

Children's Ministry Manual

*A suggested format for a simple
children's program*

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Preparing Your Environment

Stage Area: Rope off an area where you and your team will be teaching. If you don't have any rope, use whatever you can find – sticks, bamboo, branches, etc. Have one or two helpers ready to enforce these boundaries (pleasantly).

Audience: Divide the area in front of the stage in half, with an isle in-between. The girls will be sitting on one side and the boys on the other. The isle needs to be big enough for people to walk down. Again, use whatever you have – rope, sticks, bamboo, etc.

Seating Arrangement: Seat the children in a culturally appropriate way that will keep them the quietest and most peaceful. In Mozambique, we have found the best way is to seat each child in front of the other with straddled legs. The child in front sits inside the V shape of the child behind them. This forms natural lines, enabling control of hundreds of children. Other cultures find it best if they sit “Indian style” with their legs crossed.

Monitors: Have a team ready to help control the children. They should address any problem fights that break out, assist children with crying babies (escort them out till they are calmed down), and simply tap the shoulders of children talking excessively to the neighbors. With hand motions only, the monitors can remind the children who are disturbing the teaching, to stop talking, look up front, and listen. They should not scold the children out loud, or they will be disturbing the lesson as well.

Greeting

Greet the children warmly before starting your program. Introduce yourself and your team members. Smile. Show them you are happy they came and you are happy to be there with them. Interact with them – ask how they are feeling, etc.

Worship and Praise

- Try to choose some songs that reflect the theme of your lesson.
- Try to put scripture into melodies. Verses from Psalms are especially good for helping children focus on worship and the character of God.
- If introducing a new song, explain the meaning of the words first.
- Worship songs using personal pronouns are helpful in teaching children how to commune intimately with God as they sing *to* Him, vs. singing *about* Him. Example: Instead of singing, “God is so good,” sing, “God, You’re so good.”

- Understand and appreciate the value of music in oral cultures. This is one of their best forms of education!
 - Try to make songs about the stories being taught.
1. Use these songs to teach and review the facts of the stories being taught.
 2. Include in these songs the character of God reflected in the bible stories.
 - The goal should be to bring these children into a closer relationship with Jesus, not just know the events in the stories. By seeing God's character reflected in the stories, they can better enter into meaningful worship.
 - Use gestures for some songs. All the helpers should know the songs and gestures, singing along wherever they are among the children. You can call on a few children to the front to help lead.
 - Make simple instruments and shakers for selected children to use. These can be cans or plastic bottles with pebbles, rice, or beans inside. Bamboo or wood sticks of varying sizes will have different tones when hit together. Drums can be made with upside down cans of varying sizes. Use whatever instruments you can find. Scripture simply says, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord!"

Wordless Book

Purpose: to present the gospel in a very simple, visually memorable way.

Preparation: Make a book out of paper or cloth with the following 5 colors: yellow, black, red, white, and green. The colors must be in that order. Another option is to just call forward children who are wearing these colors. Have them stand in front of the other children in a row while you explain what the color means. Have each child step forward when you talk about their color.

Explanation of colors

Yellow – represents heaven. Read John 14:2. Explain how wonderful heaven is, the good things that are there such as streets of gold, happiness, light, beauty, God, angels, other Christians. Explain the bad things that are not there, such as pain, sickness, death. Ask the children, "Who wants to go there? Yes, we all do. But there is a problem. We can't get in! Why?"

Black – We can't get into heaven because of our sin. God is perfect and holy, and cannot be with sinners. Long ago God created Adam and Eve. They were perfect and had a wonderful friendship with God. But one day they chose to disobey Him. After that, Adam and Eve were no longer perfect. They became sinners, along with all of mankind that were born after them. Sickness and death now entered the world. Man was separated from God's presence. The bible says in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Red - God wanted to restore man's friendship to Him. So He made a plan that would allow sinful man to be able to come into His holy presence. He sent his son Jesus to the earth to offer himself as a sacrifice for mankind's sin. Because Jesus is

holy and perfect, his blood was good enough to satisfy God's holiness. Read John 3:16.

White - If we believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died for our sins, we can be forgiven for all our sins – past, present, and future. Read I John 1:9. We just need to repent and ask for forgiveness. Now we are washed clean, like the color white!

Green – What does this color remind you of? Look around you. Do you notice all the trees and plants that are green? They are all alive and growing! God wants us to keep growing too. He wants us to grow closer and closer to Him each day. How do we do this? We can get closer to God by spending time with Him, just like you do with a friend. How do we spend time with Him? We read the Bible. These are God's words, even though many different people wrote the different books in it. The Holy Spirit inspired the writers. So really, they are God's words. When we read them, it is like God talking to us. Other ways we can grow closer to God is by praying, worshipping Him, and going to church. Explain these as much as you like, but if the children start thinking these are the ways one is saved, stop doing this color until they understand that salvation is a gift from God only (Eph. 2:8,9) and not a result of our works.

Games

Why play them?

- Games can reinforce your lesson. It's easy to make a teaching point out of a game, or design a game that has a teaching point. All of the lessons in "Jesus, Lord and Savior" have one game that relates to the main point of the lesson. You will probably want to play more than one game, but they don't all need to signify a point. Just having fun is good in itself!
- Games can be a motivation for good behavior by selecting only the well-behaved children to participate.
- Games are a good tool for asking review questions from previous lessons or memory verses. After asking a question, ask for raised hands if they think they know the answer. Those you call on that answered correctly get to come forward to play the game.
- Competition is fun for kids. Divide the children in half, like discussed in the "Preparation" section, between the girls and the boys. Select a boy and a girl to cheer their team. They stand in front of their team and shout their team name or their word for "girls" or "boys" in their language, clapping and getting their teammates to chant with them. This goes on excitedly during the game, encouraging their teammates to win! Keep track of the points and cheer for the winners. An option, if possible, is to give one candy to the losers and 2 candies to the winners as you play each game. At the end of the whole program, if possible, you can give all the

children some kind of treat. If this is not possible, the children will still be happy to just play and cheer!

Teaching a Memory Verse

- For younger children, do not teach a long verse. Sometimes you can just teach part of a verse.
- Pick out difficult words and explain their meanings before teaching the whole verse.
- Explain the meaning of the entire verse after any difficult individual words are understood. Give practical applications.
- Teach the verse any way you wish, but remember, repetition is the key to memorizing.
- Use as many senses as you can – sight, sound, smell, touch, taste. The more you use, the easier they will remember.
- Use games to teach memory verses and have fun!

Memory Verse Game Ideas

- Lead the children in saying the verse by repeating after you. Each time you say it, imitate the actions of a different animal. The children repeat it with the new animal actions. After a while they won't need to repeat it. They will do it simultaneously with you.

Suggested animals: frog (hop in place on the ground), kangaroo, elephant, monkey, fish, snake, bird, butterfly (Wrap two thumbs around each other and flap your hands like wings).

- Again, lead the children in saying the verse by repeating after you. Each time you say the verse, do a different action. The children imitate your action and say the verse. After they learn it a little, they will start saying the verse with you, not after you.

Example actions: rub your stomach in circles, pat your head, tap your shoulders repeatedly with your fingers, raise your hands to the sky and wiggle your fingers, spin in circles, twist at your waist with your hands on your hips, etc.

- Even though this game involves words, it still works for non-readers. Separate and write every word from the verse on different pieces of paper. Have one child per word, holding the paper in front of him/her. Line the kids up with the words in order in front of the rest of the children so they can read the verse. Read the verse with the children, pointing to each word as you read it. The second time you read it, turn one of the words over so it is blank. Repeat the verse together, including the missing word. Do this again, turning over a second word, etc. Each time you say the verse, turn one more word over until the entire verse has no words showing – just blank pieces of paper. Make sure you include a paper for the scripture reference.

This game can also be played with a whiteboard or chalkboard. Underline each word and erase one word at a time. Leave the underline in place for the missing word.

- Put the verse to a chant. You can add drums or homemade shakers.
- Put the verse to a tune. You can make up a new tune or use an easy familiar tune the children already know.
- Put gestures to the verse. Don't use a gesture for every word. Limit the gestures to just a few key words in the verse. Always be doing something while you say the verse, continuing the gesture until the next one starts.
- Have a competition between the boys and the girls. Who can say it the loudest? The fastest? The highest? The lowest? The softest?
- Do the above without making it a competition – just have the children follow your lead.

Rules

Review these rules with the children before beginning your lesson, which includes the introduction, dramatized bible story, and application. Tell the children these rules one by one and have them repeat after you. Make up simple gestures for each rule as you say them. During story time, your monitors can just motion these gestures to the children who are acting up, rather than speaking and disrupting the teaching.

- Fold your hands and put them in your lap.
- Eyes up front
- Sit down
- Listen and don't talk

Introduction to the Story

Why is an introduction important? The main reason we do an introduction is to stir an interest in the audience to listen to what you are going to say. Introductions should only stir a curiosity to hear more. Don't give the main point or conclusion yet. A good way to do an introduction is to ask a question that you are sure the children will want answered. But don't give the answer! Just stay in the story today, we will hear about how the Bible answers this question... For example, if my story will be about Jesus calming the storm, ask the children if they are ever afraid. Interact with the children, getting a few stories (from raised hands). Keep it brief. Then say, "In our story today, we will learn about a time that the disciples were also very afraid. They were in a big storm out at sea. Do you think Jesus helped them

when they were afraid? Let's see what happened!" You can make introductions many ways, using short skits, puppets, or just talking to the children.

Bible Story

- You can tell a Bible story with pictures, puppets, or acting it out. Always use some sort of visual aid. You will keep their attention better and they will remember it. If you don't have any supplies, just act it out. If you are able to make some simple costumes, it will help. Even just large pieces of material can be draped on the actors to be robes and clothing. Crowns can be made with paper and tape, or vines tied to form a circle.
- Practice your drama ahead of time, making sure you dramatize your main point well. Always keep your main point in mind throughout every section of the program.
- Speak loudly, slow, and clear, so all the children can understand. Always face the audience, at least partially.
- Never have your back to the audience.
- Read the scriptures carefully. Pray about what it means and dramatize the events accurately with feeling.

Application

Pray about the main point you think God wants you to bring out from the story and how this point applies to the lives of the children. Review the events of the story briefly. Talk about why this story is important to them. Some questions to ask yourself to help you with an application: What do I learn about the character of God or Jesus through this story? How is my relationship with God affected after hearing this story? Is there something I need to obey? Spend plenty of time waiting on the Holy Spirit, letting Him teach and guide you in this most important part of the entire program. Allow time for the children to respond in prayer with you.