



Reaching Children with the Gospel
Lessons 3 & 4: Why Reaching Children is so Important

Jesus is our example

Jesus is our example in every area of life including the way He taught.

When Jesus taught people he used stories, illustrations, and object lessons.

These are some of the most effective tools we can use when we teach the Word of God, especially to children.

We need to change our adult thinking to effectively minister to children.

Jesus used things like mountains, salt, Fig trees, shepherds, farmers, seeds, and fruit.

God created people with 5 learning gates

1. Our eyes
2. Our nose
3. Our ears
4. Our mouth
5. Our hands

The more learning gates we use when we teach the better people learn, and the more they will remember especially when it comes to teaching children.

The average person remembers only 6% of what they hear but they will remember 60% of what they see.

Children have a hard time understanding abstract or spiritual principles.

Our job in teaching children is to help them make a connection between things that are physical and real and truths that are spiritual.

The Importance of Teaching Children the Word of God

The Bible is clear that we need to teach our children the Word of God

Deuteronomy 6:5-9

VERSE 6

NLT- Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up.

MSG- and then get them inside your children. Talk about them wherever you are, sitting at home or walking in the street; talk about them from the time you get up in the morning to when you fall into bed at night.

Deuteronomy 4:9

MSG - Just make sure you stay alert. Keep close watch over yourselves. Don't forget anything of what you've seen. Don't let your heart wander off. Stay vigilant as long as you live. Teach what you've seen and heard to your children and grandchildren.

Psalm 78:4

NLT-We will not hide these truths from our children; we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the LORD, about his power and his mighty wonders.

MSG-We're not keeping this to ourselves, we're passing it along to the next generation—GOD's fame and fortune, the marvelous things he has done.

Jewish Culture

In early Jewish culture - they imprinted the Word of God on their children.

Individuals did not own scrolls or copies of the Law so a high priority was placed on memorization of the scriptures.

The Jewish people wanted to make sure their history and beliefs were never forgotten. There were so many times the Jewish people found themselves in captivity. This was another good reason to place a high priority on the memorization of scripture.

When their children were 3 years old they would teach them Hebrew letters.

To effectively teach them Hebrew letters, they would put honey on them and allow the children to lick the honey off.

The important lesson they would teach their children from this was that the Word of God is sweet and precious

Psalm 119:103 - How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth

Between the ages of 6 -10, Jewish children would go to the synagogues to study with the Rabi. Their goal at this age was to memorize the first five books of the Old Testament – word for word (also known as the Torah)

Between the ages of 11-13, Jewish children would continue going to the synagogues to study. Their goal during these years would be to memorize the rest of the Old Testament from Joshua to Malachi.

They would graduate from this level and have their Bat mitzvah/Bar mitzvah. They would become a daughter/son of the law.

Notice that the main job of the Rabbi was to impart God's Word into the next generation.

We need to do the same thing when we teach children.

The Rabbi had specific methods to help the children remember God's Word. One thing they used a lot of was music.

Making the Bible Come Alive

We have all sat through sermons and at the end said, "That was boring."

The Bible is the most exciting and most important book in the universe

We need to learn how to make it come alive

There are some things we need to think about when we teach

1. What am I going to teach?
2. How am I going to teach it?
3. Who is my audience?

Consider your audience and then ask yourself: How can I teach this in a way that my audience is going to connect with what I am teaching? How can I make this come alive to my audience?

The problem is how a lot of people choose to serve/present God's Word - especially to children.

We need to serve the Word of God to children in such a way the audience we are teaching connects with what we are teaching and so they walk out remembering what they learned.

Important Things to Consider

1. Message preparation

The key word here is PREPARATION. Be prepared.

The average pastor spends 11 hours and 30 minutes on sermon preparation each week.

When a good pastor gets up to preach on Sunday morning

- He has studied to Word
- He has listened to other preachers
- He has researched his topic
- He has prayed
- He has organized his notes

Many children's ministry workers admit they spend less than one hour preparing to teach the children.

Why should your preparation be any different or less than the pastor preaching to the adults?

There are 168 hours in a week, and you (as a children's worker) get 1 hour each week with children to teach them about the things of God and the world gets the remaining 167 hours.

Practical points:

- Keep it appropriate
- Keep it simple
- Keep it Interesting

2. A child's attention span

It is approximately 1 minute for every year

Just because their attention span is short does not mean they cannot be engaged for a long time.

Every moment of your time with the children should have a purpose

Your goal is not to fill time. Your goal is not to babysit. Your goal is not to entertain children.

Your goal is to make sure the children walk away with God's Word in their heart and ready to serve Him.

3. Make learning about the Bible and Jesus the most fun part of children's ministry

Games are fun. Games are good. They serve a purpose.

But don't let the children get in the mindset that game time is fun and Bible time is boring.

Use games and contests to reinforce God's Word.

Make learning God's Word the most exciting part of your time together

4. Lecture style lessons are the least effective way to teach children.

The most effective way to teach a lesson is to make the children a part of the lesson.

Audience participation

Repetition throughout your entire lesson is important

Have them act out the story/verse

Give them lines to say or actions to do/sound effects to make

Let the children figure out a part of the story

You could tell the whole story except the end and see who can end the story correctly

Use humor

Funny Costumes

Wigs

Signs

Dress up clothes (Jacob and Leah - the ugly bride)

Toilet paper (lepers)

Every time they hear a word have them do something

Review the story with questions

Use hand motions to teach and different voices to teach

Draw the children in so they learn and receive from what you are teaching

5. Be Good at Story Telling

This takes practice

Stories are very important in the life of a child.
We can use stories to teach spiritual concepts and definitions and important theological thinking.

Jesus did this with the parables.

Stories = definitions to children

Stories can be very powerful and effective.

Stories can be told with virtually no props and no budget.

Keys to Good Storytelling

A. Have no pride – Be willing to do whatever it takes to get the point across. Don't care at all what people think of you.

B. Become the story

- Get into the story with all you've got
- Give all your emotions
- Give your entire body to telling the story
- Act like you were there
- Act like it is the most important event on Earth
- Use all your senses
- Bring your story to life

C. Look into the eyes of your audience.

- If you ignore your audience, you will be disconnected from them
- Don't be concerned with notes

D. Use Props

- Could be something you wear to define a character
- Could be an object from the story?

E. Expressions are necessary

- Sad – cry
- Angry – scream
- Happy – laugh

- Exaggerate your emotions
- Use the children to act out certain expressions

F. Gestures

Exaggerate

Huge – run from one end of the stage to the other

Far away- hand over eyes

Tiny – use fingers to demonstrate

6. Be fast paced

Children's Ministry needs to be fast paced

If you do your job correctly, you should be tired at the end of a class

No dead air

Change activities every 5 minutes or so

Be loud with them

Be super energetic

Be excited all the time

7. Use control tools

Children need guidelines

Children need consistency

Children need structure.

There is security in consistency, structure and guidelines

Rules

Some people underestimate the rules importance

Rules are important to keep order and control.

Keep your rules simple and fun too.

Keep your rules consistent

Concentrate on rewarding good behavior.

This teaches children that good habits produce good fruit

Workers should all know the rules and being working alongside of you to keep them

Behavior Awards

Have refocusing tools

You should have techniques you use tot the children quiet without having to say “be Quiet” “stop talking” “listen”

1. Call - outs “who is number one in your life? “Jesus”
2. Repeating Bible verse in different voices
3. Follow the leader
4. Stand up when you hear a word
5. Competitions- songs, cheers
6. Speed - go faster or slow down with your words or your actions
7. Volume - be louder or softer
8. Use volunteers
9. Use objects

You should be able to bring the class from loud to quiet and ready to learn and receive. Without saying “be quiet. Sit down. Attention everyone”

Then you need to be ready to give them the point you want them to hear -don’t waste your time at that moment.

8. Discipline

Misconception: We do not discipline children because if they get in trouble they won’t want to come back

Children need discipline

Children need to understand there are rules and if they cannot keep the rules they will not be allowed to participate.

How you enforce the rules has to be consistent, done in love and positive.

It is an opportunity to teach them and show them love and forgiveness.

NO EMPTY THREATS - What you say you have to do

Discipline pointers:

- When you talk to kids especially in a discipline situation - get to their level
- Be calm
- Give choices so they are a part of the decision making.
- Always Follow through with what you say

Understand is the difference between immaturity and defiance. Learn how to recognize the difference.

9. Games and Ice Breakers

One of our main goals should always be to have fun with the children for the entire lesson.

Children can learn a lot through fun.

- it can bring out personalities
- it makes children have good feelings about church and God
- it is “bait” to win children to Jesus (Jesus said we were fishers of men. What do going fisherman use to catch fish-bait)
- provides a safe environment for children to share what is in their heart
- teaches other important life skills that especially underprivileged children don’t get – co-operation, team spirit, teamwork, following instructions, good sportsmanship, honest etc.. . .
- Makes learning something memorable

Another thing to consider is that you don’t know what is going on in the life of the kids in your class. They may need fun. They may need to be a kid.

Icebreakers and Attention Getters

These are especially good when you walk in front of a brand-new group of kids. They don’t know you and you don’t know them.

They don’t care what you have to say about “Jesus” necessarily.

They don’t know how to act.

They may think you are just another boring person.

Games and Contests

They don’t necessarily have to have any spiritual meaning at all. However, they can have a spiritual meaning or be a fun way to review what the children have learned.

If you have fun with a child, they are more likely to listen to what you have to say when it is time to be serious.

Having fun uses up some of the extra energy that makes it hard for them to pay attention.

How Can I Play Games?

You can take just about any object and make a game out of it.

Other tips about games:

- Research the internet for exciting children's games, relays, contests
- Keep a record either on the computer or in a book of the games you play, so you can reuse your ideas
- Pay attention at children's events – birthday parties, school events,
- When you shop, look at the toys kids like to play with and make games from them
- Watch children's shows on television

10.Challenge

What is the point of a great children's program if there is no challenge or life application

AT THE END OF EVERY LESSON THERE NEEDS TO BE A CHALLENGE

Keep it simple

Help the kid's focus on the challenge – have them bow their head and close their eyes while you give the challenge

Make it a question they can answer.

Let the kids talk about it- Kids aren't as embarrassed to talk about their struggles as adults.

Be creative – Throw out unforgiveness or sin

Make it attainable – Who can learn the memory verse this week not who can learn 50 verse this week about love

Ideas: How can you show Jesus love this week just like the Good Samaritan?
Think of one thing you are not going to do this week so you can spend more time with Jesus?
Who can promise to pray every morning after breakfast for your friend who doesn't know Jesus

Building A Lesson

Have everything ready ahead of time

1. **Engaging activity** Plan an ice breaker, group activity, contest, bible trivia, free activities for them to do as children are arriving
2. **Opener** Welcome everyone. Draw everyone in. Get everyone refocused on the lesson

It should fast pace and get everyone's attention

It should Introduce the theme

3. **Rules and rewards**
4. **Review** - The theme or the topic. This can be done in the form of a trivia game.
5. **Worship (singing)**
6. **Bible Story**
7. **Activity/object lesson/ illustration**
Bring out the main point
How does this truth affect your life?
8. **Key verse**
9. **Challenge/prayer time**

Small groups, pray for each other, one big prayer
10. **Games/craft**

Have reserve activities

Don't fill your time- use your time

Remember your time with the children is short compared to the time they spend in school, playing video games, shopping in Walmart, or watching TV.

Conclusion - Creativity – God-given

God is the Creator. When God created the universe, He was very creative. He created everything with a lot of thought, detail, and uniqueness.

God is the Supreme creator.

The Bible teaches us in Genesis 1:26 that we were made in God's image and in God's likeness

"Then God said, Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."

The same creative power the created the universe in all its detail is in you because God made you in His likeness.

For centuries people have been using their God-given ability to create.

Who created a car, who created a cooking stove, who created the bicycle, and who created the scooter?

No matter what our specialty is, whether it is children's ministry, pastoring, or evangelism, we need to use the creative abilities God has given us.

We need to ask God to increase our creativity.

Ephesians 3:20 "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that is in us."

God's power is in us. His power to be creative is in us. We need to tap into it, and use His creativity to reach others.