



Methods That Motivate

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Enthusiastic teachers produce enthusiastic students. This happens when teachers use methods that motivate and inspire their students. Sunday School should be fun and should challenge children to new levels of spiritual growth.

Using a variety of teaching methods will add interest and motivate students to learn more. Jesus described the growing teacher in Matthew 13:52 when He pointed to the methods of the scribes and teachers of that day. He compared them to householders who brought out of their storehouses treasures that were new and old, "the fresh as well as the familiar" (The Amplified Bible). Using a tried-and-true method is good as long as it's not the only method we use. Even the most exciting puppet show can become routine if it is overused and excludes other methods of teaching.

We can glean insights for effective teaching by observing the methods Jesus used.

The Master Teacher used common examples from everyday life. He led people into new ways of thinking about God. A fig tree, leaven, the wheat and the tares—these examples from nature served to illustrate His message. Jesus used storytelling, discussions, demonstrations, direct instruction, and involved His followers in the miracles He performed. He assigned Peter the

job of catching a fish with a coin in its mouth—just the right amount needed to pay their taxes (Matthew 17:27). We will do well to study the methods of the greatest Teacher of all time.



When choosing a teaching method, we need to consider the learning styles of the children, their ages, maturity, and interests.

Children learn more when their senses are involved and when they have opportunities to participate in the learning process. They also need to identify with the story or lesson you are teaching. Look for ways to help children understand that Bible people had some of the same struggles and challenges that we have today.

Some effective teaching methods to use with elementary children are the following:

- Storytelling with props

- Group discussions
- Puppets
- Games that teach or reinforce
- Felt board stories
- Flash cards
- Crafts and artwork
- Drama skits and role play
- Creative writing
- Object lessons
- Missions projects
- Word puzzles
- Bible verse games
- Visiting characters (Bible and modern)
- Interest and activity centers
- Demonstrations
- Drawings and illustrations

If you are doing a presentation, such as storytelling, be sure the children can clearly see the visuals you are using. Props and visuals need not be complicated to be effective, but they should clearly support your objective, be large enough for everyone to see, and be colorful and in good repair. A puppet that's missing a button or needs mending will be a distraction to the children. Visuals that are old and faded lose their appeal. Keep some basic art supplies in a creative corner at home and learn to make your own visuals.

When available, computers and copy machines can save a great deal of preparation time. You can trace and enlarge simple drawings using an overhead or

opaque projector, or have your local print shop do this for you.

The laminating process will preserve and enhance your teaching materials. Some educa-

tional stores will laminate materials at a minimal cost. Also many school districts make laminating available to community volunteers.

Use the methods you are most successful with first, then begin to stretch yourself and try something new. You will be glad you did—and so will your students!

Questions For Further Study—

1. What one thing can you do to add interest and motivate students?
2. Children learn more when their _____ are involved and when they have opportunity to _____ in the learning process.
3. List three steps you will take to add interest and motivation in your classroom.

This article was adapted from one article in the colorful training booklet called *StepONE, A Guide for Teachers—Elementary*, by Verda Rubottom, Elementary Consultant in the Sunday School Field Ministries Department. *StepONE* reads like a magazine and trains like a conference. It's a quick, affordable training tool that your early childhood teachers will enjoy reading. *StepONE* will help teachers and parents minister effectively to 2- through 5-year-olds. The complete resource is available from the Gospel Publishing House, order number 02-0287. Call 1-800-641-4310.

