



# Instruct Them for Living

by Sharon Ellard

**E**very person needs a biblical moral compass to guide and protect him throughout life. By God's standards, Bible instruction falls short if children know God's Word but don't obey it. God said, "These people say they love me. They show honor to me with words. But their *hearts are far from me. The honor they show me is nothing but human rules they have memorized*" (Isaiah 29:13, italics added).

The Bible emphasizes the importance of doing God's commands.

"Even a child is known by his *behavior*. His *actions* show if he is innocent and good" (Proverbs 20:11).

"How can a young person live a pure life? He can *do it by obeying your word*. With all my heart I try to obey you, God. Don't let me break your commands. I have taken your words to heart so I would not sin against you" (Psalm 119:9).

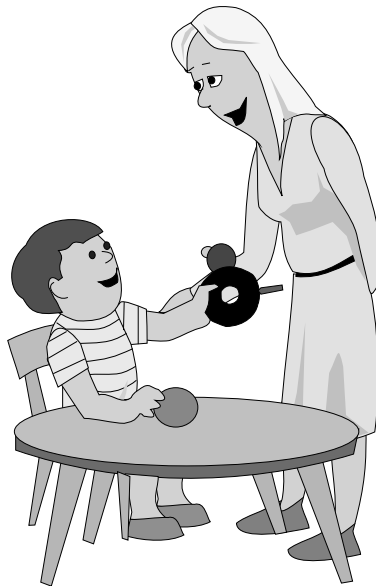
"*Do what God's teaching says; do not just listen and do nothing*" (James 1:22).

Here are six instructional strategies to help children transfer Bible instruction into biblical living.

## Involve the Children

Most young children are global learners. They use all their senses to learn. According to some sources, young children will remember only 10 percent of what they hear, 50 percent of what they hear and see, and 90 percent of what they hear, see, and do.

Therefore, plan lessons that let the children touch, taste, and smell as well as see and hear. Add actions to Bible stories. Combine marching with saying the Bible verse. Make snacks that connect to Bible ideas. Every time a child is involved in the Bible instruction, he remembers more that he can apply to everyday living.



## Teach With Everyday Items

Jesus used everyday items to teach—sheep, rocks, seeds, pigs, birds. As you plan Bible instruction, survey your home for everyday items that can help children learn eternal truths. A bedsheet thrown over a table with eyes on the side, for example, might become a whale for Jonah, the walls of Jericho (held up by chil-

dren until the trumpets sound), or a stormy sea (with children holding the edges and making waves). When children see bed-sheets during the week, they will be reminded of Bible ideas they learned at church.

## Include Practice

Learning to read, write, cook, swim, or golf all take practice. Learning to obey God every day takes practice too. Teachers can plan practice time in every lesson. Often it will look like play, but in play, children practice what will become their framework for moral choices and behavior. The hands-on learning of play gives teachers many opportunities to model how to share, to trust, to show love, to take turns, to be hospitable, and live by the guidelines of the Bible.

## Dramatize Bible Stories

When children act out Bible stories, they participate in God's mighty deeds—at least in their own imaginations. The Bible is full of actions and adventure such as Paul's escaping in a basket, Deborah's leading an army into the valley, Wise Men outsmarting King Herod. Simple props add appeal to dramas; for example, cut a simple crown from a gold place mat, ride a chair backward for a camel, or place stuffed animals in a box ark on a bedsheet sea. Have fun with the Bible dramas; the children will repeat them during the week.

## Tailor Instruction

All children are of value and are the focus of our ministry, but all children are not created equal. Some children are shy, slow to warm, aggressive, easy, or love to talk. Others are quiet at church and talkative at home. All preschoolers are active, but some children are hyperactive.

Teachers who want to instruct children in ways that change everyday living can tailor everyday Bible lessons for the children. As you read each lesson, think of specific children. Write their

names in the margins by activities that will appeal to them.

For example, if Jennifer and Samuel always need help to separate them from their parents, think of them as you read the opening ideas. If the suggested ideas will appeal to these two and help them want to stay, write their names in the margin by the activity. On the other hand, if the suggested opening activity will not appeal to them, cross through that section. Still write their names in the margin but use their names as a reminder to find a replacement activity they will like.

## Involve the Parents

Parents influence children more than anyone else. As you plan Bible instruction, look for ways to involve them. If the Bible lesson is about the farmer's sowing seed, you might let children scoop grass seed into re-sealable sandwich bags to take home and plant with their parents to use at home. Kids love play dough, for example. So copy the play dough recipe in this issue to give to parents. This strategy helps you to partner with parents in changing children's lives.

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## Questions For Further Study—

1. How does creativity figure into the process of recruiting children's ministry team members?
2. How does your ministry team involve parents in the training process of your children's ministry?
3. What training can be offered to raise the level of creativity among your children's ministry team?