***“The Basics Of Teaching Children In The Church”***

***An In-Depth Workshop On Teaching Children***

***In The Church, Sunday School And Other***

***Bible Study Groups!***

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**WHY IS CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IMPORTANT?**

 ***“95% of today’s adult Christians became a Christian by age 13.”***

**Discussion Question:** What does this statement mean to you?

I think that this statement should “shout” a most important message to every church leader – every Sunday school superintendent, every director of Christian education, every Sunday school teacher – each of us! Look at the statement again, “95% of today’s adult Christians became a Christian by age 13.” In other words, if we are to reach the children and youth of today and see them become the adult Christians of tomorrow, we must reach them by age 13.

 I hope that you see this statement with great importance and great urgency. Children’s ministry and Christian education are important because if we do not reach the children of our church and community by age 13, the odds of them ever becoming a Christian – ever coming to Jesus Christ, every becoming church members – go way down. This doesn’t mean that when a person gets to be 13 that we stop trying to reach them or stop trying to instruct them in what’s right and wrong and the other valuable lessons in the Bible. But it does remind us of the great importance of reaching children and doing all that we can to see them come to Jesus Christ, get grounded in God’s Word and to get into the habit of attending Sunday school, worship and other church ministries at an early age.

 But what about Christian education? Why is it important…especially to children?

**ACTIVITY – Define Christian Education**

1. Write a brief definition of “Christian education.” In other words, what does that phrase mean to you?
2. List several examples of Christian education. How does it take place or where does it take place?
3. Why is Christian education important? Why is it important for children and for other persons of all ages?

**What Is Christian Education?**

When we think about Christian education, we usually think about studying the Bible. At its most basic level, that is certainly what Christian education is all about. But it’s also important to learn how to apply the things that God tells us through His Word to our day-to-day lives and to learn about His love for us and how to share that love with others.

 Through the Bible we can learn what’s right and what’s wrong. We can see examples of people who followed God’s leading and those who rejected His leading. And, we learn about Jesus Christ, His teachings and the Way of Salvation that is available through Him.

 Christian education is about the Bible and the Bible is about Jesus Christ. Why is it important for us to learn about Jesus Christ? Because, as He put it, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father but through me.” (John 14:6)

 Helping children to learn to love the Bible, to learn to follow the direction that it provides and to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior is of tremendous importance. We need to remember that we’re not just talking about trivial information or facts and figures that need to be learned for a test. No, with “Christian education” we are talking about learning from the Bible – God’s Word. We are talking about things that can help to shape a person’s life and things that affect how they live – not just today and tomorrow, but for eternity!

**RE-THINKING YOUR APPROACH TO**

**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

**Why Christian Education?**

So, I hope that you all agree that Christian education and the Bible are important. And I also hope that you see the urgency of reaching and teaching children about Jesus and the Bible. In fact, you would think that everyone – all Christians, at least – would see these things as important. However, the facts seem to indicate otherwise.

 Since the mid-1970’s, Sunday school attendance has declined over 25%. Today, only about 30% of all church members attend Sunday school. And even though other forms of Christian education are growing, still only about half of all Christians are involved in any form of Christian education on a regular basis.

**Question To Think About And Discuss:** Why aren’t more Christians interested and involved in Sunday school and other forms of Christian education?

 Several years ago, I compiled a list of reasons that people gave for not attending Sunday school. The reasons that people listed included…

* Other priorities
* Members are unfriendly
* Time conflicts
* Poor classroom settings.
* Not interested in the area of study.
* Poor age group/interest distribution in classes.
* Poor teachers.
* Lack of spiritual atmosphere.
* Poor P.R. about Sunday school.
* Have never been invited.

 This list is not necessarily in order of importance; however, I believe that the reason that is there at the top of the list – “other priorities” – has to be the number one reason why people are not interested in Sunday school and Christian education.

 When people say that Sunday school and Christian education are not a priority, what are they really saying? In reality, aren’t they saying that God is not a priority? To them, their work, home, family, recreation, sleeping in on Sunday morning – all of these and many more – are more important than God and the Bible and the church.

 True, we’re mainly concerned with ministering to and teaching children through this workshop, but we must remember that, to a large degree, the parents influence the priorities for their children. If the parents aren’t interested in church and Sunday school, the children probably won’t be very interested either. And, even if the children would be somewhat interested, most of them wouldn’t have a way to get to church and Sunday school if their parents didn’t go.

**Change: Good Or Bad?**

 God never changes. The Bible never changes. The Way of Salvation never changes. But many other things related to the church, to Sunday school and to Christian education have changed greatly in recent years. These things have changed because the world has changed. The world of today is a much different place than it was 50 or 20 or even 5 years ago. As a result, the people are different and that means that children are different, too. Because children are different, we cannot rely on the same old teaching methods and approaches to reaching and teaching children in the church.

 For this reason, it is important to spend a few minutes to think about your approach to children’s ministry. Before we can teach children, we have to get them into the church and that’s often the hardest part of the job.

**Approaching Christian Education As A “Total Church Program”**

 Earlier, we talked about the fact that Sunday school and the many other forms of Christian education are all important. We can no longer view these various programs as being separate, different or even in competition. We must put together an effective “total church approach” for our children’s Christian education ministry.

 Our goal is to get all children involved in actively learning about Jesus Christ and the Bible. How they are involved should not be a big concern. Whether it’s in Sunday school or in Junior Church or in a special Kids’ Club or in weekday backyard Bible clubs or in special-interest “hobby clubs” or whatever, the important thing is that we get them involved and see them learn.

 As you plan our Christian education children’s ministries, you need to be sure to plan a variety of programs, with a variety of interest appeals and at a variety of times, so that you can make the programs available and of interest to all children of all ages.

**Making Children’s Christian Education Programs “Family Centered”**

 As you plan to make your Christian education ministry a “total church program,” you need to think not just about “children’s ministry” but also about integrating your children’s work into the other areas of church and Christian education ministry. This means that the children should not always be segregated and set apart from the rest of the church. Children should be actively involved with other ages through intergenerational programs, and especially with their parents in a variety of family centered programs and activities.

 Parents should be encouraged to be a part of the church’s children’s ministry. They can be involved directly with programs by serving as helpers, by hosting a class social, acting as prayer partners with children, serving as mentors or leaders of special-interest or hobby groups. Parents should also be involved in family-centered social activities, field trips, game nights, movie nights, etc.

 Parents today are very interested in being personally involved in activities with their entire family. But remember, parents are very, very busy. They know that it’s important to spend time with their children and in family settings, but they just don’t have much free time for such activities. They also know that it is important to have their children involved in Christian education activities through the church. Therefore, they are very appreciative of opportunities that the church provides where they can combine the two – Christian education or Christian fellowship with opportunities for togetherness as a family.

**Have A Balanced Program With Education, Social Activities & Service**

 Every children’s ministry should consist of five main areas of programming:

* Activities that reach out to children to attract their interest and involve them in a non-threatening way.
* Activities that are relevant to the interests and talents of the children. These might include opportunities to learn more about something that is of interest to the students (such as learning about science or model rocketry), opportunities to use and develop their talents (such as an art class) or an opportunity to share a common hobby or interest (such as trading baseball cards).
* Bible studies that help children learn the basics of faith in a manner that is both interesting and relevant to their personal lives and needs.
* Social and fellowship activities. This should help to develop closer relationships between Christian kids and to foster intergenerational contacts between all ages.
* Service opportunities that help the children to mature and to develop their leadership skills.

**Make Lessons Interesting, Relevant and Fun**

 We just talked about all of the changes and new products that surround us each day. TV, computers, the Internet, video games and many, many other things continually subject kids to a constant bombardment of sensory attractions. It is these same kids – kids who have been so active, so involved, so entertained, so energetic, so enthralled to the point of sensory overload – that we expect to sit still, be quiet and listen for 45 minutes as we drone on with a dull, boring story. Think it’s going to happen? Not very well!

 Today’s kids expect to see some sort of results or benefit from everything that they do, even if the benefit is only to have fun. That’s why it is so important for us to work to make every lesson interesting, exciting and fun. Kids today want to be involved. They want to learn about things that are of interest to them. They want to be with other children of similar age and interest to develop friendships with those kids. And they want to enjoy themselves and have fun.

 Methods like role-play, research projects simulation games, active/discovery learning, and creative play can help us make our lessons more interesting and relevant. Teaching tools from “high tech” computers and video cameras to “low tech” puppets and object lessons can also be effectively incorporated into the presentation of lessons that will help children learn even more about Jesus Christ, the Bible and how we can live each day in a way that will please Him.

**Put a Greater Emphasis On Teacher Recruiting, Training and Commitment**

 For far too many years in far too many churches, the only requirement necessary to be a Sunday school teacher is that you are breathing. In a desperate attempt to fill every vacancy, DCEs and Christian Ed Committees have been willing to take anyone they could get to be a teacher – no questions asked!

 Today, however, if we expect our teachers to present lessons that are – as we just said – interesting, exciting, relevant and even fun, can we expect anyone off the street or out of our congregation to step in, pick up a quarterly and hit the ground like a seasoned pro? Of course not!

 The first thing that we must do is set our standards a little higher. But, some might say, then we won’t be able to fill all of our teacher vacancies. To that, I would address this question – Which is worse, no teacher at all or a teacher who is so boring, so poor and so uninteresting that they actually drive students away from the church? Suffice it to say that neither of these choices should be acceptable.

 So, if we are going to set our standards higher, what will we look for? Will everyone have to have a degree from a Bible college or be certified as an elementary education teacher? Of course not! But there are some things that we should look for in a potential Christian education teacher…

***Qualifications of a Christian Education Teacher***

* Born again.
* Live a good Christian life.
* Love the students we are asking them to teach.
* Concerned for salvation of others.
* Must agree with church’s theology.
* Dedicated to job.
* Ability to inspire others.
* Experience.
* Knowledge.
* Curiosity

Another thing that we must do is to provide for the preparation and training for our prospective teachers. Don’t just hand them the quarterly and say, “See you next week!” Provide training in the basic skills necessary to teach children. Involve them in workshop training. Give them books and videos. Allow them to learn as a teacher’s assistant or in a limited teaching role such as V.B.S.

 And, even once they are established as a teacher, continue to give them all the help and support that you can. Conduct regular training workshops, maintain a resource library for your teachers, hold regular teachers’ meetings, make sure that they have someone to talk with regarding problems and concerns, and be sure to support each of your teachers with prayer.

**Use “Team Teaching”**

 One way to ease your teacher shortage may be with the use of team teaching. In one Sunday school that uses team teaching, a class of fourth and fifth graders has three teachers. If possible, all three of the teachers are there helping to teach and lead the class each week. One person will have the opening with a game or other focusing exercise, the second person will have the story and Bible study and the third will have a craft and talk about the application of the lesson. The teachers might keep the same jobs from week to week or they might take turns and rotate the assignments. And should one of the teachers be sick or need to be away, the class is still covered by the two other persons.

 In another team teaching situation, a Sunday school class has four different teachers. The teachers teach in pairs, two weeks on and then two weeks off. They could also divide up the teaching by the month or by designated units of study.

 Team teaching offers several advantages. Teachers are not locked in to being in the classroom each and every Sunday. And you also can better utilize the talents and skills of a particular person as you use them in a team teaching situation.

**Look Both “In” and “Out”**

 When the very first Sunday school was started back in 1780 in England, children were gathered up off the streets and brought together to learn about the Bible and also to learn to read and to write.

The story is also told about Dwight L. Moody. When he wanted to become a Sunday school teacher, he was told, “Okay, but we don’t have a class for you. If you want to teach you’ll have to go get kids and bring them in.” And that’s exactly what he did!

 Today, however, we seem to have lost that type of approach to Sunday school and Christian education. Rather than looking outside of the church and trying to bring in new kids, most of our time is spent just trying to hang on to our own members and encourage them to bring their kids to our Sunday school and other groups.

 Yes, it is important for us to minister to the needs of our members and to work to see them grow in their love for Jesus Christ and their knowledge of the Bible, but we can’t stop there. We must do more to reach out to the community and involve the children, families and other unchurched of our area.

 In his final directive to his disciples (Matthew 28:19-20), Jesus said that we were to “Go into all the world…to make disciples…to baptize and to teach…!” Have we really picked up on that first word – GO? Most of us are content to sit back in our comfortable pews and wait for the people to come running to us. Well, guess what? It doesn’t happen! If our Sunday schools and our churches and our other programs are to grow, we must go into the world. We must witness and extend invitations. We must sponsor programs such as V.B.S., backyard Bible clubs and focused Bible studies. We need to sponsor just-for-fun and family outreach events and social activities and more. The people won’t just come to us. We must go to them!

**Don’t Imitate Others**

 We’ve all heard it said that imitation is one of the highest forms of flattery. However, we might also say that imitation is one of the surest roads to failure, especially if you’re talking about implementing new programs to make your Sunday school and other Christian education programs better. Children’s ministry leaders often look at other churches in their area and see things that are being done successfully and think that surely they could do that too. Well, maybe they can, but there’s no guarantee.

 In most cases new programs or new and different ideas are not what make a ministry successful. The ministries succeed because of the people who are running the programs and because of all of the hard work, prayer and dedication that they put into the project. This is not to say that we shouldn’t all be looking for new ideas. But what it does say is that new and different does not always automatically mean success. If any new idea is to work, it must be given careful planning and much thought. It must be adapted to meet the specific needs and nuances of our group. It must be adapted to utilize the talents and skills of our group. It must be adapted to utilize the talents and skills of our leaders and workers. And it must be covered in prayer.

 Don’t be afraid to pick up on a new idea or a new program. But when you do, be ready to give it the time, planning and hard work necessary to make it a success. Just because it worked in a church across town is no guarantee that it will automatically work for you.

**Put A Greater Emphasis On Classroom Safety**

 We will be talking much more about this area of concern later, but for now, we should remind you of the great importance of the whole area of classroom safety. Many churches, denominations and other church-related organizations and insurance companies have really been pushing this whole area and sometimes we might think that the guidelines that these groups have set forth border on the ridiculous, especially for the small church. However, we must remember that we are talking about children – a parent’s most precious possession. The parents of your church and community have entrusted these precious ones to your care for training in God’s Word. That means that we must do everything possible to make sure that these little ones are always safe, that all of our children’s workers have passed the toughest personal scrutiny, that our classrooms are safe and secure, that our workers know what to do in every possible eventuality and that our workers are also protected from any possible false accusations.

 Just because it has never happened in your church or even in your town is no assurance that it never will. So, remember, when you’re planning for a better, more effective Christian education ministry, don’t forget to think about the whole area of safety.

**WHAT ARE TODAY’S CHILDREN REALLY LIKE?**

**ACTIVITY – What Do You Think?**

 Before we look at what the experts say, we want you to think about your own opinions of today’s children. Listed below you will see seven statements. Read each statement and then take a few minutes to decide whether you (5) strongly agree, (4) sort of agree, (3) are not sure, (2) sort of disagree or (1) strongly disagree with the statement. You might also write down your reason for your answer.

**Statement # 1** – The children of today are smarter than the children of 20 years ago.

**Statement #2** – The children of today have more free time than children did 20 years ago.

**Statement #3** – The children of today have a much easier life than the children of 20 years ago did.

**Statement #4** – Things like computers, the Internet, cellular phones and the many other modern innovations have been good for the children of today.

**Statement #5** – The children of today are faced with more problems and temptations than the children of 20 years ago were.

**Statement #6** – The children of today are not as interested in Sunday school and the church as children were 20 years ago.

**Statement #7** – The children of today are not as concerned about spiritual matters as children were 20 years ago.

But what are today’s children…children of the 21st century…really like?

1. They are idealistic. They have big dreams and think that all things are possible.
2. They are committed to changing the world. They show a marked interest in social change and human relationships. They want to help.
3. They work together. Cooperative learning is a big part of modern education. Seeing past differences, this generation is eager to work together to solve problems.
4. They understand right from wrong. Educators in the schools and in the church are seeking to instill clear-cut values in children.
5. They are family-centered. Studies show that there is a growing trend toward “staying home with the family.” “Family values” are also seen as important by millennial kids and their parents.
6. They need relationships. Many kids today are “information rich but experience poor.” They need less “stuff” and more relationships, particularly adult guidance.

But can you really use generalities such as these and say that all kids are like this? Of course not! There are a number of factors that we must also take into consideration. First of all, the age of the child. Children of various ages are able to understand in very different ways. Children of different ages are also at various stages of physical development. And they are at different levels of social and emotional development. Therefore, it is important to have a basic understanding of what children are like at different ages so that we can select our words, our teaching styles and our lesson content accordingly.

 One other note: Just as children of various ages are different, we must also remember that not all children within each age group are the same. Factors such as educational level, intelligence, interests, environment, ethnic background, family and social settings all play a part in determining who the child is and how they learn. The important thing for the teacher to do is to accept and love each child as an individual and not to look at them as just another product cut from the same social cookie cutter mold.

**Gardner’s Seven Intelligences**

 When we talk about the differences in children, there is one other very important thing for every Christian education teacher to remember – different children learn in different ways.

 Back in the mid-1980’s, Howard Gardner of Harvard University developed what is known as the “Multiple Intelligence Theory.” Gardner’s theory, simply stated, is that cognitive learning takes many forms in the human brain. Each of us is born with the capacity to “learn” in many different ways. However, each of us also develops preferred ways of learning, and we rely most heavily on those preferred ways to learn.

***“The 7 Different Intelligences of Children”***

 The “seven intelligences” that Gardner identified are…

1. Verbal/Linguistic. These persons enjoy using words – both spoken and written. Words are the tools that they use best when it comes to learning.
2. Logical/Mathematical. They are very logical. They like numbers and solving problems.
3. Visual/Spatial. They learn best by actually seeing or at least mentally picturing information. Drawing, pictures and maps aid them in their learning.
4. Body/Kinesthetic. These persons learn best by doing and by using their bodies. Using physical objects to illustrate learning is of value to them.
5. Musical/Rhythmic. These students learn best through sounds and music. Singing and rhyming helps them remember and learn.
6. Interpersonal. These students work and learn best when working with others. Cooperative learning, team projects and shared study helps them learn.
7. Intrapersonal. This student is the exact opposite of the “interpersonal” learner. They learn best by themselves. They do their best thinking and work when left alone.

So, what does this “theory” and all of these big words mean to you, the average Christian education or Sunday school teacher? First, we need to remember that each person is capable of learning to a degree in each of the seven different styles. But the important thing to remember is that each individual has a preferred style – or it could be a combination of several different styles – ways in which they learn best. By using activities and teaching methods that are in the style of these different “intelligences,” the teacher can facilitate better and more effective learning.

 For most of us, all that we need to remember is that different children learn in a variety of different learning ways or styles. That means that we need to incorporate as much variety into each of our lessons as possible. By varying the activities and method that we use in our lesson presentation, we will be able to help each of our students learn in the styles that suit them best. And as you observe your students and see the things that they prefer and the styles that seem to be most appealing to them, you can work to include even more of those types of activities and methods in future lessons.

**WHAT SHOULD CHILDREN BE**

**LEARNING IN SUNDAY SCHOOL & CHURCH?**

**Meeting the Needs of Your Students**

 Most Sunday school teachers or leaders assume that the curriculum materials that they are using will teach children of different ages the Bible stories, the moral values and the other Christian concepts that are important – the things that they should be learning. Few of us ever stop to take a close look at the material to see if it is true. And, for those who are using elective-type curriculum materials or who are creating your own studies, the question becomes even bigger – what should children be learning in the church?

 Certainly, we all want to see each of our students accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and then to see them grow in their knowledge of Him and His will for their lives. We also want our students to learn about the Bible and how to find the answers and guidance that it provides for living our lives in a way that will please Him. We should also want to see our students learn about prayer, the importance of worship, and love and concern for others – just to name a few. All of these “basics” of the faith are very important, but we also need to remember the importance of meeting the needs of our students. To do that, we need to talk to our students, ask questions, listen and even talk to parents to get a good handle on the things that are really important to our kids. We also need to look at the problems, concerns, temptations and fears that they are facing. Helping our students see God’s love and care in each of life’s situations is one of the most important lessons that we can help our students learn.

**PRACTICAL & EFFECTIVE**

**TEACHING TECHNIQUES FOR THE CHURCH**

**Planning Your Weekly Lesson**

Throughout the first part of this workshop, we have been talking mostly about the importance of Christian education and Christian education theory as it applies to children. Through most of the rest of the workshop we will be looking at the more practical side of teaching, examples of effective teaching techniques that can be used with children and practical examples of how these methods and tools can be used.

 But where will we start? Well, I think the best place to start is the place you should start each week as you prepare to teach your class – start with the planning!

A recent article reported that the average amount of time that Sunday school teachers spend in preparing each week’s lesson is between 5 to 15 minutes! Can a teacher really present an effective and interesting lesson if they have only spent 5 to 15 minutes in preparation? That’s barely enough time to read through the lesson once, let alone have time to really think about what you want to do and to plan the most effective way of doing it.

 If you are really going to be effective as a Christian education teacher, you must be willing to give the time and effort necessary to do the job right. Teaching Sunday school or serving as a teacher in any other Christian education program within the church is not easy. If anyone ever told you it would be, they were lying! Teaching is one of the hardest jobs that you will ever do. It requires a major commitment of your time, your effort, your thoughts, your talents, your resources and more. But we must remember what we are doing and why. We are working for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are working to tell others about Him, His word and His will for their lives. And, when you think of all that He was willing to do for you, shouldn’t we be willing to do all that we can for Him?

 To be better and more effective in our teaching we should all spend as much time in planning and preparation as possible. How should you start? I would suggest the following procedure…

1. Read the scripture on which the lesson is based. Read it in several different translations.
2. Skim through the material provided in your curriculum teacher’s guide. Remember, the curriculum and the teacher’s guide are just that – guides! They are not the total lesson. You should not be following the curriculum word for word. And, at this point in your planning, you don’t even need to read the curriculum in detail, just skim through it.
3. Decide on your “lesson aim.” This is probably the most important part of planning, deciding what you really want your students to learn from the lesson.

As you start thinking about the aim, you first need to realize what your aim isn’t. The aim is not the title of the lesson that is printed in the curriculum. The aim is not even the heading title that is listed in the Bible. The aim for your study should be the specific lesson that you want the kids in your class to learn. The aim might be based on their need to receive Jesus Christ as Savior. It might be based on their need to learn about a specific Bible or moral lesson. It might be related to something that you have heard your students talking about. It might be related to a general concern that you have for the children. The special lesson that we want our students to learn, based on a need that we see in their lives. Teaching that is purposeless is teaching that is lost.

 It doesn’t matter how good the methods and teaching tools that we have available are, if we haven’t done a good job of planning and preparation, and if we haven’t established an aim that really meets the needs of our students, then we will not be our most successful.

**Start With A “Bang”**

Once you have established your aim for your lesson, you need to set about selecting the elements that you will include in your presentation. As you set about planning, remember, you don’t need to be trying to pound facts and information into the heads of your students during every minute of every lesson. Yes, you want to have some very serious times of learning, but you also want your students to relax, have a little fun, be active, stay interested and enjoy the total lesson experience. Sitting at a table for 45 minutes listening to a boring presentation by a teacher is not a child’s idea of an enjoyable experience. For your students to get the most out of your lessons, they need to enjoy the experience. And remember, if they learn one important lesson – something that truly produces a change in their thinking or their actions – you have been wildly successful! Success should not be measured in the volume of the facts and information you can pile onto your students but by the quality of what they really learn and put into practice in their lives.

 As we think about presenting an effective lesson, we need to think in terms of three basic lesson parts…

* The opening for the lesson
* The body of the lesson
* And the application and closing of the lesson

 The first thing you need to plan is the opening for the lesson. Someone has observed that “as goes the first 5 minutes of a class period, so will probably go the rest of the lesson.” That’s probably true. If you start dull and boring, that’s probably the way the rest of the lesson will go. But, if you start in an exciting, interesting way, you have a good shot at maintaining that excitement and interest through the rest of the lesson.

 What we want to do is to start each lesson with a “bang,” something that will catch the attention of the students and get them focused and prepared for the learning to follow. The opening activity is not necessarily meant to teach any deep lesson. These activities may simply be fun. They could be “mixers” to get the students acquainted or “ice breakers” to get their minds focused and ready for the study to follow. Music and group singing can be a very effective opening activity. Games and physical activities such as “Simon Says” are good. Objects that the students can see and touch can get them interested in the study to follow. A mystery box with a hidden object inside can help peak students’ interest. These and many other activities can be used effectively to catch the students’ interest and to get them ready for the real learning to come.

**Focusing Attention**

 One of the purposes that we mentioned for opening activities is to focus the students’ attention for the learning to come. Focusing isn’t just something that you need to do during the opening, it’s something that you should plan to use throughout your lesson and also have ready for use when needed.

 Focusing could be defined as the use of activities that try to involve as many of the students’ senses in the learning experience as possible. For example, asking preschoolers to sit and quietly listen to a Bible story involves only their hearing and many will soon lose interest. But, if you can involve them even more and get even more of their senses involved in the experience, you have a better chance of keeping their attention for a longer time. One thing that you might do is to let the students use their hands to make walking, running and other sounds indicated through the story. Or, you might assign them each a different word or name from the story. When they hear that word or name, they should jump up. Or, if the story is about sheep, you might pass around a sheepskin for each of the students to touch and examine as you read the story.

 Closely related to focusing activities are “fidget busters.” By nature, children have short attention spans and lots of energy. Fidget busters are deliberate activities that are used to relieve tension, help students relax and burn off some built-up energy before an activity continues or before you move to a new activity. Fidget busters do not have any particular link to the lesson or have any specific purpose other than being an energy release, an opportunity for kids to get up out of their chairs and move around a little before they get ready for the learning to follow.

 For example, for preschoolers you might tell the children that they’re plants and must keep their feet firmly planted on the floor. Without moving their feet, they must react to different kinds of weather (rain, wind, sun, snow, breeze, hail) like a plant.

 For children who are in the kindergarten through third grade group, you might play “stand up, turn around and then sit down.” As the teacher calls out a description (examples: brown hair, wear glasses, have a sister, have blue eyes, are wearing brown shoes, etc.) that matches any of the students, those who fit that description “stand up, turn around and then sit down.”

 And for older children, you might divide the class into two or more groups. Give each student a sheet with a number on it. Each student should have a different number, if possible. Then the teacher reads a large number, for example “1,457.” Students holding the four digits that are used in this number must get in the proper order and hold their papers so that the teacher can see the correct number. The team that is first at getting their numbers in the right order wins the round.

**Class Social & Fellowship Activities**

 Another thing that is related that we want to mention here is class social and fellowship activities. These are not necessarily things that we would want to include in every weekly lesson plan – unless you have a very long lesson session – but, they are things that should be a part of our overall class plan for the year.

 Children – especially older children – are often very open to the development of friendships with other children of similar age and interest. It is also important for them to develop close contacts and relationships with other adults. For that reason, Sunday school and other church activities are an excellent place to develop and foster contacts and friendships with other Christians. It is especially important for kids to know that they are not the only Christian kids or kids who attend church who go to their school. They need to develop these friendships and relationships, and Sunday school and other church programs are an excellent place to build these contacts.

 To help promote social interaction and fellowship, one youth department Sunday school teacher intentionally does absolutely nothing for the first 10 minutes of each class period. He just lets the students sit and talk. He might enter into the conversation if appropriate, but more often than not he will just sit and listen. He does this for two reasons. First, he wants to promote fellowship and friendships and, second, he wants to listen to what the kids are talking about. This might not be an appropriate activity for children’s classes, but more structured activities, planned parties, field trips, going roller skating as a group, having a family softball game – these and other fellowship, friendship building activities are things that could be done on a monthly or quarterly basis to involve all of your kids and help them build friendships with other kids in the class.

**Children & Play**

 One other quick note about children and play. Adults often look at children at play and think that they are just having fun. But, if you really watch children for a few minutes, you will discover a playful approach to life. Even a stick or a piece of string can become a wonderful toy in the hands of creative children. Kids love to play and they learn from play, too. Play is the work of children and through it children learn to get along with others and it helps them develop mentally, physically and emotionally. As you think about teaching children, don’t just think of play as fun or as a “fidget buster.” Well selected play and fun activities can also be effectively used as teaching tools in your lessons. Encourage kids to play and to have fun – and use that play to help kids learn more about God, the world and getting along with others, too.

**The Body of the Lesson**

 Next, we want to think about the body of the lesson. This is the “meat,” the place where we will use a variety of activities to try to help the students learn the lesson of the day. Before we think about specific elements that might be used to put together the body of the lesson, there are several things we need to remember.

 We need to remember that just like your body is made up of many different parts, so the body of your lesson should be made up of a variety of different activities. The entire lesson should not be wrapped up on one 30-minute activity – for several reasons. First, we need to remember that children have a short attention span. As a general rule, the age of the child in years is about how many minutes of attention you can expect to get from that child for an activity. So, if you are teaching five-year-olds, the various activities that you incorporate into the body of your lesson probably shouldn’t be longer than 5 minutes each. By using a variety of short, 5-minute-long activities – maybe with a “fidget buster” or two mixed in – you should have a good lesson that will keep the students’ attention and help them learn the lesson you have in mind for the day.

 The second reason for using a variety of activities goes back to what we talked about when we discussed the “multiple intelligences learning theory.” Different children learn in different ways. As you present your lesson through a variety of activities, utilizing a variety of learning styles, more students can find things in your lesson that will be tailored to their needs and the learning style that they prefer.

**“Active/Discovery Learning”**

 The first thing that we want to think about is “active/discovery learning” – by doing. Researchers tell us that the average person remembers about 10% of what they hear; about 20% of what they see; but up to 90% of what they do. That’s why it’s so important for us to involve our students in the actual learning process.

 “Active/discovery learning” is learning by doing. It is effective with all ages, but especially so with children who have that natural curiosity and, in many ways, learn best through their experiences.

 Adults tend to teach as they were taught. We often concentrate on pouring biblical facts into the brains of our students. Head knowledge doesn’t necessarily produce heart faith or even inspire behavioral change. Children welcome activity, they learn best by doing. Children hate sitting in chairs. They are weary of teachers that talk all the time or make them work in workbooks where they are only doing busy work. Active/discovery learning involves action and kids’ senses. Children must have lessons with “handles” that they can get hold of. They must be able to grasp and experience a truth before they can own it. Active learning gives them those handles.

***Examples of Active/Discovery Learning***

* Direct experiences. This might include making crafts and then taking them to a nursing home or involving older children to help at a homeless mission.
* Role-play. This is when people are given parts to play in a contrived situation. There is no prepared dialogue; the participants just “wing it.”
* Demonstrations. Things like magic tricks and science experiments or “guess the object in the mystery box” are forms of demonstrations.
* Purposeful games. These might include active games like “Simon says” or the old favorite, “Upset the fruit basket,” that are used to illustrate the lesson aim or as a springboard for making a particular lesson point.
* Purposeful activities. These are usually group activities. They might include things like giving the students a number of craft sticks and a roll of masking tape and then have them work together to build their own “Tower of Babel.” (This is a way to illustrate working together.) Or you might have an assortment of ingredients that could be used to make brownies but have no recipes. Then let the kids make their own brownies by combining what they think would go into them. Bake a little of each batter and taste. (This is a good illustration of the importance of planning and seeking God’s plan for our lives.)
* Bible search. Have concordances and other Bible reference books available for older kids to use as they search for verses in the Bible that speak about the theme of the day. You might have them paraphrase the verse and put it into their own language or even into the form of a bumper sticker slogan.
* Drama. Let the kids rewrite a Bible story or scene and put it into their own words or modern situations. Then allow them to act out the story or present it with puppets.
* Interviews. Have the kids interview members of the church to ask them questions about their faith. For example: “Why is prayer important?”
* Video. Let older kids use a video camera to create their own “commercial” for your church or Sunday school, to tell people why it is important to attend.
* Research projects. Help kids to examine the records of your Sunday school for the past several years to see if your attendance is going up, down or staying about the same. Then think about things that could help build Sunday school attendance.
* Personal expression through arts and crafts. You might give students a lump of clay and have them sculpt something that illustrates the lesson theme. For example, sharing.
* Scavenger hunt. Send the students to search for objects to illustrate the lesson aim or theme. For example, faith. The hunt could be made in the classroom, outdoors or throughout the entire church, if possible. Rather than having the kids bring back the actual scavenger hunt item, you might give them a disposable camera and have them take a picture of each of the items on the list.
* Field trips. Take the students to visit a local nursing home or a rescue mission. Help them see the needs of others and how they can help.
* Special guests. Invite persons from within your church and others to share personal experiences with the children. For example, someone who has experienced miraculous healing might share about the power of prayer.

 Active/discovery learning is focused through debriefing. Once you have used an activity, don’t just end it and move on. Talk with the kids about what they have done and how they felt. Ask, “What does this mean to you?” and “What will we do about it?” as you use the activity to illustrate your lesson and focus them toward putting this lesson to work in their lives.

 One other very important note: “Teachable moments” provide some of the best opportunities for discovery learning. As situations arise within the classroom – two children want the same toy or one of the students shares a concern because his grandfather is very sick – don’t just quickly pass over the situation. These are teachable moments, opportunities for you to help the students learn something that is not just an abstract lesson from a book; this is a real lesson based on real needs and real-life situations. Take advantage of every teachable moment and use them to help the students ask the question, “What would Jesus do?” or look at the Bible to try to find what it tells us to do. Remember, teachable moments can provide some of the best opportunities for active/discovery learning. Don’t miss them!

**Interactive Learning**

 One other note to add here: In several of the examples of “active/discovery learning” we talked about students working together as groups. One of the hottest trends in modern education for children is “interactive learning.” Interactive learning involves children working together on projects. Children are divided into groups of 3 to 5 students, depending on the class size and the room you have available, and allowed to work on their own develop strategies, to work on projects and learn from each other as they work together toward a common goal. Interactive learning activities are focused on cooperation rather than competition.

**Storytelling**

 Another very important element in the presentation of lessons to children is story telling. Long before there was writing, history and traditions were being passed down from generation to generation verbally through stories. The Bible tells us that the early Jews were great at passing on their traditions and stories about God and His relationship with their nation through stories. In fact, we believe that many of the stories that are recorded in our Bible today were first passed down orally, from person to person, until they were finally written down.

 Jesus was the master storyteller. What we know as the parables of Jesus are among the best and most effective stories ever used to illustrate moral truths, God’s kingdom, faith and the many other things Jesus was trying to teach.

 Today, storytelling continues to be a very effective method of teaching, particularly with children. Stories can introduce children to other times and cultures. They allow them to “walk in someone else’s shoes” for a bit. They lead to greater understanding of cause and effect. They teach lessons that are contained in the stories and are delivered in a nonthreatening way. And, yes, stories can be a lot of fun.

 Before we decide to tell a story as part of our lesson, there are some things that we should remember: First some story telling **“do’s”** Read and study the story carefully.

* Know the characters and plot well.
* Use lots of dialog.
* Assemble your props and pictures.
* Visualize the story. Read it and think it through until it seems like something that happened to you.
* Practice.
* Maintain eye contact.
* Use your voice carefully and effectively. Vary your tone, mood and loudness to set the mood and excitement of the story.
* Use stories that are on the students’ intellectual level.
* Get the children involved. Ask “What do you think happened next?”
* Simplify stories so that small children will understand them better.
* Use stories that contain characters with which the children can identify.

Then some **“don’ts”** for story telling…

* Don’t talk down to your students.
* Don’t rely on only Bible stories to get your point across. Stories from contemporary life can be used, if not always examples of faith, then as illustrations of the need for Christian witness. Stories from nature can also be used very effectively.
* Don’t distract attention from your story with your actions or by wearing unusual clothing.
* Don’t overdo gestures.
* Don’t interrupt yourself with corrections.
* Don’t moralize. The story should point to God and his salvation in Jesus Christ, not “good” things we ought to do. Good stories often do not spell out the meaning at the end. The meaning discloses itself as the story develops.
* Don’t stand over your students. Get on their level.

It is also important to remember that stories don’t have to be told only through the traditional setting of the teacher talking while the students sit quietly and listen. Story telling aids such as a short video presentation, a computer, a chalkboard, an overhead projector, objects or props, reading as dialog and puppets can be effective in helping to focus the students’ attention as you involve even more of their senses in the story and learning experience.

**Effectively Using Questions**

 Another very effective teaching method that we should all be using is questions.

 Questions, if well-prepared and well-used, can be a very effective teaching tool. Basically, there are three types of questions…

* Information. These are questions that ask for a recall of facts.
* Analysis. These are questions that ask the students to make a comparison or application of information.
* Personal Response. These are the “what do you think?” type of questions. They put the student into the situation and ask them how they would respond or what they think.

Information questions are best used for review or as you summarize a lesson. They are used to make sure that the students have learned the lessons and have gotten the facts that you wanted them to learn. But, as you ask information questions, keep in mind that the understanding of the concept or meaning of a lesson or story is much more important than knowing the exact words and facts and figures. Don’t get hung up searching for one word that really doesn’t have a lot of meaning relative to the lesson and your aim for the day.

 As you use questions throughout your lesson, most of these questions should be designed to make the students think. Good questions of this type require more than a “yes” or “no” answer. When students give their initial response to your question, follow it up with a “why” question to get them thinking even deeper. But remember, when you ask students to think, give them a chance to think. When you ask a question and no one responds immediately, don’t think that you have to jump right in and talk. Allowing students to discuss a question in small groups or having older students write their answer may be helpful.

 One other note about “what-do-you-think” questions: If you are asking a student for his or her opinion, don’t put them down because their response might not be exactly what you think it should be. There should be no wrong answers to opinion questions. If a student gives an answer that is un-Biblical, you can try to direct the students to an understanding of what the Bible says or how a Christian should respond, but, again, don’t put the student down. If you do, you may find that the students will stop giving you honest answers.

 Most teachers find it helpful to write down some of the important questions that they want to ask as they plan their lesson. That doesn’t mean that these are the only questions you might ask. As you go through your lesson, often questions will come to you and often the questions that you ask will generate other questions. Encourage your students to ask questions, too. And remember, if you don’t know the answer, say so! These hard questions often provide an opportunity to dig even deeper into the issues that are important for students. If you don’t know the answer to one of their questions, talk to your pastor, check the Bible, check other books, check the Internet and encourage your students to try to find the answer, too.

**Other Effective Teaching Methods**

 As we have been thinking about how you can present your Sunday school lesson, we have tried to give you the information about “active/discovery learning,” storytelling and questions. But these are not the only effective teaching methods that are available to you. In fact, the things that you can use and the methods that you can incorporate are almost endless. Just about anything that you do, just about any object, just about anything that you say can be used as a lesson. It’s all how you – the teacher – use these things and these situations and these activities. Just a few possible teaching methods and activities might include:

reading debate

writing poetry

creative writing storytelling

speaking jokes

singing musical composition

musical performance playing a musical instrument

cooperative learning group projects

silent reflection meditation

thinking strategies dance

role play sports

body language miming

signing graphs

maps paining

sculpture pictures

drawing deciphering codes

games outlines

bible search discussion

buzz groups simulation games

 When selecting teaching methods for your class, remember…

* They should fit the educational objectives of the lesson.
* They should fit the abilities and interests of the students.
* They should involve the whole student, requiring the use of several senses.
* They should include all of the students.

 One other important reminder…

When you have a smaller-than-usual class, do your best to make everyone present feel special. Also, honor those who come on time. Very important: If only one child shows up, have your lesson! That one child is important.

**What About Memorization?**

 As we were talking about asking questions we mentioned that understanding is more important than always having the exact word-for-word answer. What does that say to us about memorization as a part of teaching?

**Discussion questions:**

* How important is it for us to have our children memorizing information in Sunday school or church?
* What should children be memorizing?
* What are the priorities that we should set for our students to be learning in Sunday school or the church?
* Where does memorization fit into that overall plan?

 There are some very important things that children should be learning and memorizing in Sunday school. Selected Bible verses, the Lord’s Prayer, the Books of the Bible, the Ten Commandments…these and many others are all important and could be on a list of things that we want our students to learn and memorize. However, we must remember that understanding is always more important than memorization. It is much more important for a child to understand the meaning of John 3:16, for example, than it is for him to be able to recite the verse word-for-word from memory.

**Effective Teaching Tools**

 We have been thinking about teaching methods; now let’s think about some of the things that we can use to make those methods and our teaching even better – teaching tools. The dictionary defines the word “tool” as “something used in performing an operation or necessary in the practice of a job; a means to an end.” I’ve never met a good Christian education teacher who didn’t appreciate all of the help that they could get. Good teachers are always looking for “tools” that will make their teaching better, easier and more effective.

***SLIDE #24 – Teaching Tools***

* Computer
* Smartphones
* Overhead projector
* Video projector
* Flannel board
* Objects
* Sound recordings (records, tapes, CD’)
* Puppets
* Drawings, sketches, charts & maps
* Video (TV, DVD’s and video cameras)

**Leading A Child To Christ**

 Through much of the workshop we have been trying to focus on teaching methods and teaching tools and some practical examples and ideas for how each can be used. Earlier we talked about what children should be learning in Sunday school and we got a lot of good ideas from you, but it’s also important to think about some specific things that children should be learning and some of the practical ideas and examples that can be used in teaching them.

 The first thing we want to think about is leading a child to Christ.

**Illustrating A Presentation About God’s Plan of Salvation**

**OPTION #1** – The Science Experiment. For this “experiment” you will need a one-pint clear jar with a screw-on lid, ½ cup clear Karo syrup, ½ cup cooking oil, ½ cup water and ½ cup bleach. First, to show the separation that sin has placed between God and man, pour the Karo syrup into the jar (representing God) and then pour in the oil (representing man). You will see that the oil and Karo are together, illustrating God’s original intention for his relationship with man – side by side. “However, man sinned. When sin came into the world, things changed.” To illustrate this, pour some water to which food coloring has been added into the jar. The water will slip between the oil and Karo, just as sin separates man from God. “But God had a plan to take away the sin. That plan was to send Jesus into the world (John 3:16). Jesus took away the sin and restored the relationship between God and man.” To illustrate this, pour bleach into the jar and shake. The “sin” will disappear.

**OPTION #2** – On a blackboard or whiteboard, draw a stick-figure labeled “man” and a circle labeled “God,” about 12 inches apart. Begin by saying, “God loves you and wants a good relationship with you.” (Read John 3:16.) “But, man sinned and sin keeps us from God.” Draw lines to make it look like both the “man” stick figure and the “God” circle are on the tops of ledges with a deep valley in between. Write the word “sin” in the valley between “man” and “God.” (Read Romans 3:23 and/or Romans 6:23.) “But God provided a ‘bridge’ for man to get back to Him. Jesus Christ died and rose again to forgive your sin.” (Read John 14:16 and/or I John 1:9.) Draw a cross between the tops of the two ledges so that the crossbar in the cross touches both sides. Write the words (Jesus Christ) on the cross and put an “x” over the word “sin” in the valley. “You must trust Jesus to be your Savior.” (Read Romans 10:9 and/or John 1:12.) Draw an arrow from the “man” to “God.”

 Following either of these presentations, you should invite the child to:

* Pray and tell God how you feel about Him.
* Admit to God that you are a sinner in need of forgiveness.
* Tell Him that you believe that He loves you so much that Jesus died for your sins on the cross.
* Express your willingness to break your sinful habits and become a new person.
* Invite Jesus to become a part of your daily life and take charge of your life.
* End their prayer by asking God to help them keep their new promise to live for Him.

 The teacher should rejoice with the child who receives Christ. Welcome them to the family of God. And remind them that this is just the beginning. They need to determine to learn all that they can about God and how to live for Him each day.

**Other Notes About Presenting The Plan Of Salvation To Children**

 No matter whom you are presenting the plan of salvation to – children, youth or adults – the basic 5-part approach is the same…

1. Show him the NEED for salvation. All persons are not going to Heaven. No one in himself is good enough to go and the result of sin is forever separation from God. (Romans 3:23; Revelation 21:27; John 8:21, 24)
2. Show him the WAY of salvation. Salvation is a free gift because the Lord Jesus took our place on the cross, was buried and rose again from the dead (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8; I Corinthians 15:3).
3. Lead him to RECEIVE the gift of salvation – Jesus Christ – by trusting Him as his personal Savior (John 1:12; Revelation 3:20).
4. From the Bible, help him find ASSURANCE of his salvation (John 3:36; Revelation 3:20; Hebrews 13:5).
5. Lead him to CONFESS Christ (Matthew 10:32). This confession should be mad to you, other workers, later to his friends and as circumstances permit, in a public church service.

 These five parts are often presented to children in the form of “The Wordless Book.” This is a simple book that contains five sheets of colored construction paper to represent the following:

* Black – sin
* Red – the blood of Jesus
* White – forgiveness of sin
* Yellow – the streets of gold (heaven)
* Green – growth in Jesus.

 When presenting the plan of salvation to children, here are several things to keep in mind…

* Be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit. God will draw children to himself. Never force, coerce or push children to make a decision. Salvation must be freely accepted.
* Understand when a child is ready. When a child understands that God is a person who loves him or her, when a child can know the difference between right and wrong, when he or she experiences sorrow for doing wrong, and when the child gains a basic understanding of Christ as God’s Son who died for his or her sin, then the child is ready to respond to the Lord.
* Know how to explain the plan of salvation. Have a planned presentation of the gospel, but always be ready to adapt it to the child. Encourage children to ask questions. Share your own experiences, if appropriate. When leading a child to Christ, be sure to have the child read the scriptures as you turn to them. If a child is too young to read, turn to the scriptures and point to them as you read.
* Help a child to pray to express faith in Christ. You might use a simple prayer like, “Lord Jesus, I know I have sinned, and I am sorry. I turn away from my sins and ask you to forgive me. I believe you died for my sins. I confess my sins to you, and now I want to receive you into my life as my Friend and Savior. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.” However, if possible, the children should be encouraged to pray their own prayer. You might encourage them to “Speak to Jesus in your own words. Tell Him what you believe about him and ask Jesus to forgive you for your sins.
* Talk to children individually. Speak to individuals during snack time or craft time. Ask your co-teacher to join you as you talk with individual children. Discuss verses such as Romans 3:23, Romans 5:8 and Romans 10:9.
* As much as possible, avoid difficult symbolism. Adults may understand terms such as “ask Jesus into your heart” or “accept Jesus.” Young children may not. An easier concept for a child to understand is to become a member of God’s family. You can also emphasize that God wants to “become our heavenly father.”
* Don’t talk about heaven. While that is the reward for those who are “in Christ,” it unnecessarily creates fear in young children because they don’t want to go where their parents are not.
* Celebrate each child’s decision. You should also memorialize the occasion by writing the date in the child’s Bible or by giving the child a new Bible.
* Remind the child that this is just the start of their walk with Jesus. Follow up the decision with special instruction designed to help the child grow in faith.

 Remember, Christian education teachers within the church have a tremendous responsibility. We have been called to teach people about God, His Word and His will for their lives, and certainly His greatest desire is that all persons should come to know Him and receive Him as their personal Lord and Savior. Do you really love the Lord? Is He number one in your life? If He is, then I am sure that you will want to share that Good News and see all persons come to know Him, too. Sharing the Plan of Salvation with our students and regularly giving them the opportunity to accept Him should be a big part of every teacher’s lesson plan for the year. Not that it should be done every week, but, as we said, be open to the Holy Spirit’s leading and look for the opportunities that He sets before you invite your students to become a member of God’s family.

**Teaching Prayer**

 Another very important thing that we should be sure that we are teaching to our children is about prayer. I hope that all of you believe that there is indeed power in prayer. I hope that all of you pray regularly. And I hope that you pray for each of your students regularly. Prayer is so powerful, yet many people – many Christians – often fail to even begin to tap into the power that is available through it. That’s why it’s so important that we teach our children about prayer and that we help them establish their own active prayer life.

 Prayer helps us strengthen our relationship with God. Prayer helps us seek God and the direction that he has for our lives. Prayer helps give us strength to stand up to temptation. Through prayer God wants us to tell Him our desires, our fears, our hopes, and He wants us to “sing songs of joy” to Him when we are happy. Praying before meals and at bedtime is good, but He wants to hear from us more often than that. He wants to be involved in all areas of our lives, to comfort us when we are sad, to strengthen us when we are scared and to laugh with us when we are happy. And, as we pray, we also need to learn to listen. Through prayer, God speaks to us, to help us know His will and the things that he wants us to do.

 The word “ACTS” can help children remember the purpose of prayer:

A – Adoration – Adore God, love Him and praise Him for who He is.

C - Confessing – Admit your sins to God; ask for His forgiveness through faith that Jesus died for our sins.

T – Thanksgiving – Thank God for answered prayers, for the good things He has done in your life.

S – Supplication – Submit your needs to God. Pray for your family and friends, for those who are sick or sad. Pray for those who are not Christians yet. Pray for your own spiritual growth and any other needs that you may have.

 It is important that children know how they should pray, why they should pray and the elements of a prayer, but perhaps the most important thing for the child to learn is that God is his Heavenly Father, and, like a father, God watches over us and will take care of us. He wants to help us. He is waiting for us to come to him through prayer.

 As children pray, they should be encouraged to talk with God as they would a friend. The elements and the style and the words aren’t the important part. What is important is the personal love, faith, concern, praise and thanksgiving that they bring to their Heavenly Father as they talk with Him.

 How can we help our children learn to pray and have a real desire to take their needs and their joys to God? The best teaching tool here is experience! As we give the children an opportunity to pray and encourage them to pray – both in our classroom and on their own – students will become more comfortable with prayer, they will increasingly see its value and they will make it an even bigger part of their daily Christian walk.

 Here are some things you might do…

* Have children pray sentence prayers. Within a group, you might have children pray a sentence prayer on the same topic.
* Use “echo prayers.” Pray a short phrase or sentence that the child can repeat – like a responsive reading, only this is responsive praying.
* Use “finish the sentence prayers.” Have each of the children complete the sentences that you begin. For example, “Lord, forgive me for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_;” “Lord, thank you for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” or “Lord, please help \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”
* Prayer partners for children. Have children pick the name of a classmate out of a prayer partner box. When prayer time comes during class, have children pray for their partner. Encourage kids to pray for that partner during the week, too.
* Encourage kids to keep a “prayer journal” as a way of keeping track of what they have prayed for and the answers they received.
* Invite persons who have experienced answered prayer to come and talk to your class.
* Create a “class prayer calendar.” List a different need, a different student’s name or other prayer atopic on each day.
* Be spontaneous. The next time a child comes to you with a worry or concern, ask the child if the two of you can pray about it right then. It can be a short and simple prayer, but you will be teaching the child the importance of praying from the heart.
* Solicit “Prayer Buddies” for the children in your class. Invite adults to become prayer partners with one of the students in your class. Invite adults to become prayer partners with one of the students in your class and pray often for that child. The “Prayer Buddy” might also be asked to send a card or a small gift from time to time as an encouragement and to let the child know that someone is praying for them.

**CREATE A PRAYER CALENDAR**

 What are some of the things that we should be encouraging our children to be praying for? As we think about these things, create a “prayer calendar.” Create a calendar blank. On that blank write a few words to suggest something that the children might pray for on each day. For example, their parents, their Sunday school teacher, kids that they know who do not attend Sunday school, a friend or relative who might be sick, someone who has been mean to them, etc.

 By using a variety of activities, teaching methods and teaching tools, you can make your Bible lesson and the body of your weekly lesson presentation interesting, exciting and relevant to the needs of your students.

**Closing Your Lesson**

We’ve talked about ways of opening your lesson and the importance of “starting with a bang.” We’ve also talked about the body of the lesson – the main part of your Bible lesson presentation and the different methods and tools that can be used in its presentation. Now we want to turn to the closing.

 When you realize that you have only about 5 or 10 minutes left in your class time, what do you do? For far too many teachers it becomes “panic time.” They look at the clock and realize that they have only a few minutes left and then they look at their lesson outline and realize that they’ve only covered about half or less of the material that they wanted to cover. So what do they do? They panic, put it into high gear and try to cram as much of the remaining material as possible into those last few minutes.

 Is this what you should do? Certainly not! First of all, don’t worry about what you didn’t cover. If you were able to help your students learn something from what you covered – something that they can really use, something that can affect their life or their actions – then you have been wildly successful. Perhaps you had an opportunity to use a “teachable moment” and maybe you didn’t even get to your lesson. Again, if the students were interested, if they got excited, if the lesson touched their lives and helped meet your students’ needs, you did a great job. Don’t worry about what you didn’t get to. If the material was really important, pick up the lesson at that point next week. If not, move on to your plan for the following week.

 When you realize that you have only about five minutes left in your class session, stop! The first thing you should do is summarize what you have covered. You might list important facts or noted related to your aim on a blackboard. Ask questions to make sure that the kids have learned what you wanted them to learn. Ask them to paraphrase the important messages of the lesson and to put those messages into their own words. Make sure that they know what you were trying to get across to them in a way that they can verbalize and a way that is relevant to their lives and their needs.

**Active Application**

 The next thing you should do is talk to your students about applying the lesson within their lives. What would you think of a doctor who went to school for 7 or 8 years, but when he graduated, never did anything with his knowledge? He never established a practice or saw a single patient? We’d think that it was a big waste, wouldn’t we? Well, that’s what many Christians do. They have read the Bible for years. They attend church and Sunday school each week. They can quote all kinds of scriptures and are just loaded with knowledge in their head, but that’s as far as it ever gets. They never do anything with it. They never put it to use in their lives.

 One of the most important parts of every Bible lesson – no matter what age you are teaching – is the application. As you summarize the material covered in the day’s lesson, you should ask this question, “What are we going to do with this information and this lesson that we have learned?” As much as possible, involve your students in helping to answer this question and get their ideas on things that they can do with the lesson to put it into action within their day-to-day lives. Teachers should also be prepared to give specific ideas to the students about things that they can do. If the lesson is about prayer, give them a card that has prayer reminders listed for each day of the upcoming week. If the lesson was about loving others, talk about specific things that they can do to be kind and show love to their parents, their sisters and brothers, to other kids at school, etc. If you were teaching an Easter lesson and wanted to remind the kids about the importance of Jesus’ resurrection, you might give each child a small smooth stone on which you’ve written “Jesus Loves Me.” Tell the kids to carry the stone in their pocket or lay it on the stand beside their bed and every time that they pull it out of their pocket or look at it, remember that, indeed, Jesus does love them. He loves them so much that He was willing to come to earth, to live and die for them. But remember, He didn’t stay in the grave. He is alive and He continues to love them each day!

**Service Projects and Missions**

 We just talked about the application of your lessons. One of the best ways to help students apply a lesson is through service projects and missions. One of the most important lessons that kids should be learning in your Christian education class is that they are instruments of God’s love. God wants them to be His helpers, to show His love to other people – in our church, in our neighborhood, in our city, across the nation and around the world.

 Every Christian education class or program should include a missionary emphasis. It is important for children to realize that every Christian has a responsibility to reach out to others with the love and truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

 There are several kinds of mission emphases that might be considered. Most of us immediately think of foreign missions. The work of what we commonly refer to as “home missions” is also of vital interest. These might include missionaries to the American Indians, the people of rural Appalachia, intercity dwellers or ethnic and foreign settlements within our own country. Christian service organizations that work within our state or community might also be considered “home missionary” projects. And you might look even closer to home, to the needs of the needy, elderly, lonely, sick, underprivileged, and others right within your local community.

 Whatever you are thinking about doing, research the project or group well and find out how your class could best help. Is there something that the kids could do, like visiting a nursing home? Is there something that they might collect, like medical supplies for missionaries in Africa? Or, could they raise money, perhaps to give to buy a rabbit or goat for Heifer Project International?

 Get the kids involved through correspondence with the leaders of the project. Let the parents know what you are doing. Promote the project so that the entire church knows what you are doing. Invite others to contribute toward the project, but don’t let the adults overshadow the work of the children. Set a goal and then give progress reports as you work toward that goal. And, when the project is completed, celebrate your success.

**Looking Ahead To Next Week**

 The next element that you should include in your closing is to look ahead to next week’s lesson. Statistics tell us that fewer than 10% of all attendees – of all ages – come to Sunday school prepared for the week’s study in any way. Most people come to Sunday school and our other Christian education studies and have no idea what they will be studying. It’s so much easier for the teacher when the students are prepared, when they have a little idea what will be happening and when they are ready to contribute to the study in some way.

 Ideally, we would like all of our students to be prepared for each week’s study. Realistically, if we expect our kids to spend a few additional hours of their busy week on Sunday school homework, we’re fooling ourselves. Very few kids will take the time to read their student lesson books or even the background scripture during the week. But, there are some things that you might do to help get your kids a little prepared.

* You might give students an index card on which you have listed several questions related to next week’s lesson. Remind the students that you will be expecting them to have an answer ready for each question.
* All kids like to get mail – and e-mail. Early in the week send each student a card or e-mail in which you have listed several questions related to the lesson. You might also give them other suggestions for preparing for the lesson such as suggesting that they read the scripture as part of their personal devotions or that they pray for things related to the lesson.
* You might tell the kids that to start next week’s class time you will have “show and tell.” Ask the students to find an object that relates to the theme of next week’s lesson. Tell them that you will allow them to show the items at the beginning of the session and share how they see the item relating to the theme.

**What About Crafts?**

 There are certainly other things that could be included in your closing time, as your schedule or lesson plan allows. One of the things that some teachers include is craft time. But that brings up a question that many Sunday school and other Christian education teachers wrestle with: should you be using crafts as a part of your lesson?

 Earlier we talked about the 7 learning intelligences – the different ways in which children learn. Two of the styles that we mentioned were related to creative arts and physical activity. In general, crafts involve these two styles. Therefore, crafts may be very beneficial in helping certain children learn the lessons you are trying to teach. However, that very statement also raises an important question. We said “crafts may be very beneficial in helping certain children learn the lessons you are trying to teach.” The question is, are the crafts really related to “the lessons you are trying to teach?”

 Too often crafts are just “busy work.” A teacher sees that she is not going to have enough material to fill the full hour, so she decides to have the kids cut a cross out of construction paper, glue it onto a paper plate and then color the plate. It might be pretty when it’s done, but what purpose did it serve?

 Crafts must have a purpose. And when properly used, crafts can be a very effective teaching tool. There are a number of good ways to use crafts, but using them to keep kids busy or to fill time is not a valid educational purpose.

 Craft projects can be a very effective form of “active/discovery learning.” Kids can work on a project that helps them learn about the Bible or about the application of biblical truths. For example, they might create a diorama, a 3-D picture box that shows a Bible story. Or, mix 1 cup of fine sawdust with ½ cup of school glue to a doughy consistence. Let the students sculpt shapes that relate to the lesson or theme. In several days the sculptures will harden. Or, you might let the students “paint” a scene related to your lesson right on the windows of your room. Mix food coloring with shaving cream and allow the students to use their fingers or brushes to “paint” the scene right on the glass. It will stay for several weeks, if you want.

 Crafts encourage interactive learning. Allowing students to work together on a project like creating a felt banner encourages them to plan and work together toward a common goal.

 Crafts can be used as a witnessing or outreach tool. Have the students make small floral arrangements in a Christian message coffee cup, using silk flowers. Then, as a group, take the cups to a nursing home and give them to the residents.

 Remember, there is nothing wrong with crafts, but if you use them, use them well and make sure that they have a purpose that is related to teaching a lesson. Use crafts, but use them with a purpose.

**What About Puzzles, Mazes, Etc.?**

 Another questionable area for many teachers relates to the use of puzzles and mazes and fill-in-the-blank materials. What we have just said about crafts can also be applied to puzzles and mazes and the like. They must have a purpose beyond just filling time or keeping kids busy. Puzzles and fill-in-the-blank materials can be used very effectively as review resources, to find out what the kids have learned, as a sort of “test.” But when such materials are used as the primary teaching tool, they often convey the message that the Bible is a very hard-to-solve riddle and that the only way to really get to God and into His Word is through some difficult maze. Games and puzzles and similar materials can be fun, but what is our purpose? If you use something strictly for the fun of it, make sure that you say so, right up front. If you use the materials for review, that’s good, too. But again, be careful that you have a genuine purpose in mind for using puzzles and mazes and the like. Keeping kids busy and out of trouble are not valid reasons for using them.

**What About Snacks & Refreshments?**

 And there’s one other area where teachers often have questions – snacks and refreshments. Should you serve snacks during Sunday school? Should you have snacks or refreshments as a part of other Christian education programs like after-school Bible clubs and VBS? If you do have snacks, what should you serve?

 To help answer these questions, maybe we need to think about the purpose of snacks and refreshments.

* First, and most obvious, snacks provide food for the body. Sadly, many students who come to Sunday school have not had breakfast. We probably can’t serve a complete, nutritious breakfast to our students, but healthy snacks like fruit, milk and juice can help provide the energy that kids need to get their day off to a good start.
* Second, food can help students focus. One teacher reported giving preschool children lollipops before she told the Bible story.
* Third, snacks can be a good “fidget buster.” Taking a break from lesson activities to have a snack can be a good outlet and great change of pace for the kids.
* Fourth, snacks and refreshments are a great fellowship and friendship builder. One teacher of older children says he often lets the kids just sit and talk as they enjoy a snack. It helps build the social interaction and friendships between the kids.
* Fifth, food can actually be used to teach lessons. Letting students sample matzo, unleavened bread, can help them understand important elements of Bible stories like Passover. It can also be used in active/discovery learning. For example, giving half the students beautifully decorated cupcakes and the other half plain, dry graham crackers can be a great discussion starter related to equality, fairness and sharing.

 Whatever your purpose might be for using them, if you are planning to use snacks, you should first want to talk with the parents of your students. You need to know how parents feel about you serving their children between meal snacks and any foods that they might or might not appreciate you serving.

 It is also very important for you to be aware of any food allergies that your students might have. Be aware of these allergies and before you plan to serve any item, be sure to read the ingredients on the packages and be alert to products that can cause an allergic reaction, such as peanut oil, aspartame, wheat, dairy products and red dye. When serving snacks to very small children you also need to be aware of other food safety issues to avoid possible choking or other problems. For example, cut bananas into “sticks” rather than rounds. Avoid nuts and dried fruits. Serve cheese in thin slices rather than cubes. Serve water or milk. Many dentists recommend that if you serve fruit juice to smaller children, you should dilute it about half strength.

 Kids love to eat! It’s not just because they are hungry – which most kids are just about all of the time – but it’s also an important part of their social life. Every time kids get together, food is a big part of the activity. Food should not be seen as an enticement or bribe to get kids into your class, but rather as a normal part of any activity or gathering for kids.

**Activity: Let’s Think About Kids & Food**

Here are some questions for you to think about. If you are working with a group, get everyone involved in discussing each of the questions.

Should we have snacks as a part of Sunday school? Should it be done each week? Could it be done occasionally?

What snacks might be served at Sunday school?

Should we have snacks at V.B.S.?

When are snacks appropriate and when are they not?

What snacks might be served at B.B.S.?

What are examples of healthy snacks that parents might approve giving to their kids?

What are examples of unhealthy snacks that parents might frown on you giving their children?

**Discipline In The Church & Sunday School**

 Throughout the workshop we have been talking about many of the elements that go into teaching and ways to helping children to learn about Jesus Christ, the Bible and His will for their lives. There is another area that we should talk about – something that we with we didn’t have to talk about or use in our classroom – and that is discipline.

 More and more, teachers of children are seeing an increased discipline problem within the Sunday school. In the past, the worst that most teachers had to be concerned with was a student that wouldn’t share or who found it hard to sit still. But today, vandalism, profanity, theft, violence and more are making their way into the Sunday school classroom. And add to these a defiant attitude of many children who have no respect for authority and rebel against any attempt to correct their actions.

 Before we take a look at some of the things that can be done, we need to remember that the best cure for discipline problems is to prevent them. To help avoid trouble, the teacher must be totally prepared. If the teacher plans a lesson utilizing interesting teaching techniques, many discipline problems will be avoided. Students should also be given an opportunity to stand, stretch, etc. during the class period.

 God is love and the teacher must communicate that love to all students. But, at the same time, we must remember that the Bible upholds what is right, and therefore, wrong behavior cannot be allowed to continue.

 The primary element in securing good behavior is to work with the parents. Since the Sunday school worker cannot touch the student in discipline, and other negative means of discipline may be misunderstood, the teacher must work in harmony with the home. The mother and father have the right and obligation to discipline their child. But remember, the home should be involved in the total education process, not just when discipline is needed. At the same time, we must remember that Sunday school should be a place of love and acceptance; therefore, negative discipline must be approached with care.

 Remember, too, many children do not know what is considered proper behavior for the church. Remove some of the problems by giving instructions carefully. Don’t forget to praise good behavior. Sit among pupils. Separate friends and buddies who have a way of getting into trouble. And make sure that you have adequate help with your class at all times.

 But what if all these efforts fail? What can a teacher do if there is still that one student who insists on disrupting the class? Should the teaching of the majority of the class be sacrificed to one disruptive student?

 There are times when the teacher will have no alternative other than removing a belligerent student from the class. Put the student in the secretary’s office or sit him in the hall. In doing so, he loses his platform to perform for the kids. While he is there, you can also counsel him individually. First, let him sit quietly and wait. This gives him a chance to think. When talking with the pupil, appeal to proper motives and place responsibility back on the pupil to reenter the class and practice good behavior.

 The teacher’s attitude toward behavior is important and will do much to set the tone for learning within the classroom. As much as possible, use positive attitudes to create a classroom atmosphere where good behavior is seen as the ideal and a goal for all students at all times.

**Other Notes About Discipline**

 Remember, the focus of discipline is to create an environment for the child to own his behavior and look down the road at the consequences of his behavior. It is important to remember that the word discipline comes from the same root as disciple and that there is a big difference between discipline and punishment.

***“Discipline vs. Punishment”***

Discipline is

* Positive
* Shapes the child’s future decisions
* Encourages personal decisions
* Seeks natural consequences for behavior
* Encourages appropriate behavior
* Involves love, concern, disappointment
* Child feels adult’s concern

Punishment is

* Negative
* Punishes the child’s past behavior
* Based on expectations of the adults in charge
* Seeks an arbitrary negative reinforcement for behavior
* Discourages inappropriate behavior
* Tension, frustration
* Revenge

 It is also important to remember that one of the best forms of class control is prevention. When children are really interested in learning, when they are involved, when they are excited, when they are having fun, when they are motivated toward self-control, discipline is usually not necessary. Effective discipline puts the emphasis on affirmation and prevention, not on harsh rules and stiff penalties. The question that every teacher should ask is, “What can the child learn from this situation?” rather than “How can I punish him for what he did?”

**Classroom Safety**

 There is another area that we wish we didn’t have to say much about, but, unfortunately, it is something that every Christian education teacher and leader and parents must be very concerned about, and that is classroom safety.

 Every time you begin to talk about this whole area, you can usually see several people who roll their eyes and say to themselves, “Is this really important? Do we have to listen to this again?” Yes, it is important. Why? Because – like it or not – it happens. Several years ago there was an incident in a small rural church in Pennsylvania where a children’s choir director was accused of sexual misconduct around one of the children. This was a person that everyone in the small church thought they knew. Everyone really liked him. But the whole incident could have been avoided if the church had followed several very basic and simple safety procedures by running background checks on all volunteers and by making sure that there were at least two adults with children at all times.

 Church leaders should develop an effective plan for safety in the classroom, including getting and checking references – including police records – for all volunteers, establishing policies and developing written standards. But it is also important for Sunday school and other Christian education teachers to be aware of their responsibilities and liabilities, too.

 Don’t put yourself in a situation where you might be accused of any type of misconduct – intentional or unintentional. Limit your physical contact with children. Have your activities in an open area or room, not in a private office. Make sure that you have adult helpers with you at all times in the classroom, on field trips and related activities. Where would you find a fire extinguisher or a first aid kit? If you are not trained in first aid, make sure that you know someone close by who is. Know what you would do in the event of a fire or other emergency. How would you notify parents if their child became ill or injured in the classroom? What would you do if someone unknown or uninvited tried to enter your classroom? Remember, the best defense against problems in this area is to be well informed, well prepared and always thinking about putting the safety of your students first.

**YOUR APPROACH TO TEACHING IN THE CHURCH**

**The Importance of Love**

 Earlier we talked about how love is one of the most important qualities that persons should have to be a Christian education teacher. Persons can learn the methods and how to use the tools, but learning to love is much more difficult. Why is love important? Because if you really love your students you will care about them and be concerned about what they learn and how they use that information in their lives. If you are really concerned about your students, you will have a desire to learn more yourself. You will want to be a better teacher. You will want to use the methods and tools that are most effective and helpful to your students. And, you will have a genuine desire to see your students grow in their faith and in their love for Jesus Christ.

 Having love for your students is important, but it is also important to show your students that you love them and care for them. Teaching involves a lot of words, but we must remember that our actions also convey a big part of our lesson. Here are some other ideas…

* Praise each child’s strengths. Concentrate on acts of kindness, helpfulness, cheerful attitude, etc., not on their appearance.
* Find out the interests and abilities of each child and provide opportunities for each to demonstrate their specialty.
* Give equal treatment to all children. Find reasons to praise and encourage everyone.

 You also show your love for your students through your commitment to your job as a Sunday school teacher and to the preparation that you make. Before each lesson, prepare yourself…

* Your mind (give the children and your work of preparation your undivided attention).
* Your body (relax, be comfortable and eat breakfast).
* Your spirit (spend time in prayer and Bible reading).
* And also prepare your classroom – have the room arranged before the start of the class session (have tables and chairs in place, have supplies organized and make sure the room is clean, comfortable and well-ventilated); check the décor (decorate the room so that it is both bright and appealing as well as soft enough to be calming).

 You also show your love and concern for your students by having a genuine desire to see them learn. Good teachers motivate their students through…

* Curiosity. Kids love anything with mystery or suspense.
* Fun. Integrate humor and funny surprises into your teaching activities.
* Significance. Kids love to feel important.
* Love. Love invites children to respond.
* Acceptance. Make sure you accept all students for who they are. Treat children like real people.
* Need. Children need to know how to get along with others and how to do better in school. Show them that the Bible has all the answers.
* Reward. Candy and prizes are okay, but thanks, praise and special events are the best reward for a job well done.

 Before we close, we want to use (another/an) acrostic, this time using the word “teach.” As we come to the end of our workshop on teaching children in the church, I want to use this word – “teach” – to briefly remind you of what you should really be about as you think of ways to be a better teacher and to be more effective in your work for Jesus Christ.

“T” – Timely. Christian education should be relevant. It’s vital that you learn about children’s everyday experiences to understand their lives and to know what they need from you. Your teaching strategies must change to meet the needs of the changing child. Scripture shows us how. Throughout Scripture, God calls himself “I Am.” Not “I Was” or “I Will Be.” God touches humanity and interacts with us in the here and now.

“E” – Experiential. People build their lives on experience. Our teaching should help children discover for themselves the truths of Scripture through positive personal experience. Our teaching plans should include as many hands-on experiential opportunities as possible. Think about what you can do to make a lesson come alive. What can you do to let your students touch, see, hear, smell or taste the lesson: And remember, be sure to debrief, showing kids how biblical truth relates to the experiences and to the kids’ lives.

“A” – Adaptable. Flexibility is a must for every good Christian education teacher. Lesson plans are important, but it’s okay to change your plans to fit the needs of your class. Be prepared for the unexpected. Remember, your goal is for children to learn about God. The goal isn’t for you to get all the way through the lesson. Take hold of those “teachable moments.” Have backup plans for times when kids aren’t doing well with an activity.

“C” – Creative. Everyone can learn to be more creative. Work to plan your lessons with a creative person. Creativity comes with practice. When mistakes happen, learn from them. Don’t stop being creative. Also, learn to use the creativity and talents of other people within your congregation.

“H” – Heroic. We should continuously inspire children to become heroes who are more than conquerors. People tend to live out the expectations others place on them. If we expect children to act up or to disobey, they will. But, what if we expect them to become strong, faithful, courageous believers? They’ll likely become what we expect them to become.

**Where Do We Go From Here?**

 Being a Sunday school or other Christian education teacher is one of the most important jobs that we can do. In “The Great Commission” (Matthew 28: 19 & 20), Jesus gives us these instructions: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

 These two verses contain some very important instructions for every church as it plans its Christian education programs and for every Christian education teacher and leader. There are four distinct things that Jesus tells us to do. First, we are to “go.” Get out of the church and go to the children. Take our programs to them and invite them to come to us. Second, we are to “make disciples.” To be a disciple is to be like Jesus. All of our Christian education programs should help people to learn more about Jesus and the Bible, and to help them become more like Him. Third, we are to “baptize” or immerse people in God’s Word and in the Spirit. And fourth, we are to “teach.” Only as people learn about God, His Word and His will for their lives will they really be equipped to live their lives for Him. It’s important for us to see as many people as possible come to know Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior, but that is just the start of their journey. Through the Christian education programs of our church, we can help people to learn how to live each day for Him and do the things that He would have them do.

 There is one final part to these words of Jesus – the second half of verse 20. There Jesus says, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Sunday school and other Christian education teachers often wonder if they are really doing any good. Are we really making a difference? None of us should be in the business of teaching Sunday school or any other Christian education class for the honor or the glory or any other rewards. We do it because of all that Jesus Christ did for us. He was willing to leave heaven and come to this earth where he lived and died as one of us. But he didn’t stay in the grave. And that is the “Good News” that every Christian educator should want to share. Because Jesus rose from the dead, each of us can also have the hope of eternal life. When we feel that no one cares, remember, we are doing this for Jesus. And even though many people might not appreciate what we are doing, Jesus does! As he said in his final words here on earth, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

**TEACHER SELF-EVALUATION**

 Please answer the following questions about your Christian education teaching efforts. This questionnaire is intended to help you evaluate yourself and how you are doing as a teacher. As you participate in the “Basics of Teaching Children in The Church” workshop, hopefully this information will help direct you toward both your strengths and weaknesses. The results of this survey are for your personal information and self-evaluation.

1. Are you in the classroom each week before any of the students arrive? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you greet each child warmly as they arrive?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you encourage children to get to know each other? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you contact children outside of the class? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you know all of your students’ names? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you know your students’ likes, dislikes and special needs? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you give children the time and opportunity to meet with one another before and after class? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you encourage children to work in groups? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you work to model healthy relationships between children and other adults? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. Do you pray regularly for each of the students in your class? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
11. Do you make an effort to actively involve each of the students in your class? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
12. Do you provide hands-on learning opportunities? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
13. Do you make learning fun for your students? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
14. Do you provide hands-on learning opportunities outside the classroom? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
15. Do you display sensitivity to the multiple intelligences represented in your class? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
16. Do you make learning enjoyable for kids? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
17. Do you encourage kids to make connections between the lesson and their daily lives? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
18. Do you use personal experiences as examples of ways to apply God’s Word? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
19. Do you help children understand why they need to live by God’s Word? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
20. Do you give your students several practical ideas for things that they can do to apply the lesson in their lives? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
21. Do you create practical – rather than philosophical – lessons? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
22. Do you provide weekly accountability by checking to see how kids have applied what they’ve learned? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
23. Do you make an effort to keep parents informed about what you are studying in your class? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
24. Do you make an effort to involve parents in your class? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
25. Do you regularly give your students an opportunity to accept Jesus Christ? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
26. Do you encourage children to ask questions during your lesson? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
27. Do you make the classroom a fun place to be? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
28. Do you give children choices in lesson topics or activities? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
29. Are you aware of the specific problems and concerns that your students face in their day-to-day lives? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
30. Do you teach lessons with adequate pacing between active and quieter activities? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
31. Do you understand what children are able to do at their age level? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
32. Do you understand how kids of different ages learn best? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
33. Do you vary the learning activities from week to week to interest all kids? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
34. Do you make a conscious effort to reduce your “teacher-talk” and increase student participation? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 **“Monthly Prayer Calendar” for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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