

SECRETS TO A SUCCESSFUL BIBLE LESSON

Toolbox II

Suggested time: 60 minutes

PowerPoint Available: "Secrets to a Successful Bible Lesson"

Slide 1

Teaching the Bible to a group of children is an exciting privilege! We have the incredible opportunity to help them discover the truth about God, themselves, and the world around them. We get to share the Good News and teach the Bible, so they can know God, experience His redemptive love through faith in Jesus Christ, and live a victorious life in Him as part of God's family.

We want to teach all of this in a way that is effective - we want to give our best to God, and we want our investment and effort to be meaningful and successful in building God's Kingdom. Let's discover together how to do that.

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When we teach a Bible lesson to our students, we can look at the faces of our students to help determine how effective our teaching is. Are they bored, engaged, seriously trying to take everything in...? These faces give us the first clue to finding out if our lesson is successful.

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How should we define success when it comes to teaching a Bible lesson? Success is not measured merely by attendance numbers or even by number of verses memorized or test scores. True success can be measured by these criteria:

1. The Holy Spirit is at work. Is the Holy Spirit speaking, or is the teacher focused on their own plans and on entertaining the kids? When we teach the Word of God, we must be Spirit-led. We are not sharing our own plans or our own wisdom; we are instruments used by God to present His very words to the children in our class. This is totally different from teaching math or reading! When our students come to understand the heart of God and fall in love with Him, this is success!
2. The Word of God is taught accurately. (2 Timothy 2:15) When we correctly handle God's Word, teaching in a way that reveals His true intent, this is success!
3. The Gospel is presented. A plant cannot grow until the seed is planted. As we teach the Bible lesson, we must include the Gospel so children can choose to begin a relationship with Jesus Christ. When we regularly give children the opportunity to be saved, this is success!
4. Students are engaged and learning. The DL key chapter is Proverbs 2. It's all about calling out, seeking, and searching for understanding. This is active learning. Our Bible lessons should be like

treasure hunts, where students literally search for truth in their Bibles. When students seek to know God better, this is success!

5. The lesson is age appropriate. Imagine we are discussing a shoe with our students. When talking to five-year-olds, we may just say that it is a brown shoe. With eight-year-olds, we may discuss the size, the height of the heel, and the materials used in making the shoe. But with twelve-year-olds, we may also talk about the cost, the country of origin, the activities it is used for. When we teach at the right level, and our students learn to communicate an age-appropriate amount of accurate information, this is success!
6. Active learning is connected to the lesson. Did students understand the connection between the DT and the lesson, or was the DT just a game? When their hands-on activity leaves a memorable impression in their minds that relates directly to the main points of the lesson, this is success!
7. The Bible being brought to life. Are the students' imaginations running, recreating the plot of the lesson in their minds? (We will talk more about this in a moment.) When students have a clear mental picture of the events in the lesson, this is success!
8. Students understand how to apply the lesson to their own lives. Do you give students time to mentally personalize the lesson and think about how it will affect their lives? As you stand by the door and ask students what they are going to do with what they learned today, what will they say? Their responses will tell you if your lesson was successful. (We will talk more about this in a moment.) When your students can explain how to implement the lesson in their everyday lives, this is success!

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How do we accomplish this?

Make sure the skeleton of the lesson is solidly in place. This refers to the basics that are woven throughout every lesson. The foundational elements of the lesson need to be strong to support the creative edge of the lesson. Without a strong skeleton, your lesson will flop.

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The top of the skeleton is the head...the Lead Teacher.

There is no point in having all the bones aligned if you don't have a good "head" leader in place.

Before placing a volunteer as a Lead Teacher, ask:

1. Do they have the gift of teaching? (Are they in their sweet spot?)
2. Are they spiritually mature? (They should be ready to teach the Word and be actively living it out.)
3. Does the joy of Jesus flow out of them?

Keep in mind that your students will rise up to the level of the teacher.

For Directors: what happens if you have the wrong teacher in place?

1. Pray - ask God for wisdom.
2. Remember there are many children in the class, but there is only one Lead Teacher. In order to fulfill your responsibility to shepherd the sheep in your care, you must address the situation.
3. Lovingly meet with the teacher and talk about their strengths. Ask how they feel their class is going. Then lovingly share what you see.
4. Assure them you would love to have them as a part of your team, but a different position may better use their gifts and therefore help them grow in confidence.
5. If they don't want to change positions, work closely with them to help improve their skills. Model how to teach, and actively coach them toward success.

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Let's talk more about the rest of the skeleton...the part that supports the head.

While all of these points are covered in basic training, we must continually make sure they are properly aligned in order to ensure successful Bible lessons.

- 1) The Gospel is woven into the lesson with a clear invitation for salvation. Don't forget the invitation!
- 2) The teacher knows the lesson well enough that they can maintain eye contact with the students - not the outline in the curriculum - as they teach.
- 3) Props are used to capture and maintain the students' attention.
- 4) The 4 Rights are woven into the lesson.
- 5) Students and teachers are using their Bibles. (Teachers should use the same translation as the students.)
- 6) The Scripture outline in the curriculum is followed.

Now...after the skeleton is correctly aligned, we are ready to move to a more advanced level and "flesh out" the lesson.

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How do you keep kids on the edge of their seat, eager to learn and apply the lesson?

Think outside the box and be willing to break outside your routine.

Allow time for brainstorming creative teaching ideas.

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We teach the Bible lesson and value the art of storytelling.

We have taught for many years that leaders should not use the word "story" in reference to Bible narratives. This remains true. We never want students to think of the Bible as a collection of fictional stories, but rather as historical events and communication from God that can guide our modern lives. However, the art of storytelling is essential to effectively teaching truth.

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How do you use the art of storytelling in teaching the Bible? Learn to pull the story out of a passage of Scripture. First, understand what a story is:

- Stories have a setting and characters. (When and where does the lesson take place? Who is involved? Historical figures? You and me? God is always the main character!)
- Stories have a plot with a beginning, middle (conflict leading up to climax) and end (resolution). This is a sequence of events that unfolds through time. Teach through a sequence of events.
- Stories connect with people at an emotional level and engage their minds. Help your students identify personally with the thoughts and feelings of the characters.
- Some stories are fiction, and others are nonfiction. When we teach the Bible, we are teaching nonfiction - a **true** story. This means you cannot make things up to enhance the lesson. Remember, the Bible is NONFICTION, it isn't a fairy tale or even historical fiction. You need to study what is written, research the context, and teach from the facts.
- Stories may include the storyteller's unique perspective so the audience can connect the story to their everyday lives.

Practice this together! Read Matthew 14:22-33 out loud. Break into groups, and have each group work together to answer the following questions:

- What is the setting?
- Who are the characters? (Remember, God is always the main character!)
- What happens in the beginning, middle, and end?
- What were the characters thinking and feeling?
- How do you personally connect with this story?

Come back together as a large group and share your answers.

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Effective stories allow the audience to identify personally with the characters. Step into the shoes of the main characters. What did they hear, touch, say, smell, or see?

To do this, you need to slow down, study the Word well ahead of time, and give yourself time to “make friends” with key people in the lesson, without twisting or embellishing the truth.

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If you were Daniel, what would you have touched, tasted, smelled, heard, and seen? How can you get your students into the sandals of Daniel, identifying with his decisions and responses? How can you read the passage of Scripture vividly, so your students can picture themselves living through the experience? Practice varying the tone and volume of your voice and pausing for effect at the appropriate times.

Read Daniel 1:12-13 quickly in a monotone voice. Then read Daniel 1:12-13 with expression:

“(Humbly) Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat (pause) and water to drink (pause). (Confidently) Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.”

Have the group stand up and read Daniel 1:12-13 together with expression. If it is not expressive enough the first time, have them read it again!

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Read Matthew 4:18 in a monotone voice, and then read with expression.

“(Joyfully) As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee (pause), (straightforward voice) he saw two brothers (pause), (a bit more expressively) Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. (Excitedly) They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.”

After reading the verse, ask trainees, “What did you touch, taste, smell, hear, and see?” Have them list down on a piece of paper as many ideas as they can think of. Then have them shout out answers to the group.

Slide 13

Don't miss the last opportunity to connect with your students! Telling a good story is important, but if you miss the conclusion, you miss the whole point! The conclusion is essential because it bridges the gap between the story and the students' everyday lives. The conclusion tells them what you want them to do with it!

Think back to Daniel - how does that connect with students today?

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Make older students think deeper; what did Daniel's commitment to God cost him? What could it have cost him? What might a commitment to God cost you?

Slides 15-18

Invite students into an experience! The atmosphere in your room can bring the Bible to life, regardless of the size of the room. Be creative with what you have. Have students step into the scene and become part of the Bible narrative.

If you are a Director, cheer for the leaders who are creative, and help those who may need help. Usually “iron will sharpen iron” and leaders will begin to motivate and inspire other leaders.

Take time to show the participants some everyday items and demonstrate how they can be used to bring the Bible to life.

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Conclusion

The more you study and the more you pray, the more you will hear the voice of God as you prepare. Ask for wisdom, pray for your students, and strive for excellence. God will be at work and that will result in a successful Bible lesson....and your students will reflect Jesus as He shines through you.

Pray these verses over your teachers: 1 Corinthians 15:58, Colossian 3:17, and Galatians 6:9.