

Teaching Children About Jesus



Preliminary Remarks

- ▶ Work of God involves so many parts. No one can do it all, but everyone has a role to play – where do I fit in?
 - ▶ What gifts has God given me and what is His purpose for my life?
 - ▶ What can I do in the Lord's vineyard?
 - ▶ What is my vision? What is my passion?
 - ▶ Who has God sent me to?
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My background influenced my calling

- ▶ Raised in a Lutheran church in US, had the benefit of *learning Bible stories* in Sunday School and Vacation Bible School
 - ▶ But accepted Jesus as Saviour only after coming to Nigeria. I wanted my children to learn as I had.
 - ▶ In those years, most churches I saw here did not have a strong children's department with proper teaching
 - ▶ Later, it became a burden to establish a strong children's department in our church and develop good teaching materials.
 - ▶ I now feel a sense of urgency to teach children about Jesus
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Many Churches and homes neglect proper development of a Child

- ▶ Best pattern of development is that of Jesus in Luke 2 vs. 52: “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men.”
- ▶ Parents often focus on physical and intellectual, neglect the social and spiritual.
- ▶ Churches often focus on youth and adult while children are to be kept quiet or busy.

Yet, children are the future of the church.



Why do we need to teach children?

Because God commands it!

- ▶ "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children" (Mark 10 vs. 14).
- ▶ "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22 vs. 6).

The soul of a child is just as important to God as that of an adult or youth. Jesus may come any moment or a child may pass early – if so, the souls of these children may be lost.



Need to guard against evil influences

- ▶ Social media, internet and entertainment that encourage sinful behaviour so there is need for careful monitoring.
 - ▶ Peer groups that influence rebellious behaviour so parents must know with whom their children interact
 - ▶ Children must know their identity and authority as a child of God and be equipped to stand against evil.
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Importance of teaching children about Jesus

- ▶ Children become born again from an early age and can stand against temptations as they grow, also giving parents peace
- ▶ A child can be an open door for Christ to enter the home, bringing other children and even parents to church

Catch them young!

- ▶ Much of a child's personality is formed by the age of 5 years. Lickona (1994) states that the foundation of moral development (understanding right from wrong) is laid from birth through 3 years of age.
 - ▶ “Attitudes that a child learns during the first 5 to 7 years of his life become almost permanent.”
 - ▶ Between 1 and 7 years of age, a youngster is most susceptible to religious training.
“Depriving a child of spiritual training severely limits his capacity to ever reach spiritual maturity.”
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- ▶ One author writes: “*Prayer habits that last a lifetime are most often formed in childhood... kids can learn how they, too, can talk to their creator.*”
- ▶ What are the first words a child speaks?

Characteristics of the child that make it easy to teach them about Jesus

- ▶ Sincerity
- ▶ Accepting
- ▶ Will easily take correction and change positively
- ▶ Eager to learn
- ▶ Ask questions to ensure they understand
- ▶ Active

Each child is unique so no teaching method or style is 'right' for every child: therefore, need to be flexible to meet needs of each child.



Never underestimate the ability of the child to learn

- ▶ Help children to maximize their potential; don't belittle their capacity to learn
 - ▶ Provide them with opportunities to showcase their ability to demonstrate their knowledge of scriptures
 - ▶ Must ensure adequate preparation or the children will give the teacher a lesson! Take this task very seriously.
 - ▶ Church authority must make sure that those teaching in the children's department are themselves knowledgeable about the Bible.
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Provide a good role model

- ▶ Children are watching what we do and say. They are more affected by actions than words.
 - ▶ An effective teacher must not be one that goes by the view “do what I say, don’t do what I do”.
 - ▶ Children’s teachers must be of good behaviour and appropriate appearance.
 - ▶ It is not just anyone that should be entrusted with this important responsibility.
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Teaching Biblical Truths

- ▶ Keep it simple and focused on Jesus
 - ▶ Use a translation of the Bible that is easy for them to understand – KJV uses unfamiliar language that even adults sometimes misinterpret
 - ▶ Teach at their level – don't expect them to understand higher level terminologies
 - ▶ Teach the Bible as God's word, not a story book. Show how Old and New Testaments are integrated
 - ▶ Encourage feedback – make sure they understand by giving them a chance to express themselves.
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Make Learning about Jesus fun and interactive

- ▶ Don't over-spiritualize the relationship with God: let them speak to their Father in a manner natural to them.
 - ▶ Give them a variety of means of presentation
 - ▶ Different activities to keep them engaged and challenged
 - ▶ Special programmes like VBS, Bible clubs, etc.
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Reward for consistency in children's ministry

- ▶ No greater reward than to see the children grow into fine Christian youth and adults but it takes years for the effect to be seen.
 - ▶ It is worth the wait.
 - ▶ Our experience with 32 years of Vacation Bible School. First year had 15 children, but in last few years have had about 600, to the glory of God!
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And now, my request:

- ▶ As an offering to the Lord, I have developed teaching manuals with lessons on topics like: Steps to Salvation, What would Jesus do? Godly Character, etc.
 - ▶ I would be grateful if you would help me to ensure that these materials get into use by churches and ministries for the teaching of children about Jesus.
 - ▶ One copy per church or ministry, but if you know others that can use them, please take more.
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**Thank you for listening.
May God help us to disciple
these little ones.**