

7 Keys to Teaching Today's Child (Part 2)

By Timothy Brown

In [part one](#), I touched on three important keys: love the children unconditionally, pray for each child every week, and work to clearly communicate important truths. This article will focus on four more keys that when applied can make a big difference in the learning process.

Use Questions Carefully

One of my favorite methods of teaching is to ask questions. If you ask the right questions, you can tell whether or not the children are getting the message. Try to get them to answer in their words and not just parrot back something you said.

It's important to plan key questions ahead of time. Think through the lesson and choose a couple of areas where you want the truth to hit home. Develop a couple of questions that will cause the children to think about the subject. The best kinds to ask are thought-provoking questions, ones that can't be answered yes or no.

Example: "Does God love you?" The children will answer either yes or no, but that doesn't tell you much about their understanding of God's love. Here's a better question: "Can you tell me some ways God shows his love to you?" Now they have to think about it and as you get several answers, you have a better idea on whether the group understands God's love.

It's helpful to vary the types of questions so you don't become too predictable. Below are four different types of questions you can try.

1. Factual – asking for specific information. (Example: "How tall was Goliath?")
2. Rhetorical – asking for an obvious answer. (Example: "Who's bigger, God or Goliath?")
3. Analytical – asking students to put facts together and draw a conclusion. (Example: "How could David face Goliath with such courage?")
4. Relational – asking the students to identify with the feelings of the characters as well as the facts. (Example: "How do you think David felt the first time he saw Goliath?")

Be careful not to read more into the story than is presented. In the above question, the Bible gives a clear picture of how David felt. He was angry and wanted someone to take care of Goliath.

If the feeling is not clearly presented, phrase your explanation with words such as: "He *may* have..." "Saul *might have* thought..." "If I was in his spot, I'd *probably feel like*..."

Don't be afraid to ask hard questions. You'd be surprised at the insight God gives children into his word. I've had many times when children taught me by answering a difficult question. When you ask a difficult question, give the class time to think about it. A short silent period is ok. If the question stumps the class, try rephrasing it once or twice before giving the answer. It will mean more to the group if they figure it out without you giving it to them. It will also stay with them longer.

Send the children home with a way to apply the day's teaching

Each class you teach should have a basic theme for the saved child to apply. Read through the Bible portion of the lesson and develop one truth you'd like to convey. Write it in a simple sentence that you can repeat several times during the class. Example: *God wants you to show his love to others.*

Take that statement and ask God to show you a *specific* way the children can apply it the coming week. If you make it too general, the children are less likely to follow through. Example: This week I want to challenge you every day to say thank you to someone who does something nice to you. Make sure it is something you normally wouldn't thank them for.

It's helpful to have the challenge written on a piece of paper and give it to them at the end of class. Ask them to return it next week and discuss how it went.

Teach lessons that will meet their needs

When preparing each lesson, ask God for wisdom in how to apply it to the children. God knows the needs of your class far better than you do. After praying, read through the scriptures and look for something that stands out to you. Most curriculums give you a basic theme you can use, but make sure you personalize it. Ask God for help in applying it in a way that will best help your class.

If all you do in class is tell an exciting Bible story you'll help increase the kids knowledge of the Bible, but what they really need is wisdom. Wisdom is learning to apply and use the knowledge you've received. It's great to learn that David defeated Goliath. It's even better to learn that the same God who helped David will help you win over a problem if you trust him. Share how they can trust God that week.

If you see a specific problem or need affecting your class that should be addressed but the curriculum doesn't cover it, you may need to set the curriculum aside for a week to address it.

Remember things that all children have in common

- Children have eternal souls.
- Children are sinners.
- Children who are saved are still prone to sin and need to learn how to resist temptation.
- Their concepts of right and wrong are easily molded. Make sure they are based on the Word of God.
- Children are capable of making real decisions.
- Children are teachable and are more prone than adults to follow through on challenges given them.
- Children are good at memorizing. Encourage and help them to memorize verses. When done, the verses will be with them wherever they go.
- Children readily believe so make sure you accurately handle the Word of God.
- Children want to excel.
- Children love to sing. When they learn a song based on Biblical principles, every time they sing it during the week it will reinforce those principles.
- Children respond to love. (Don't we all?)

Add these four keys to the three in the [previous article](#) and you're well on your way to teaching more effectively. Do these consistently and it's amazing what God can do. I've been teaching long enough that I've seen some children I taught years ago become strong, mature, and godly adults. When you teach children, you're investing in them in a way that will help now and in the future.