



The Challenge of Teaching the Bible to Children

by LeRoy Bartel

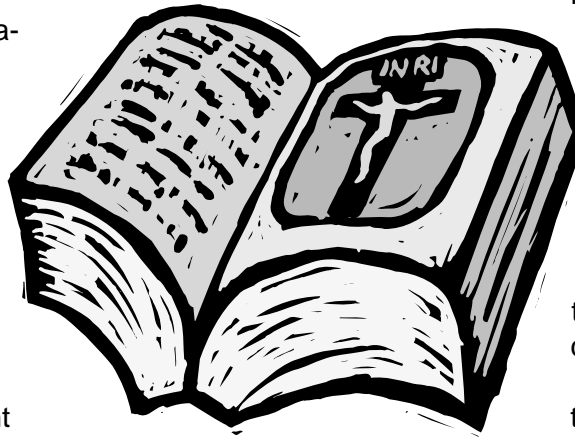
Some individuals who are involved in religious education don't believe that Bible study is really for children at all. They claim the Bible is really an adult book. They tend to exclude children from any focused attempt to understand the Bible's message.

How tragic to hold such a view, in light of the emphasis Scripture puts on training children (Deuteronomy 6:1-9; 11:18-21; Psalm 119:9-11; Proverbs 22:6). Jesus emphasized the quality of spiritual understanding and the simplicity of faith possessed by children! (See Matthew 18:1-5; 19:13-15: and parallels.)

High Tech or High Truth?

On the other hand, it might be seriously questioned whether some who are engaged in children's ministries in evangelical churches, and claim to teach the Bible to children, really do so. Unfortunately, some children's programs fall more into the category of high-tech entertainment than Bible teaching. These approaches turn children into spectators instead of participants in learning. The emphasis is placed upon what is going on "up front under the lights" rather

than what is happening in a child's heart, mind, and life. Sometimes activities are thrown together without any central biblical focus. Bible stories and characters are sometimes presented in surrealistic, almost mythical proportions, so that the truth is distorted rather than presented as believable reality. Is it any wonder that later in life youth reject the reality of these stories?



Scripture=Power & Potential

What potential and power exists when we teach the Bible to children! Paul reminded Timothy, "From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). A proper view of God, formed at an

early age by exploring what the Bible teaches, doesn't need to be unlearned in later years. There are marvelous results when tender consciences are informed by the only reliable moral compass, and when values are formed by the eternal principles of God's word. Children develop a deep-seated confidence in the promises and provision of God. Early on, they are taught to be open and responsive to God's voice. A reservoir of biblical truth fills their hearts and is at the Holy Spirit's disposal during their youth and adult years. They develop an understanding of God's revealed will, so they don't flounder without direction and purpose later on in life. It truly pays to teach the Bible to children!

How blessed are the children that have the privilege of participating in learning activities that get them to explore the truth of Scripture, apply its message in concrete, comprehensible ways, and lead them to respond to God at their level of understanding. I ought to know. I began my adventure of the Christian life as a preschooler in an Assemblies of God Sunday School, and I've never wanted to turn back. Let's teach the Bible to children!

Questions For Further Study—

1. Look up the following verses and write them in your own words.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Deuteronomy 11:18-21

Psalms 119:9-11

Proverbs 22:6

2. Are the children in your children's church spectators or participants? What improvements can be made to help the children participate more in your ministry programs?

3. Where do you think your children's church program falls—Does it tend more toward high-tech or low-tech? Is the Bible teaching weak or strong? Mark the position on the graph below where you think your children's church program falls. (For example, Church A uses high-tech methods but sacrifices the quality of Bible teaching. Church B emphasizes strong Bible teaching using lo-tech methods.) Discuss with your children's workers what improvements can be made in your children's ministry programs.

