



Using the Bible with Preschoolers

Preschool teachers need to plan each session with the thought, "How can I weave Bible-related material throughout the activities of this session?"

Teaching the Bible is not limited to group time with preschoolers. Bible-related material must be interwoven throughout the session. Even though children look at a teacher reading the Bible during group time, Bible learning is not necessarily taking place.

The Bible needs to be used many different ways to communicate biblical truth to each age group.

What Is Activity Teaching?

Activity teaching is teaching the Bible and other truths while preschoolers are involved in activities. Activity teaching can be on a one-on-one basis, or a teacher and more than one child can be involved in an activity. This teaching approach is using the Bible, Bible thoughts, songs, Bible conversation, and stories with preschoolers from the time they arrive in the department until they leave.

Bible Thoughts

One of the best ways to help preschoolers relate to the Bible is through the use of Bible thoughts. A Bible thought is a Bible verse used in terms which preschoolers can understand. For example, Psalm 122:1 reads, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." A Bible thought from the verse reads, "I like to go to church." This Bible thought can be used with babies through five-year-olds. "I like to go to church" will be the true feelings of the child if happy learning opportunities are provided.

When can Bible thoughts be used? Bible thoughts may be used anytime, anywhere. Continue thinking about the Bible thought "I like to go to church." As Scott arrives, say, "Scott likes to go to church. In the Bible we read, 'I like to go to church.'"

As Scott enters into the room, say, "Your friends Kevin and Anne like to go to church. In the Bible we read, 'I like to go to church.'"

While Scott is involved in painting, sing the song "I Like to Go to Church!" and say, "In the Bible we read, 'I like to go to church.'"

As Scott looks at the picture "Boy Jesus at Church," say, "Boy Jesus went to church. In the Bible we read, 'I like to go to church.'"

When Scott washes his hands before snack time, say, "Scott is growing. He can wash his hands at church. Scott likes to go to church. In the Bible we read, 'I like to go to church.'"

When Scott is nearby, open the Bible to Psalm 122:1. Put your finger on Psalm 122:1. Say, "Here is where we read, 'I like to go to church.'"

Although group time has not taken place, Scott has heard a Bible thought for this session which relates to his firsthand experiences.

Two or three other Bible thoughts used throughout the same session will increase Scott's Bible knowledge.

As was previously mentioned, the Bible thoughts can be included in transition time, group time (for three fours, and fives), rest room time, snack time, quiet time, outdoor time, and departure. Parents may also be encouraged to use the Bible thoughts at home with the preschooler.

Use of Bible-related materials should begin with the arrival of the first child in the department/room and continue until the last child departs.

Bible Stories

Bible stories may be used in much the same way as Bible thoughts. Bible stories are used with two-year-olds throughout the session, with no formal group time. Bible stories may be recalled during activities with older preschoolers and included in a planned group time.

Pictures, books, nature items, music, and various areas in the room should remind you to recall Bible stories. For example, a Bible story about baby Jesus is appropriate as a child rocks a doll. A child's new brother or sister could prompt a teacher to tell the story about baby Jesus.

Group time with threes, fours, and fives is also an appropriate time to recall Bible stories and to tell the suggested Bible story for the session.

Bible Conversation

Bible stories, as such, are not used with younger preschoolers. Bible conversation is more appropriate. A story needs a beginning, a crisis, a climax, and an ending; young preschoolers do not have an attention span long enough to listen to a complete story. Bible conversation, however, can be very meaningful with all preschoolers.

Bible conversation simply involves talking about the Bible, pictures of Bible characters, and situations from the Bible. For example, as a baby pats the Bible say: "Bible. This is the Bible. There are stories about baby Jesus in the Bible." You may say: "Bible. In the Bible I read that Jesus loves us. Jesus loves Larry."

Guide preschoolers as they handle the Bible. Say: "Lift the Bible with both hands."
"Open the pages very carefully."
"Thank you for being careful with the Bible."

During each session the Bible should be accessible to each child. A teacher needs to be aware of the Bible, and guide as preschoolers show interest in it. The Bible may be placed in a baby's bed, or you may hold the Bible while you hold a baby. The Bible may be placed on the floor so a creeper and toddler can have access to it. "Be very careful" are words to guide as children learn that the Bible is a special book. "I will help you look at the Bible" are words to use with a creeper and a toddler.

Positive guidance with the Bible will give preschoolers good feelings about their Bible at church. The words "No" and "Don't" used with the Bible give the preschoolers negative feelings about the Bible. Even with teachers' careful guidance, pages of the Bible may tear. Mend the pages with cellophane tape. It is better to have a mended, used Bible than a new Bible on a shelf in a cabinet.

Talk with any age preschooler as you and the child look at pictures in the Bible. Ask the older preschooler to tell you about the pictures.

You may choose to have two Bibles in the classroom. More than one teacher can help children look at and talk about the Bible.

Songs and the Bible

You can teach biblical truths through songs. What preschool songs can you recall about God, Jesus, the Bible, and church? Here are a few songs which may be used:

GOD

"God Loves Me"
"I Thank You, God"
"God Gave Me Eyes"
"God Made the Flowers"
"Thank You, God"
"God Makes Little Birds"

BIBLE

"The Bible"
"I Know a Bible Song"
"Bible Helpers"
"I Open My Bible"

JESUS

"Christmas Tells of Jesus"
"Jesus Listened to the Birds"
"Jesus, Jesus"
"Jesus Loves Me"
"I Love Jesus"
"Jesus Loves Children"

CHURCH

"My Church"
"I Like My Church"
"I Sing at Church"
"I Like to Go to Church"

Preschoolers will learn the songs if you sing them as they are involved in activities. During group time, older preschoolers will want to sing along with you.

Why not hold six-month-old Becky near a window and softly sing the song "God Loves Me"?

While three-year-old Mickey arranges flowers in the nature area, sing the song "God Gave Me Eyes."

While you walk outdoors with preschoolers, sing the songs "God Made the Flowers" and "God Makes Little Birds."

During the Christmas season help parents feel comfortable singing the song "Christmas Tells of Jesus." Sing about Jesus often.

A child looking at the Bible will remind you to sing the song "I Know a Bible Song." During group time with threes, fours, or fives, use the Bible and sing the song "I Open My Bible."

As a baby, creepers, toddler, two-, three-, four-, or five-year old arrives at church, sing the song "I Like to Go to Church."

Use the child's name in the song.

Conclusion

Teaching biblical truths to preschoolers begins when the first child arrives. The teaching experience ends when the last child leaves. The teaching can either be positive or negative, depending on the adults in the room. Positive teaching requires planning by dedicated teachers. "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily" (Col. 3:23).

