



Lively Stones | PETER 2:5

Holding forth the word of life

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BUILDING UP THE GODLY FAMILY Teaching children aged 7 to 9 —Bringing the lesson to life

YOU see them everywhere in church, primary schoolers full of energy and chattering on and on. So what are the characteristics of children in this age group, and how does this affect the way we teach them in church?

First, we must note that primary schoolers span a very large age range from 6-year-olds who can just read and write and are not yet fully independent, to pre-teens confronting puberty and identity issues. My main experience has been with the lower primary age group, and it is about this age group (primary 1 to 3) that I will be writing. As I am not a trained educator, I will be writing from personal experience, on methods that I personally have found effective.

I generally believe that teachers need to involve the whole child in lessons. Children learn in different ways.

The primary schoolers span a large age range from 6-year-olds....to pre-teens confronting puberty and identity issues.

Some children are perfectly comfortable sitting down for long periods listening to Bible stories on audio CDs. Other children need more stimulation ---- these are children of the multi-media generation. Lots of animation, music and action are what grab their attention. Yet other children are hands-on learners. They need to touch and do things to remember the lessons.

Moreover, children of this age group do have short attention spans. Expecting them to sit still for more than half an hour at a time, is not realistic. And, having grown up in the church, they have heard many of the stories before.

The solution, then, is to keep the children involved. Object lessons are one way. Some teachers build lessons around objects, and use the object as a focus of attention. For instance, you could hold up a baby's milk bottle and talk about how a baby needs milk to grow, and how just as babies desire milk, we should desire the Word of God.

However, I am more in favour of working everyday objects into Bible lessons. Sometimes it is as simple as bringing a toy sheep to class when telling the story of The Lost Sheep. The point of bringing things to class is so that the children can relate the lesson and therefore God's Word to their everyday life. It also gives them an opportunity to stand up and touch the object, or discuss it with their peers. That way, they will be ready for another sit-down-and-listen session later on.

Children of this age group also have rather limited experiences, and tend to relate things to their own daily experiences. Everyday common objects can help them understand Bible truths. For instance, I was telling the story of how Samson had to keep the Nazerite vow, part of which involved not touching dead bodies. We came to the part where Samson picked up the jawbone of a donkey. Now, I would have loved to have produced the jawbone of some animal in class at the appropriate moment and wave it around with a flourish, but I didn't have one handy! Instead, I

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compromised and produced the wishbone of a chicken. The point was clear when I asked the children where the rest of the chicken was. The chicken had to be dead in order for me to remove that bone. They understood immediately that Samson had touched a dead animal to get the jawbone out.

Some objects are obvious -- flour and oil when telling the story of Elijah and the widow, bread rolls when talking about how Jesus fed the 5,000. At other times, it really depends on creativity and what you have at home. I often raid my children's bedrooms to borrow toys, farm animals, zoo animals (lions for the story of Daniel, a donkey for the tale of Balaam). My daughter's baby dolls too pop up in class often as we talk of the baby Moses, or even baby Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes. My son's Lego bricks have appeared many times as I talk of how you need a builder and a plan to make an object out of the bricks. Putting the pieces into a bag and shaking it vigorously (I illustrated this) will not work.

So too, the world was not created by accident, with bits of matter bumping into each other. There was a Designer, and He had a plan. Plastic fruits and vegetables are useful too, in teaching how Christians must bear fruit. Hold up an orange, and the children know it came from an orange tree. It is easy to move from there to how we are known by our fruits too. And you don't have to limit yourself to objects they can touch. Include taste too.

When we talk of bread in the Bible, the children have a mental image of Sunshine or Gardenia loaves. Bringing some pita bread and chapatis are a good way to introduce them to unleavened bread. And lemon juice in water can help children understand the problem of the bitter waters in the wilderness. The point is not how clever the objects are, but rather how we can find ways to engage a child's interest and help them understand the basic concepts.

So when you confront your next lesson, prepare it prayerfully, and then look around your home to see what you can find to help bring the lesson to life.

Trudy D



Announcements:

Teachers' Day Lunch Fellowship
Date: 4 Sept (Sunday after Worship Service)
Time: 1-3pm
Venue: Teochew Garden Restaurant, The Concourse, Beach Road



Editorial Team: Mrs Julia Koh, Mrs Selina Lee



Editorial

Teaching children God's Word has never been an easy job for me as a mother of three. Each of my children has different learning attitude and level of understanding. So with each child, I have to adapt accordingly.

As a busy stay-at-home-mum (SAHM), juggling the many roles of teacher, chef, cleaner, care-giver etc can be mind-boggling and exhausting. So it is only with God's grace and His wisdom that I can use daily objects/situation to impart His Word to my little ones.

I totally agree with Trudy's article that bringing the lesson to life with daily objects is very effective. I remember one incident when my son Jedidiah toppled this messy "leaning tower" of magazines on our coffee table. Regretfully, my normal reaction would have been screaming my head off. But thank God, He calmed me down and I took the opportunity to sort and throw away the outdated magazines and tidied the leftovers. I told my son that God actually used a "bad" situation (toppling the pile), turned it around and made it good (tidying up). And so it is in our life that anything that happens works for our good.

I was very thankful to God that I was able to teach my son that way that day. I pray that I can always see opportunities to impart God's Word to my children in my daily life.

With this, I want to encourage both SAHM and working mums to strive each day to share God's Word with our children. There is never too little time. We can only pray for opportunities and for the eye to recognise them.

Teaching God's Word is the only way to ensure that when our children grow up, they will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

JK