



Teach Every Child

by Genie Stoker

As you reach the Bible lesson, a boy takes a ball from his pocket and begins moving it from hand to hand. A girl stares quietly out the window. You may think they have tuned out the lesson. But when the story ends, these same children begin an animated discussion, quoting details from the story. Actually they had been listening quite intently. One needed physical activity (juggling the ball) to stay alert and focused. The other needed rest from the visual clutter of the classroom to absorb spoken words. Far from being bored or disrespectful, these kids simply had different learning styles.

Educator Dawna Karkova, in her book *How Your Child is Smart*, (Berkeley: Conari Press, 1992) describes learning styles based on differing patterns of mental activity in three modes: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. However, she cautions us not to use learning styles as pigeon-holes or labels. Growing children often change their style, and the strongest learning experiences are those that incorporate all three modes: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.

As we plan a lesson, we can ask, *Does this activity contain visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements?* One activity that incorporates all three modes can make a lasting impression on the entire class. A simple felt board is an excellent example. As you tell a story, students learn through

sound. As they place characters on the board, they learn kinesthetically. As they watch the growing diorama, they learn visually.

Walking and Talking

As Jesus traveled from town to town, He talked with the disciples. They remembered well the topics they discussed, the people they met on the road, and Jesus' responses to those people. I know a youth leader who takes his group hiking. The counselors and teens converse as they walk. They stop along the way to rest, admire God's beautiful world, and pray. A second grade teacher takes her class outdoors to experience Bible stories that happened outdoors. The Tucson sun and desert landscaping help her class understand the 40-year trek of the Israelites as they searched for food and places to sleep.

Breaking Bread

Jesus used mealtimes for teaching and binding His group in fellowship. We can follow His example, even with a brief snack once a week. Our 4-year-olds learned to pray by saying a short grace, then discussing their joys and concerns as they ate. We ended the snack with another prayer, naming whatever they'd mentioned. During Lent, women in our church have a pretzel-baking party for elementary-age kids. They share a little of their own faith as the kids knead and shape the dough into praying hands.

Observing Love In Action

The disciples knew that Jesus healed people because they saw Him do it. They learned through the total process: observing, thinking, discussing, and imitating. We too can show our classes what we and others do in the community. A field trip or a guest speaker bring relevance to a lesson.

Videos also make Bible stories stick because they involve several modes of learning: through tone of voice, visual impressions, and the emotions revealed in drama.

Doers of the Word

It wasn't long after Jesus began teaching the Twelve that He sent them out to be teachers. He knew how to keep them involved and help them learn and grow deeply. Rather than wait until they were perfectly prepared for ministry, He sent them out to practice new ideas and learn as they went. We do this when we offer preschoolers an opportunity to make something for Mom or Dad, or when we offer elementary students the opportunity to serve in the church and community.

Children's worship is an opportunity for kids to share what they've learned with one another, each one using his unique learning style. Those who enjoy reading can read the Bible verse; those who enjoy singing can share their faith in song. Those

