

Impact Your Teaching with Object Lessons

By Timothy Brown

What Is an Object Lesson?

An object lesson is a form of teaching where the teacher uses an everyday item to illustrate new truths. The item can be anything brought to the classroom. If it's too big for your room, bring a picture of it.

Object lessons use a basic principle of teaching: if you want to teach a new truth, start with something the students know and use it as a bridge to introduce the new teaching.

Using an object the children can see and feel also reinforces familiar truths you are teaching.

Why Use Object Lessons?

Balloons made for sculptures are thicker than normal balloons and are difficult to blow up. The easiest way is to purchase a balloon pump. You can find them in some department stores or online at Puppets from One Way Street.

Insert the nozzle on the end of the pump and inflate it with slow, even pumps. Don't inflate them all the way to the end. Make sure to leave room for the air to expand as you make the sculpture. Take it off the pump and let just a bit of air out to make it easier to tie the balloon.

Object lessons are tools you can use to convey and clarify your message. Since children use more of their senses during the learning process, the amount of the lesson the students remember and retain increases.

Another benefit is objects help gain and keep the children's attention. When you pick something up while teaching, you perk the interest of the children, especially if the object doesn't seem to have anything to do with the lesson.

Later, when the students see the object outside of class, it becomes a reminder of the truth you taught, which further solidifies the teaching.

For example, you can use a traffic light to teach about prayer. The red light represents when God says no, the yellow represents when God says to wait, and the green light is when God says yes. Once the lesson is delivered, God can remind the children of it every time they see a traffic light.

Object Lessons Used In the Bible.

God knows the value of using objects to teach and uses them in the pages of the Bible.

- In Genesis 9, He uses the rainbow—a natural “object” – to remind us of his promise to never again destroy the earth with a flood.
- In Ezekiel 4:1-3, God has Ezekiel construct a miniature model of Jerusalem and act out its destruction by an enemy attack. By making the model and acting out the siege, it gave the people a clear picture of a coming attack.
- In Amos 7:7-9 God uses the picture of a plumb line, a carpenter's tool, to show the people they weren't measuring up to God's standard.

How to Develop a Lesson Starting with an Object:

Choose the object and write a brief description of what it does or how it's used. Notice the word brief. You want a *basic* idea. Too much detail is distracting and may lead to the children's loss of attention.

Once you have the basic idea, look for a spiritual application, asking God for His insight and direction. Look for verses to support your application, but make sure to look within the whole context so the verse isn't misapplied. Use the verse and its teaching to support the lesson you are giving.

How to Develop a Lesson Starting with a Theme:

1. Write the theme and determine what scripture verse(s) accurately coincide with it.
2. Write the teaching outline and then think about how the object needs to fit into the lesson. Ask God for his direction in developing the theme and lesson and for help in choosing the right object.
3. Find an object to match the description.

Presenting an Object Lesson:

1. Capture the attention of the children by using a brief, intriguing introduction such as a thought-provoking question, a brief story, or a personal illustration.
2. Show the object and describe what it is or does. If the children know what it is you can ask questions and have them tell you what it does. If feasible, let the children handle the object. The more of their senses they use in the lesson, the greater the impact and the longer it will last.
3. Next, give the spiritual lesson you want to teach with the object. Quote, read, or summarize your verse(s) to further reinforce the teaching.
4. The next step is vital if the lesson is to impact the lives of the children. Apply the lesson to the child's life—make it specific and simple. If it's too general, they tend to ignore it and if it's too difficult they might give up partway through.
 - "Show God's love to others," is a general application and difficult to know how to practice.
 - "Say 'Thank-you' to five people this week you normally wouldn't," is specific and easy for the child to do, It also expresses God's love.
5. Link the lesson to the next class activity using a link phrase or sentence.

Where Can You Use an Object Lesson?

Object lessons can be used in a Sunday School Class, during a Sunday School opening program, in Children's Church, as a children's sermon in a church service or during Vacation Bible School.

While this article focuses on lessons that teach Bible truths, the principles and procedures can be used in almost any teaching situation, sacred and secular.

Record Your Lessons:

When preparing an object lesson, it's easy to think you'll never forget it. Don't believe it. It's far better to record the lesson basics while preparing it than to try to remember it at a later time.

Use a notebook, 3X5 cards, a computer file, or any method of your choice. Give the lesson a catchy title and list the object, theme, and Bible verses used. Write a brief outline of the lesson and note any personal illustrations used. Organize your lesson file according to the title, object or Bible verses.

Using object lessons will increase the effectiveness of your teaching, hold the attention of your students, drive home your message in a way that lasts, and generally make class time more enjoyable for the students and you. Give object lessons a try and see what God does in your life and the lives of your students.