

Sharing Jesus with children

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It's exciting to share Jesus with children! When you do they often respond to Him in a natural, loving way. Jesus says: "*Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not. For of such is the Kingdom of God.*" Matthew 19:14.

In this seminar we will look at many different ways of sharing Jesus with children. Our goal is that each child will come to know Jesus in a personal way, and will live for Him always.

We are seeking to "*train up our children in the ways of the Lord*" so that when they grow older they "*will not depart from them.*"
Proverbs 22:6



Introduction

Children's work may be exciting, but it's not always easy!

Here are a few of the "secrets" for sharing Jesus with children. Put them into practice and your ministry will be much more effective:

- Be prepared.
- Be pre-prayered.
- Maintain a fast pace.
- Be personally interested in each child.
- Present Jesus as the children's best friend
- Make sure each child knows exactly what to do at all times.
- Be simple.
- Be down at the children's level.
- Be happy and smile a lot.
- Have lots of variety.
- Keep each child occupied at all times.
- Love each child as Jesus loves them.

1. Songleading

"Come into his presence with singing" Psalms 100:2

Children love to sing. With a little help and encouragement from you they will "*make a joyful noise unto the Lord*".

Here are a few simple guidelines for leading children's singing:

1. Enjoy the song yourself. If you enjoy it the children will too.
2. Use songs they can understand and which are at their level.
3. Have plenty of variety in the songs eg: fast/slow, Scriptures, action songs, fun songs.
4. Encourage the children to participate eg: clap hands, do the actions, boys against girls
5. Have the words of the song clearly presented eg on overheads, flash cards, flip sheets
6. Give a starting note, then "One...two..."
7. Be confident and sing loudly to give a strong lead.



To discuss *Are you teaching your children to sing songs or to worship the Lord?*

Do you need to introduce some new songs? What sort of songs?

Assignment *Try to find one new song that would be 'just right' for your children. Bring it along next time, preferably with words, music and accompaniment. Be prepared to teach it to the group.*

2. Memory verses

"I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You". Psalm 119:11

It is very good for children to learn portions of God's Word (and adults too!). Every time you help your children learn a Bible verse you are planting a seed in their lives which God can use in the future.

1. Have regular memory verses.
2. Use a variety of ways of teaching the verses. Here are some methods you can try:

Jumbled letters

oD ton eb diafar : I liwl pleh uoy Iiaahs 41:13

Numbers for letters of the alphabet

7 15 4 9 19 12 15 22 5 a 10 15 8 14 d:z

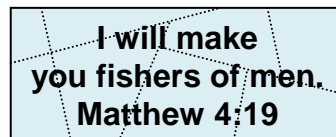
Put each word on a card and jumble them up. The children must put them in order.



Fill in the missing letters

_ll ha__ _i ne_ _n_ f__l sh__t o_ t__ g_or_
o_ G__ R_ma__ 3:23

Jigsaws



Replace words with pictures and puzzles.

Tape the verse using different voices. Guess the voices.

Groups repeat the verse out loud.

Sing the verse.

Paint over clear crayon.



3. While you are teaching the verse drum it in with lots of repetition.
4. Always get the children to learn where the verse is found in the Bible. It is the verse's "address".
5. Apply the verse to the children's lives. They must understand the verse and see why it is important for them to learn it.
6. Review the verse regularly, especially the following week. Prizes and competitions will motivate the children to go over the verse again so they are sure to remember it.

To discuss

- Why is it so important for children to memorise Bible verses?
- Are you having enough memory verses in your children's work?

Assignment

- Choose one method of teaching a memory verse. Use it to teach a verse to your own children or family. Bring it along next time and be prepared to teach it to the group.

3. Telling a story

Let me tell you what God has done. Psalm 66:16.

Stories are always a major part of ministry to children. Jesus told many stories, and so can you!

You can use stories for:

- guiding thinking
- presenting the truth in action
- establishing happy relationships
- giving information
- moulding character
- broadening the children's experiences
- teaching
- etc.

Selecting a story.

Use experiences, vocabulary, ideas and characters that are meaningful to the children. Each story should meet the needs of the majority and should present the highest standards of life and behaviour.

Presenting a story.

- Know and enjoy the story yourself.
- Study, analyse, and outline the plot so you are totally familiar with it.
- Decide how to visualise the story. You could use: flash cards, pictures, flannelgraph, relevant objects, puppets, drama.....
- Tell the story. Don't read it: make it your own.
- Tell it simply, directly, dramatically using familiar words. The children should see the characters in action through your speech and actions. Act the part.
- Interpret spiritual truths and make applications as you go, rather than tacking them on the end.
- The characters should have moral strengths for the children to emulate eg: honesty, love, obedience, kindness. They can also be funny.
- The plot must have a sense of unity and be such that the children can see it happening. It should be full of action and pace, with lots of interest, suspense, conflict and drama. It should make one major point that the children can identify with. (If there are too many lessons or points the children can't absorb them.)
- The story should be doctrinally sound and emphasise positive values rather than negative ones.



Parts of a story.

1. **Introduction:** This provides the setting, introduces the characters and arouses the children's interest.
2. **Body:** This is a succession of events with action in close sequence. There will be lots of human interest with drama, pace and possibly some suspense.
3. **Climax:** This is the high point of the story: what everyone was looking forward to. It is a moment of discovery, where a secret is revealed or something exciting takes place. It should be simple, sincere and natural. This is the time when the children are most receptive to spiritual truth, so incorporate the lesson as part of the climax.
4. **Conclusion:** This should be brief, concise and direct. It disposes of the characters and should leave the children happy and positive with the main lesson reinforced in their minds.

Analysis of a story.

Listen to a Bible story and then analyse it together:

What positive characteristics did the character give you to emulate?

How many times was spiritual truth included in the story?

List any words or concepts that you think were too advanced for a nine year old.

What was the climax of the story?

Did you (as an adult) enjoy the story?

How could this story be visualised?



To discuss *What signs in the children tell you they are really listening?
Why is it so important to incorporate spiritual truth within a story, not just tacked on the end?*

Assignment: Prepare (and if possible tell) one of the following stories:

<i>Daniel 6</i>	Daniel in the lions den
<i>2 Kings 5</i>	Naaman's leprosy
<i>Judges 6-8</i>	Gideon and the Midianites
<i>Judges 13-16</i>	Mighty Samson
<i>1 Samuel 17</i>	David and Goliath
<i>Matthew 8</i>	Jesus and the soldier's daughter
<i>Mark 16</i>	Jesus rises from the dead
<i>Acts 9</i>	Saul meets Jesus

4. Preparing and presenting a lesson

Teach them to your children and their children after them. Deuteronomy 4:9.

In each lesson you seek to teach just one major truth or idea that the children can apply to their lives. This is *education* so it should fit into a total, balanced programme. If you use one of the many curricula available you can be sure that you are presenting all aspects of the Christian life in a balanced way.

Here are some important areas to consider as you prepare a lesson:

1. Visuals

Don't just talk! Always have something for the children to see or do which reinforces each point. eg. stories, quizzes, songs, plays, object lessons, figures, cartoons, flannelgraph, video, outlines on the desk, floor or board.....

2. Variety

Try different techniques. Use different visual aids and orders of doing things. The lesson should never be predictable. Break it up into small, interesting chunks eg. talk, do, talk, do..... As part of your variety you could include:

- Music
- Games
- Art
- Drama
- Watching
- Talking
- Listening
- Writing
- Drawing
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3. Questioning

This is the main way you teach so questioning should be continual and repetitive. Make sure you involve each child in answering questions so they are all listening and thinking through the answers.

Questions can be used for:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • gaining attention | • making the children think |
| • suggesting possibilities | • checking understanding or memory |
| • reinforcing learning | • checking understanding or memory |



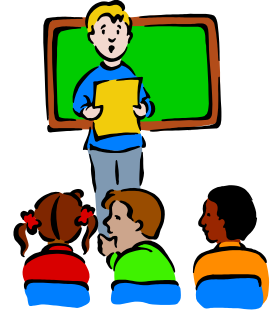
Your questions can be at three different levels:

<i>Facts:</i>	eg. "What did Jesus want His disciples to do?"
<i>Concepts:</i>	eg. "Why did Jesus ask them to do that?"
<i>Values:</i>	eg. "What would you have done?"

"How" and "why" questions are more challenging than "who", "which", "where", and "when" questions.

Here are a few don'ts about questioning:

- Don't - ask questions where you don't expect an answer
- allow chorus answers
- allow one child to answer all the questions
- humiliate children if they get an answer wrong
- have yes/no answers. Re-word the questions so that the children have to think.



Exercise: *Read John 14:1-3. What are some questions you could ask from this passage?*

4. Voice

Make sure your speaking voice is interesting eg. by varying your pace and timing. Speak slowly and firmly to emphasise important parts. Get exciting in the exciting parts!

5. Simple

Make sure you are at the children's level in all ways: in speech, concepts, interests, and even in the physical way you arrange your class.

6. Recapitulate

Drum in the major points so the children can't miss them!

Preparing a lesson

1. Commit your preparation and the presentation of your lesson to the Lord. Also pray for each one of the children.
2. If you are using prepared lesson materials read the teacher's guide carefully so you know exactly what you want the children to learn.
3. Choose suitable activities to reinforce the lesson and its key messages.
4. Gather all the materials you will require and arrange them in order of use.
5. Go through the teacher's guide again, highlighting everything you are going to do and say during the lesson. Check that one part will flow naturally into the next.
6. Practice using any visual aids if you are not familiar with them.
7. Check your timing. Will you be able to get everything done in the time available? Will everything flow along at a fast pace?
8. After the lesson evaluate how it went. Is there any way you could improve? Did your children understand what was taught them? Did you show them how it could become part of their lives? Did they learn?

To discuss

- *Are you happy with the teaching material you are using?*
- *Is your teaching programme balanced?*
- *Is your teaching bearing fruit in the children's lives?*

Assignment

In your lesson this week try at least one activity you haven't tried before. Also check on your questioning. Practise using questions at each of the three levels.

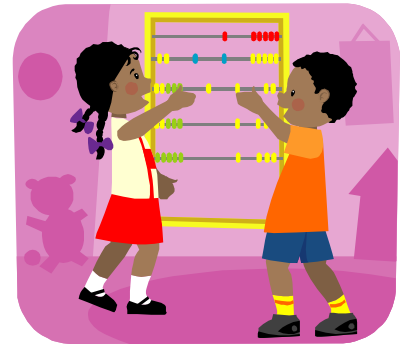


5. Discipline

"He who heeds discipline shows the way to life". Proverbs 10; 17

If your children behave properly and pay attention they will be open towards learning from the Word of God. When discipline is bad it is very difficult to teach anyone anything! If you allow your children to run riot you are teaching them that this kind of behaviour is acceptable in the Kingdom of God.

What's needed is a positive learning environment. While you are speaking the children are listening attentively, but at other times they feel free to ask questions, make comments, and share whatever is on their hearts. There is a general buzz of involvement and activity. There isn't the tension that comes from enforced silence.



Here are some ways to achieve this kind of positive learning environment:

1. Pray for your children.
2. Let them see that the Lord Jesus really means something to you, and that you really want them to learn of Him. They will learn from you if they respect you.
3. Show a special concern for and an interest in each child as an individual. They must each feel that you care for them personally.
4. Be well prepared. Make sure your lesson has plenty of variety, interest and pace. The children will be so involved they won't have time to cause any trouble!
5. Expect the children to be good. Be very clear in your instructions and show by your attitude and tone of voice that you expect instructions to be carried out immediately.
6. Don't allow children to talk while you are talking or try to talk them down. Wait for silence while looking at anyone who is talking.
7. Involve each child in every activity. They should always have something to do and know exactly what is expected of them. Keep on looking around so you maintain eye contact with everyone.
8. Get the children's attention only when you need it. At other times give them freedom so they can enjoy their time together.
9. Let the children see that each one must contribute for the whole group to go well. Give them lots of praise and encouragement when they do. If possible give each child a special task that helps all the others.

Ideally you should have no discipline problems because all your children are involved at an appropriate level, have lots to do, are enjoying themselves and are learning to live life Jesus' way.

To discuss *What should you do if one child is disrupting all the others?
Which of the points above do you consider is the most important?*

Assignment *Evaluate the discipline in your group next time you meet. Do you have a positive learning environment? How can you improve it? Are your children learning? Are they becoming more like Jesus in their behaviour and attitudes? Are you providing them with a good role model?*



6. Leading a child to Christ

Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these. Matthew 19:14

Children respond to love trustingly. Matthew 18: 2-5 (This is how we should all come to God, but most adults tend to come critically rather than with a free giving of themselves.)

Childhood is a time of obedience, not of major decision-making. In children's evangelism, therefore, our goal should be to present Jesus as the loving Saviour and Friend. We don't need to push, urge or force the children to make a decision. When Jesus wants a child to come *He* calls and the child comes. The child's decision is a natural response to the love of God. We are to make *disciples*, not *decisions*! Matthew 28:19,20



Here are some guidelines for how to present the gospel to children and for how we should seek to lead them to the Lord:

1. Children should come to you, rather than you go to them in seeking a decision.
2. The message you share should be balanced. It should present all aspects of the Christian life, not just the need to accept the Lord.
3. If a child comes to you find out exactly what they have come for. Use two-sided questions so their will is not forced. eg. *"Would you like to pray now or would you like to go away and think about it?"*
4. Put the responsibility back onto them. eg. *"If you want to accept Jesus come and see me when I am on my own sometime, and I'll help you."*
5. If you are sure the child wants to accept Jesus, and is doing it freely from their heart, explain the way of salvation to them, simply and carefully. It is helpful to use a simple tract as you do this. (See your Christian bookstore for examples).
6. Check that the child still wants to accept Jesus. If so, lead them in prayer, a phrase at a time, out loud.
7. Afterwards check to see if they understand what they have done. eg. *"Did you ask Jesus to come in?" "Is Jesus now your Saviour?" "What has happened to your sins?"*
8. Explain that they have been born (like babies) into God's family. Now they need to grow so they will get to know Jesus better. Show them how to pray (talk with God), and read their Bible (so God can speak to them).
9. Organise some Bible reading notes for them. eg. *Scripture Union* or *Every day with Jesus*.
10. Record their name and address for follow-up.
11. Ask them to tell some named Christian what they have done. Romans 10:9,10



Follow-up

Your goal is for each child to have a meaningful relationship with Jesus and to stay true to Him all through their lives. Here are some ways you can help them get established in their new life in Christ:

Personally encourage them by letter, phone, text, facebook, email etc.

Find out which church they want to attend and let the church know. If possible take them along yourself and introduce them to other Christian children and to the leaders of the children's work. Possibly take them through a Bible Correspondence course. See your Christian bookstore or look on-line for examples.

Encourage them to have a daily quiet time with Jesus. Show them how to do this. Give them any materials they may need. Pray for them!

To discuss *Are you presenting a full, balanced gospel to your children?
Are decisions to accept Christ made under coercion?
Are many children accepting Jesus as their Saviour? Why? Why not?
How can you help your children get established in a regular quiet time with Jesus?*

Assignment *Gather together suitable materials so you are always prepared to be able to lead a child to Christ.
Practice so you are confident in using this material.*

7. Family devotions

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your heart. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.
Deuteronomy 6:6,7.

A short, regular time of family devotions can be a great blessing in a family.

- It gives parents an opportunity to teach children about the Christian life in a warm, supportive and non-threatening way.
- It helps give the family greater strength and unity.
- It provides a forum for learning, discussion and sorting out of important things eg: problems, needs, future events, areas of service.
- It helps prevent a buildup up of tension. Praying together, and reading of God 's Word always bring many positive benefits.
- It helps build and reinforce a sense of belonging within the family. This can be a major part of the heritage which parents pass on to their children.



“The family that prays together stays together”. This may or may not be true depending on how the prayer time takes place. It can sometimes cause conflict, especially when children are forced to be involved against their will.

Here are some guidelines-for having family devotions:

1. Choose a suitable time and place when the family can all be together, without pressure of time or other events eg: after a meal , at the children's bedtime.
2. Be brief. It should be a loving, natural and pleasant time; not antagonising wait till it finishes.
3. Have all family members involved (if they are willing).
4. Have a variety of activities. Some possibilities are: Bible reading, reading from a devotional book (there are many available from Christian book stores), stories, prayer, testimony, singing, crafts, drama, planning and preparing for helping others, games, sharing of daily happenings, etc.
5. Be flexible. Change if the time or style isn't meeting everyone's needs. Don't allow the time to become boring.
6. Be systematic. Have some ongoing learning activity so you are teaching your children Christian principles in a balanced, systematic way.
7. Don't become religious about it. There's no law which says "thou shalt have family devotions" or "they should be done in such and such a way".
8. You may like to set apart one night each week as a "family night". This can be a fun night with lots of varied activities: crafts, outings, games, visits, puppet shows, "mysteries", baking, movies etc. It will soon become the highlight of the week with everyone involved and enjoying themselves. If family devotions are a natural part of this time you will be telling your children that their spiritual lives are just as important and just as much fun as all other areas. A family night can also be a great opportunity for parents to give their children a systematic Christian education, Buy some Sunday School material and use it regularly every week.

To discuss What are some reasons why family devotions start and then gradually peter out?

Who has the primary responsibility for the Christian education of children? Their parents, school , church? What are the implications of this?

Assignment Talk about family devotions with the rest of your family. Do you need to begin, or adjust family devotions or maybe have a family night? Are you really bringing up your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord? Ephesians 6:4.