make two sets of cards with words or pictures that reinforce your lesson objectives. For a correctly answered question, the child may turn two cards over to see if they match. Variation: match attributes of God, Armor of God pieces, Beatitudes, etc. Team with the most matches wins.

**Dodge the Question** — Divide the children into two groups. Have one group form a large circle and instruct the other group to stand inside

the circle. Give the outside circle a nerf ball. Then tell the children inside the circle to dodge the ball. If a child is hit, he must answer one of the review questions and then join the other circle. Play continues in this manner. Groups exchange places when the last child has been hit; winners are those last to be hit.

**Felt Board Shape Choices** — For a correct answer, the child gets to choose a colorful shape (circle, square, triangle, etc.) that has a secret amount of points behind it. The team with the most points wins.

**Ice Cream Cones** — Cut out cone shapes from felt. Make 10 "scoops" (circles) of different flavors (colors) of ice cream to fit the cones. Divide the children into two teams. For a correctly answered review question, the team may add one flavor on their cone. The team with the most "scoops" on their cone wins.



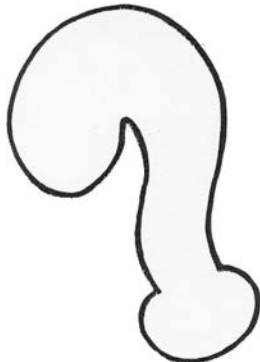
**Longest String** — Cut yarn into 12 different lengths and put each piece through a cup of an egg carton with only a short end showing on the bottom. For a correctly answered review question, the child gets to pull a string of yarn. The child with the longest string is the winner. For variety, cut a piece of yarn the exact length of one of the pieces in the egg carton and put it in your pocket. The winner would be the one who pulls out the string of yarn the same length as yours.

**Memory Toss** — Before class, roll six sheets of colored paper into cone shapes. Tape each cone securely and trim it around the top edge. Write a number from 1 to 3 on the front of each cone. Write 1 on three cones, 2 on two cones, and 3 on one cone. Tack the cones to a wall or bulletin board in a pyramid pattern with the open end of the cones facing upward. Explain the game to the children as follows: Each player can earn three chances to toss Ping-Pong balls into the cones by correctly answering a review question. The number on the front of the cones is the number of points the child's team gets if the ball lands in that cone.

**Move Around the Path Game** — On a manila folder, or piece of construction paper, draw a path with sections on it. For a correctly answered question, the child gets to move a marker one step on the path. The first person to the end of the path wins. You may want to decorate the game with colorful stickers.

**Pop-The-Question** — Write the review questions on separate slips of paper and insert them into balloons. Blow them up. Let the children pop a balloon to answer the question. Small children may wish to have someone else pop their balloon for them. Variation: instead of having the question in the balloon, you can insert numbers that correspond to a list of questions or insert the point values for a right answer.

**Question Marks** — Make a large question mark pattern. Use the pattern to cut out a question mark shape for each question. For a correctly answered review question, the child may choose a question mark. On the back of the question mark, have written "Zonk," "Sorry," "Try again," "Winner," or "Bull's Eye." Award a small prize or candy for "Winner" and a larger one for "Bull's Eye." Or, you could have point values on the backs of the question marks.



**Shuffle Board Target Toss** — For a correct answer, the child gets to toss a bean bag at the shuffle board to win points for his team. The team with the most points wins.

**Target Review** — Make a 20-inch felt target with two or three rings and a bull's-eye. Then cut out different-colored felt for each ring, giving the rings a point value (5, 10, 15, and 25 for the bull's eye). Make an ample supply of felt arrows in two different colors. Then make up a list of review questions, giving them point values to correspond with your target.

Divide the class into two teams. Appoint a team to go first. Give the first player from that team the opportunity to choose a question by point value. If he answers correctly let him put his arrow on the proper ring or bull's-eye. (If the child chooses a 10-point question and answers correctly, he places his arrow on the 10 ring of the target.) If he answers incorrectly, he receives no points. At the end of the game add up the points. The team with the most points wins.

**Tick-Tack-Toe** — Divide the class into two teams, the "X" team and the "O" team. Direct a review question to one child from the "X" team. If he answers correctly, he gets to put an "X" on the grid. If he answers incorrectly, give a member of the "O" team a chance to answer the same question. Alternate questions between the two teams. The team that gets three symbols in a straight line or five symbols on the grid wins the game. You can make a Human Tick-Tack-Toe Game using masking tape on the floor to make a large grid. If the child answers correctly he gets to choose a square to stand in.

**True/False Game** — Before class, write several short sentences about the lesson on slips of paper. Write both true and false statements. Fold the strips of paper and put them in a box. Divide the class into two or more teams. Have the children take turns going to the box and drawing a slip of paper.

Read aloud the statement; then let the child say whether the statement is true or false. If the answer is correct, give the child's team 100 points. The team with the most points after the last slip of paper is drawn is the winner. As an alternative, you can put the slips of paper inside balloons. Each child gets to pop a balloon to get his paper!

**Who or What Am I** — Before class, write short riddles on individual slips of paper based on this week's lesson. Provide one riddle per child. Put the slips of paper in a container. Let each child draw a riddle. Read it aloud and let the child try to answer it. If he cannot, let the other children respond. For example:

1. My blood was put on the door posts of all Israelite houses. What am I? (A lamb)
2. I caused much sadness for the Egyptians when I came to their houses one night. What am I? (Death angel)
3. I asked Pharaoh many times to let the Israelites go. Who am I? (Moses)
4. I was Moses' brother. Who am I? (Aaron)

Award 100 points if the child correctly guesses on the first clue, 50 points for the second, 25 for the third.

### **Lesson Review Games without Questions**

**Figures and Shapes** — After your lesson, put the main figures on the flannel board covered with large shapes. One at a time have each child choose a shape and see if he or she can identify and tell a little about the figure hiding underneath. Play until all shapes are removed.

**Mystery Word** — Before class have a "Mystery" word written on a paper and hidden somewhere in the classroom. Before you begin your

lesson, tell the children to listen for a "Mystery" word during your teaching, then afterwards ask the children to guess what the "Mystery" word is. The class will not only listen to every word of your lesson, but a discussion of the words they guess is also a good review. Pull the "Mystery" word out of hiding to show them what it is. Award a small prize or candy to the first person to guess the hidden word.

**Picture Match** — Using several Bible pictures of people and events (possibly from your curriculum) have the children match a Bible person with an event in that person's life. For example, Noah/ark, Jonah/fish, etc.

**What's Missing?** — Seat the children in a circle. Put pictures of objects in the center of the circle. Tell the children to look carefully at all of the objects and try to remember what is there. Then have them close their eyes while you take away one of the objects. Have them open their eyes and see if they know what is missing. Use Bible related items or themes from your lesson.

**"What's It" Box** — Decorate a small box and place small objects inside it—small pictures or felt figures which relate to the Bible lesson. Allow the children to arrange the objects in the correct sequence of events and re-tell the story. This works well for the events surrounding the last week of Jesus' life. Into some plastic Easter eggs, put objects pertaining to the events such as a dime (for the 30 pieces of silver), a sponge, bread, rope, picture of a purple robe, dice, cross, angel, thorn, nail, piece of white linen, small plastic palm tree, etc. Number the outside of each egg and let the children put the objects into the correct sequence. Variation: you can number the cups in an egg carton and have the children place the items in the correct egg cup.

### **Verse Memorization Games**

Games and songs are a great way to help children memorize Scripture. For example, you can play one of the following games:

**Block Head** — Divide the children into teams. Have a set of small blocks for each team. As each team member correctly says the next word of a memory verse, he places another block on the stack. The tower becomes more precarious as the game continues, and the winning team is the one who can say the whole verse without toppling their tower.

**Button, Button** — Seat the children in a circle with their hands cupped together in their laps. Go around the circle, pretending to drop the button into each child's hands. Then actually drop the button into the hands of one player. Whoever receives the button must say the memory verse. That player may then proceed to drop the button into another child's hands. If time permits, try to make sure every child gets the button at least once.

**Choir Director** — As if directing a choir, use hand signals to command the class to say the verse fast, slow, boys only, girls only, loud, soft, just move mouth, while wiggling, etc. Children learn by rhythm, rhyme and repetition. Variation: Make different "choir" groups such as the Loud group, the Soft group, or the Whisper group.

**Clapping** — A clap rhythm is a great way to reinforce memorization. Make clap rhythms such as 2 syllables = 2 claps. Variation: replace a word with a clap, until you clap the whole verse. Then you can reverse it: add a word in place of a clap until you say the whole verse.

**Clock Memory Review** — Make a clock. Instead of marking the hour numbers on the clock, use a verse reference or a symbol of a verse children have learned. Move the large hand of the clock to the first reference. The first child who can correctly quote the verse has the privilege of moving the hand to another reference for the next child. Variation: Use both clock hands, one for the reference, and the other for an outstanding word in the verse. Point the small hand to the word and the large hand to the corresponding reference.

**Crazy Stand-ups** — Have all the children stand up and repeat the verse who have eaten breakfast, have blond hair, have a pet, who are a certain age, etc.

**Echo** — You say a word, they repeat it back.

**Flash Card Game** — Make two sets of memory verse cards, printing one word of the memory verse on each card. Divide the class into two groups. Scramble each set of cards and give each group a set. The first group to lay their memory verse cards down in the correct order wins. (Make four sets of cards for a larger class.) Variation: The older children can arrange the younger ones in the right order as they hold the cards.

**Hide a Verse** — Using poster paper, print the verse and cut it into a jigsaw puzzle. Hide the pieces around the room before the children arrive. See how quickly they can find the pieces and form a complete puzzle.

**Hop Scotch** — Cut out paper stones, one for each word in the verse. Put them on the floor and have a child step on each stone as he/she says the next word in the verse.

**Hot and Cold Game** — Bring an object to class to use as a "treasure." Display the object; then send one child out of the classroom for a moment. While he is gone, hide the treasure somewhere in the room. Let the child return. The other players must guide the child's search for the treasure by calling "cold" when he is far away, "cool" when nearer, then "warm," and finally "hot!" When the child locates the object, he earns the chance to say this week's memory verse. Stress that the player who is "It" must trust the other players to give him good directions. If he obeys the instructions, he will find the treasure. This is how it is when we trust Jesus and obey His commands.

**Hot Potato** — Repeat the verse together several times. Ask for volunteers to say the verse by themselves. Then have the children sit in a circle. As they pass a small object (ball, potato, orange, or stuffed animal) around the circle the children should say each successive word in the verse as quickly as possible. When you call "stop," whoever is holding the object must say the memory verse. Variation: Pass a prize around the circle as the children repeat the verse. Whoever is holding the prize when the verse is completed drops out. The last child to be eliminated receives the prize.

**I'm Thinking of a Verse** — Say, "I'm thinking of a verse that is found in John" or "I'm thinking of a verse that has 'perish' in it." Keep giving clues until someone gives the correct answer. Variation: The child who gives the correct answer may then give a clue for another verse.

**Memory Toss** — After reciting the verse several times, toss a small object (ball, potato, orange, or stuffed animal) to a child to say the verse alone. Let the child then toss the object to another child who in turn must say the verse.

**Mystery Verse** — Write a mystery verse on the board before class using only the first letter of each word. For example, write "B O T L J C A Y S B S A 16:31" on the board.

**Musical Memory Verse** — A melody line is a great way to reinforce memorization. Using a familiar tune or jingle, sing the verse with the children several times until the verse is thoroughly learned.

**Pass It On** — Have the children sit in a circle. Whisper the verse in the ear of the first child; then let that child whisper it into the ear of the next child and so on from one person to the next.

**Ping-Pong** — Line the children up in two rows facing each other. Toss a beanbag back and forth saying the next word of the memory verse.

**Popcorn** — Have the children sit in a circle. Then, one word at a time, have the children pop up to say the next word in the memory verse, then sit down. See how fast the popcorn can pop!

**Relay Race** — Write the words of the memory verse (including the reference) in scrambled order on the chalkboard. Then draw a vertical line down the middle of the chalkboard. Divide the group into two teams (boys against girls). At a signal, let one child from each team come forward and print the first word of the memory verse on the chalkboard. As soon as they are finished, they should hurry back to their teams. The next person will then go up and print the second word. The first team to finish the memory verse is the winner.

**Remove a Word** — Print the memory verse with each word on a separate piece of construction paper. After you read the verse, have the children close their eyes while you remove one of the words. Have the children open their eyes. The child who can tell you the exact word that you removed is the one to come up next time and remove the next word.

**Verse Puzzles** — Give each child an envelope with the verse cut up in puzzle form. The first one to put the verse together in the correct order is the winner.

**Word Addition Game** — Sit in a large circle. Say the memory verse together two or three times. Start the game by having a child say the first word in the verse. The next child says the first two words in the verse; the next child says the first three words in the verse, and so on. Keep doing this until someone says the entire verse. Start the game over again, this time have the child who said the whole verse begin the game. Make sure everyone has a chance to participate. Another way to do this is to throw a ball randomly; the child catching the ball must add the next word.

### ***Tips and Tricks for Playing Games***

Here are some things to remember when using games in the Sunday School classroom:

- If possible, use a game as one of several Learning Center choices. Children like to make choices about the activities they do.
- Make the games more exciting and interesting by using big points. Rather than one point per right answer, make it 1,000 points!
- Do not emphasize wrong answers. If a child gives an incorrect answer, never say, "That's wrong!" Say, "That's a good answer, but not quite what I'm thinking." Be sure to correct their misinformation. If you want an exact answer, warn them ahead of time that they have to answer this question exactly right.
- Award tokens the children can "spend" in a "store" instead of awarding prizes or candy. They can collect them and once a month open the "store" after Sunday School.
- Make sure each child has a good time and builds confidence. Don't put a child "on the spot". There are a number of ways to make the games fun but less competitive on an individual basis:
  - ♦ Use teams. A team doesn't like to lose, but it is not an individual rejection. Let the whole team decide on an answer and then let one person answer for the team and complete the turn.
  - ♦ Play against time. The whole group can play to see how fast they can compete, and then see if they can improve their time in subsequent games.
- Keep the game time reasonable. Playing a game too long or too often will cause children to lose interest in the game.
- There can also be a time limit on a game, and the group can see how far they get before the time is up. If there is not enough time, a game can be stopped before it is complete. Just give some advanced warning of the time limit, and say that the person or team that's ahead is the winner.
- Be sure the game is neither too simple (they will be bored) or too difficult (they will be frustrated).
- Keep instructions as simple and clear as possible. If instructions are confusing or take a great deal of time to learn, the children will lose interest.
- Instructions should be complete. Play the game yourself before introducing it to the class so that you can explain it clearly and completely.
- Be sure there is a way for all children who want to play the game to have an opportunity to play.
- Provide ways for non-readers or slow readers to be successful when playing a game.
- Emphasize the fun of playing the game rather than the competitive aspects of the game. Competition can be a motivating factor in the enjoyment of a game, but it can also lead to rejection and/or discouragement among one or more children in the class.
- Children who do not wish to play the game should be allowed to "help" in some other way, such as keeping score or making sure the player stands behind the throw line, etc.



- We want every child to be a “winner.” Use lots of praise and encouragement; lead them to the correct answer.
- Some children have experienced failure when playing games and need to see that no one “fails” when games are played in Sunday School.
- Discuss the importance of encouraging one another when playing the game. The game needs to be fun for all. No booing your friends!

Many games are time-consuming to make, but can add zest to your lesson. Therefore, make it to last for future use. If it is possible, preserve the game by laminating it.

## Object Lessons

Bring your Bible lessons to life with Object Lessons. Involve as many of the five senses as you can so that your students can taste, smell, hear, see, and feel the experiences you are teaching them. Keep your object lesson simple, yet powerful. There are many object lesson books available through Christian book distributors. Here are some examples of things you can do that will give your students something to remember.

1. If you are talking about Jesus being the bread of life, break and eat a loaf of bread together and talk about the qualities that are similar.
2. To discuss how the Word of God is nourishing like the bread of life, before class cut a slit in the bottom of a round loaf of French bread and pull out a little of the bread. Tuck a pocket-sized New Testament in the loaf. During class, have the children come and break bread with you. They will be amazed to find the Bible inside the loaf and will make the connection between the Word of God

and the bread.

3. If your lesson is about the woman who lost a coin, hide some money around the room for the children to find.
4. If you are teaching about Spiritual gifts, bring brightly wrapped gift boxes into class to capture the children's interest.
5. For a lesson on the fruit of the Spirit, have a bowl with 9 fruits in it. Talk about how the fruit is an offspring of the tree. Relate that to Christian character by explaining that if they show gentleness, people will know they are a Christian.
6. To demonstrate how Jesus is the light of the world, have a candle. Show how it lights up a dark room.
7. Use a flashlight to show how Jesus turns your darkness into light. Compare the battery to Jesus; the torch is useless without it.
8. If you are teaching on the unruliness of the tongue, you can purchase a cow tongue at the butcher shop; they are gross and the kids won't soon forget that lesson!

## Puppets

Kids of all ages love puppets. They capture the attention of everyone. Anyone can use a puppet. You don't have to be a ventriloquist; kids don't care if your mouth moves. They know it's all for fun. Here are some pointers to remember:

- Never use animal puppets to be Bible characters.
- Puppets should never ask Jesus into their hearts or ask

forgiveness for their sins. The puppets are make-believe, but they can love hearing God's word and memorizing verses.

- Get to know your puppet. Give it a name, a voice, a personality; then never change them.
- Practice moving the mouth with your thumb, not your fingers.
- Use a r to see what the audience sees.
- Have puppets comment or ask questions of the class or teacher during the lesson. This helps the children pay better attention.
- Have one puppet always forgetting the Bible verse. The kids will have to correct him over and over and by doing so, will learn the verse themselves.
- Use of a puppet stage is easier than having the puppet on your hand.
- Make a barn door out of a refrigerator box and have animals in the "barn."
- It's easy and inexpensive to make a puppet stage with PVC pipe, plumbers glue and Velcro sheets.

## Visual Aids Decorate, Motivate, and Instruct

Lively and colorful visual aids make your classroom an exciting and memorable learning place. It's been said that you remember only 10% of what you hear, but 60% of what you see.

### Bulletin Boards

Bulletin boards are not just places to put room decorations. You can use them for "think and do" activities as well as motivational tools.

Here are some bulletin board ideas:

- Turn your windows into stained glass or a sky
- Make your door the wardrobe door into Narnia
- Hang things from the ceiling (stars, butterflies, birds)
- Use the back of cabinets, book shelves, or window shades

- Change them often
- Arrange them left to right
- Choose colors and back grounds wisely
- Keep it simple

### Story Boards and Flash Cards

Use large and colorful pictures to enhance your Bible lessons or to teach worship songs. Or, make flash cards. People of all ages learn better with visual aids. Since developing teaching aides is expensive and time consuming, make them to last so you can use over and over again.