

7 Things To Do When Telling a Bible Story

By Timothy Brown

The Bible lesson is the most important part of your Sunday School or Children's Church class and all the other activities should revolve around its theme. While there are many ways to share the lesson, storytelling is still one of the most effective; if done properly. When it comes time to tell your Bible story, here are seven things to consider.

Use Your Bible

After all, you are telling a Bible story so you should use it and read from it a couple of times. By holding your Bible as you teach, it's a subtle reminder to the children that you are teaching the Word of God. These aren't just nice stories that you got from a fictional storybook, but real-life stories recorded in the scriptures. It also helps to reinforce the importance of the Bible in their lives as the children see you holding and using it. You can also keep an outline of your lesson in it that you can refer to when needed. TIP: If you are going to read verses from a couple different passages, mark them ahead of time with a sticky note so you can find them quickly. Just make sure the note isn't too noticeable or it can become a distraction.

Teach with Excitement

Enthusiasm is contagious. If you have it while telling your story, the children will pick up on it and be drawn into the story. Remember, the stories in the Bible actually happened. They aren't fairy tales. So, when preparing, put yourself in the story. Think about what emotions the characters would have, what action is going on, and how you would feel if something similar happened to you. Try to picture the events and places in your mind. For example, Goliath was almost ten feet tall, so try standing under a basketball rim and imagine someone big enough to dunk a ball standing still. As you study, ask God to help make the story come alive to you and give you the wisdom to make it come alive to the class.

Know Your Lesson

It's hard to find a large block of time during the day to properly prepare a lesson, so spread it out during the week in short intervals. On Monday and Tuesday, I usually focus on the Bible portion of the lesson and read it at least three times and prepare an outline. Then on Wednesday or Thursday focus on how to apply it and look for ways to involve the children while telling the story. Then on Friday I run through the lesson out loud with any visuals. By spreading the preparation out, I can do it in shorter time segments and am reminded of it all week long.

Know Your Visuals

If you're using a flashcard booklet, practice turning the pages so you don't reveal a picture too soon. If it's flannel graph, stack your figures and practice putting them up. I once did a story with a camel figure and when I picked it up the legs caught several other pieces and knocked them on the floor. The children in the front dove to pick them up, which turned into quite a distraction. If you're using PowerPoint™, make sure you're familiar with your slides and when to change them. If someone else is running the program, give them cues ahead of time so they know when to change the slides.

Animate Your Story

When preparing, look for action words and emotional cues that can help in telling the story. David picked up five smooth stones before facing the giant. You could bring in a dozen stones and have them lying on the floor where you tell the story. Then instead of saying that he picked up five stones, kneel down and pick up each stone and choose five of them. When the servant girl heard Peter's voice in Acts 12, she got excited and ran to tell the others who were praying. Instead of telling that, act it out. Jump up and down with excitement and point toward the door as you say "Peter's here at the door."

Include the Children When Possible

Ask questions to keep their attention. If it's a familiar story, let one of the children tell a small part. In the earlier illustration, instead of you choosing the stones, have one of the children pick five stones out of the dozen on the floor. The more active the children are in the story, the more they will pay attention and the less discipline problems you'll have.

Be Yourself

Don't try to mimic someone else you think is a great storyteller, but let the Lord use your style and personality. He placed you in front of that class, not the person you're trying to copy. He has a reason for that and will use you regardless of how talented you think you are or aren't. Children respond to honesty and when you are yourself and demonstrate how much you care, they will overlook flaws you think you have.

So here are seven things that can help you present your Bible story in a way that is exciting and memorable. Remember, you're telling Bible stories and since they're worth telling, they're worth telling with all your heart. Prepare as though it's the last story you'll be able to tell, and then commit it to God and trust the outcome to him.