

Creative Ideas for Teaching the Word

Using a variety of approaches to introduce stories from the Word kindles interest and enthusiasm. Any method, when used every week, can become routine and boring.

The following tables are laid out to help you find ways to (1.) introduce, (2.) read, (3.) understand, (4.) respond to and (5.) remember stories from the Word.

There are ideas for both younger and older children.

1. Introducing the Story

If the children have been sitting for a long time before the lesson begins, you may want to do a song or have a little exercise before you begin. Once students are alert, choose an activity to help draw them in to the lesson. Vary the technique you use so that the children will retain their interest over the course of the year.

Age Group	Activity	Method
All ages	Story Basket	Put item(s) (or pictures of them) mentioned in the story into a large basket. Bring the item(s) out as you introduce the story. <i>e.g.</i> water (water to wine), rock (house on rock), shoe (Moses removes shoes), branch (I am the vine), star (Abraham, wise men), <i>etc.</i>
All ages	Show a Picture	Any story. Many available on the Internet. Make it more interesting by showing only part of the picture and having students guess what it might be. Slowly reveal more until the entire picture can be seen.
All ages	Hide something in a box	Put something from the story into a box. Pass the box around. Let the children feel and shake the box to guess what's inside. Open and discover contents <i>e.g.</i> new truth from heaven (book), rubber snake (Aaron's rod) <i>etc.</i>
All ages	Visualize the setting	Have students close their eyes and describe the setting, customs or events that they will hear about in the story.
Young children	Sensory Experience	Eat something mentioned in the story (puffed cereals for 'manna' or honey), pour water (any story mentioning water) or put hands into sand (Abraham's descendants will be as the sand of the sea) and invite the children to talk about the taste, texture, <i>etc.</i>
3 and up	Listening Key	Ask students to listen for a key word or phrase as you read the story. Raise their hands whenever they hear the word.
7 and up	Generate Anticipation	Share 3-5 True/False statements relating to themes or events that encourage discussion. <i>e.g.</i> statements about Mount Sinai, Moses and the cloud on the mountain in preparation for reading the 10 Commandments.
7 and up	Predict the Outcome	Pose a problem and ask the students to predict a character's response or to predict what may happen next. <i>e.g.</i> The Lord gave Moses the power to do miracles. Will Pharaoh be able to do them too?

10 and up	Similar Situation	Have students think about a time they might have been in a situation similar to one that is in the story for the day, <i>e.g.</i> wanting something (Hannah wanting a child) or facing a difficult task (David and Goliath). Share their thoughts with a classmate or with the class.								
10 and up	Contrast Charts	<p>Set up a chart (<i>e.g.</i> Good Friend vs. Bad Friend, or Good Promises vs. Bad Promises) and invite students to brainstorm words that describe each kind of person or promise.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Good Friends...</td> <td>Bad Friends...</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Help others</td> <td>Criticize others</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Are interested in others</td> <td>Are interested only in themselves</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>Read a story relating to friendship or promises, <i>e.g.</i> David and Jonathan stories, or Jephthah's vow.</p>	Good Friends...	Bad Friends...	Help others	Criticize others	Are interested in others	Are interested only in themselves		
Good Friends...	Bad Friends...									
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10 and up	Key Words	Tell the children one key word in the story <i>e.g.</i> ark, ephod, drought or leprosy. Brainstorm what the word means, and write responses down to activate prior knowledge.								

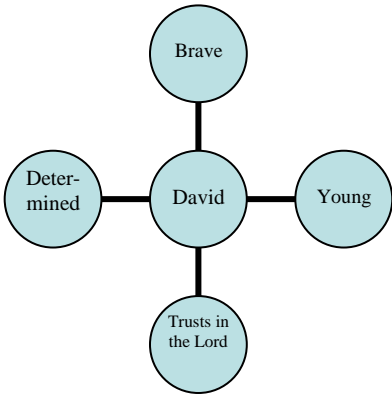
2. Reading Activities

Use one of these ideas or combine several different ideas in one lesson. Keep creative momentum and interest going throughout the lesson time by engaging students at every step.

Age Group	Activity	Method
Young children	Reenact Miracles as you read	<p>Look for miracles in the story that you might re-enact as you read. Build interest and suspense as the story progresses <i>e.g.</i> turn water to "wine" by pouring water into a non-see-through pitcher with grape juice concentrate at the bottom. When you pour from the pitcher at the end of the story, it will have turned into "wine".</p> <p><i>N.B. It is wise to let children know that what they have witnessed was not a genuine miracle! Only the Lord can really do miracles. It was an enactment.</i></p>
Young children	Use Pictures	Bring focus and understanding to the lesson by showing a series of pictures as the story develops, or add details to a felt board or suede graph as you read.
Young children	Call and Response	When a phrase is used repeatedly in a story, engage the children by inviting them to finish it when they hear it <i>e.g.</i> And God saw...that it was good (creation story in Genesis).
Young children	Storytelling	Read the story over several times and become familiar with the details. Tell the children the story simply and accurately—using good eye contact, and vocal and facial expression. Memorize key phrases or choose important details read aloud. Use props or pictures to bring it to life.
Young children	Happy or Sad	Give each child a two-sided face. On one side, the face should be happy—on the other side it should be sad. As you read the story aloud, have the children hold up the face that shows if the action or people in the story is happy/sad (good/bad).

Young children	Acting (no preparation)	Teacher reads the story aloud while the children sit and listen. Discuss the story with the class. Brainstorm acting and set-up. Teacher reads the story again while the children move around, showing what is going on. Choose whether everyone will do all of the parts, or whether one group of children will act out one part, while another group of children act out a different part.
Young and older children	Use Props	Gather a few props to show the children as the story progresses <i>e.g.</i> a staff, piece of clothing, pitcher, oil, <i>etc.</i> Helps bring understanding to the story. Decide whether to spark interest by sharing ahead of time, or keep props hidden to retain interest later in the reading.
6 and up	Book in Hand Theater (some preparation)	Prepare script by downloading the text from www.biblegateway.com and pasting into a Word document. Use colors or a variety of fonts to distinguish different characters in the story. Add character and narrator names. (This whole process should take less than 15 minutes.) Print one copy for each child in the class. Introduce the story. Give a few basic staging directions <i>e.g.</i> where a house, stream or mountain might be. The children will read the story as a play and act it out as they go. If the children enjoy it, repeat the reading and change who is reading which character.
6 to 10	Choral Reading	Children read a section of the story aloud as a group. Works well if there are phrases that recur <i>e.g.</i> All that the Lord has spoken, we will do. Write the phrase on a board, large piece of paper, or make copies and hand out as recitation slips.
6 and up	Acting (more preparation)	Create as script (see above). Prepare costumes and a few props. Proceed as above. Present play to another Sunday School class.
10 and up	Jigsaw Reading	Good for long stories <i>e.g.</i> Daniel. Divide the story into sections. Assign each section to a group of children. Each group reads independently. Groups get together and each group <i>tells</i> their part of the story to all of the children.
10 and up	Reading Buddies	Divide the children into groups of 2 or 3. Take turns reading the verses aloud. When everyone has finished reading, discuss the story with the group.
10 and up	Silent Reading	Give students a reading question, <i>e.g.</i> who helps David? Each child reads the story silently. Students discuss their answers together.
12 and up	Vantage Points	Assign each student a vantage point to focus on while reading the story <i>e.g.</i> the characters, what the Lord or His representative is telling people, problems and their causes, feelings of the people involved, <i>etc.</i>

3. Understanding the story

Age Group	Activity	Method
All	Drawing	Illustrate one scene of the story.
All ages	Use Your Setting	Use the outdoors to measure out the Tabernacle of Israel, set up a tent or re-create the burning bush by tying colored fabric strips to a bush.
Young children	Water Play	Experience “cleansing” from leprosy by having the children dip their hands into flour. Discuss what life was like for lepers—and then have the children wash seven times in the “Jordan” (water) like Naaman. Part the Red Sea by filling a shallow tray with water and “parting” it with a hair dryer. <i>Optional:</i> use blue food dye for special effect.
5 and up	Terrain Box	Create the terrain of the story in a box using sand, rocks or clay. Use figures to show the action.
5 and up	Sequencing	Put pictures or story cards with people or events in the order they appear in the story.
7 and up	Drawing	Draw a main character, a person with whom they most relate, a symbol in the story, or important object.
7 and up	Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pair-share • Small group • Whole class 	Identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most important part of the story • Lesson being taught • Application to life • Different (better) decisions that could have been made by people in the story • Consequences of poor decisions • Teacher lead discussion to connect previously learned ideas students could not connect on the own
10 and up	Attribute Web	 <p>The diagram shows a central circle labeled "David" connected to four surrounding circles: "Brave" (top), "Young" (right), "Trusts in the Lord" (bottom), and "Determined" (left).</p> <p>Develop a web by starting with the name at the center. Add to the chart as students identify qualities. Extend the web further by listing examples from the story.</p>

10 and up	Large Scale Map	Use rope (indoors) or chalk (outdoors) to outline a map of Canaan. Include main cities (<i>optional</i> : make standing signs) and walk the routes taken in the story. Use sturdy tape or paint to make a more permanent map in your Sunday School space and use it again and again.																				
10 and up	Attribute Chart	<p>List qualities with evidence from the story</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DAVID</p> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: auto;"/> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; width: 50%; margin: auto;"> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 40%;"></div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 40%;"></div> </div> <p style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; width: 50%; margin: auto;"> Attributes <i>e.g.</i> brave For Example <i>e.g.</i> fought without armor </p>																				
10 and up	Feeling Chart	<p>List 3-5 key events in a story on the left side of chart, character list across the top. Note the feeling or response of each character to each event.</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Mary</th> <th>Angels</th> <th>Herod</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Jesus is born</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Shepherds hear news</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wise men hear news</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Herod hears news</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Mary	Angels	Herod	Jesus is born				Shepherds hear news				Wise men hear news				Herod hears news			
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10 and up	Actions Chart	Note actions of characters toward each other <i>e.g.</i> David and Saul.																				
10 and up	Venn Diagram	<p>Compare 2 events, 2 characters, 2 stories, <i>etc.</i> Note differences (in each circle) and similarities where the circles overlap</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 20px 0;"> </div>																				
10 and up	Map Work	Learn to draw a freehand outline map of the land of Canaan. (Imagine the Dead Sea as a pickle with a bite taken out of it.)																				
10 and up	Story Map	Use pictorial symbols to illustrate what happens in the story at various places.																				
10 and up	Journey Map	Trace the journey of a main character <i>e.g.</i> David's flight from Saul.																				
12 and up	Vantage Point	Each member of the class (or smaller group) looks at the story from a different perspective: People, Searcher (the Lord's message), Problem, Illustrator, Geographer, or Specialist.																				

12 and up	Comparison	Compare the main character with another person in the story or another person in the Word <i>e.g.</i> Joshua and Jesus, Elisha and Jesus, Good king and a Bad king, <i>etc.</i>
12 and up	Design	Design a picture or other form of art to illustrate a concept. Does not need to be finished.
12 and up	Debate	Discuss the story in debate format.

4. Response Activities

This list of activities is only beginning! Use these ideas as a springboard for your own creative ideas!

Age Group	Activity	Method				
All ages	Art Projects	The sky is the limit! Here are a few tips to help you : Glitter —put the project to be glittered on a large rectangular baking tray or low-sided cardboard box. The tray will catch the extra glitter. Tap it in to one corner and pour back into the container. Paints —for young children, use one brush per color to slow down “color mixing”. Use a muffin tin to separate colors for older children. Use a Paper Cutter —to reduce preparation time—stack the paper and cut out multiples. Buy a Rotary Fabric Cutter —layer the fabric and cut once.				
All ages	Banners	Banners may be made for permanent display, or in simple form to provide a learning experience. Divide up the characters in a story, give each child a piece of felt and have them cut out figures. Use alphabet templates to cut lettering. Assemble as a class. Banners may be arranged in sections to show a sequence of events, or depict one central theme or scene.				
Younger children	Singing	Look for songs that familiarize children with stories from the Word. Lori Odhner has written many songs that make good teaching tools. Order online at bookstore@newchurch.org .				
Younger children	Class Book	Each student makes a page to be collaged into a class book. Use the book later to review the story.				
Young to 10	Illustrated Book	Students create their own miniature book on a theme <i>e.g.</i> Elisha’s miracles. Depending on how you design the project, this may continue on from week to week.				
5 to 10	Story Ladder	Retell story through pictures and words in 4 panels, after dividing paper into 4 rectangles (fold, or used prepared paper) <table border="1" style="width: 100%; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr> <td>Rebekah hears Isaac telling Esau to prepare a stew.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rebekah helps Jacob prepare a stew.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jacob covers himself with skins, offers his stew and receives the blessing of the firstborn.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Esau brings his stew and finds out that Isaac has been tricked. He begs for a blessing also.</td> </tr> </table>	Rebekah hears Isaac telling Esau to prepare a stew.	Rebekah helps Jacob prepare a stew.	Jacob covers himself with skins, offers his stew and receives the blessing of the firstborn.	Esau brings his stew and finds out that Isaac has been tricked. He begs for a blessing also.
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5 and up	Jigsaw Puzzle	Glue a picture on to lightweight cardboard. Cut the picture apart to create jigsaw pieces. The child reassembles the picture. Send home in an envelope or Ziploc bag!								
7 and up	Accordion Book	Fold a long strip of paper in accordion fashion and make book with text and pictures. Write or illustrate a story in sequence <i>e.g.</i> Creation. <i>Optional:</i> glue on a front and back cover.								
10 and up	Board Game	Teacher or students can create a board game for an ongoing story in the Word. Keep and play again later.								
10 and up	Who Am I?	Put the name of a character on the back of each student and have them try to figure out who they are by asking questions that can be answered “yes” or “no.”								
10 and up	Disclosure Game	Write a series of clues. Read them one at a time, having students raise their hands when they know which judge, prophet, king, <i>etc.</i> is being described. Keep going until most hands are up.								
10 and up	Scramble	Give students key words listing people and key events from a story. Have them cut these apart, then rearrange into groups that seem to make sense. Discuss.								
10 and up	Story Board	<p>Divide a piece of paper into 8 rectangles. Use one rectangle for each of the following:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td>Story title and student’s name</td> <td>Main character</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Setting (time and place)</td> <td>Situation</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Problem/Antagonist</td> <td>Conflict</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resolution</td> <td>End—wrapping up loose ends</td> </tr> </table>	Story title and student’s name	Main character	Setting (time and place)	Situation	Problem/Antagonist	Conflict	Resolution	End—wrapping up loose ends
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12 and up	Time Line	Make a mural illustrating major events on a time line <i>e.g.</i> inventions which enabled the spread of the Word, progression of kings, time line of events in the Word. Cut out or draw pictures of major events and place along time line.								
Older children	Crossword Puzzles and Word searches	Create your own! Sites on the internet can help you make your own. You may also purchase a program fairly inexpensively. Enter keywords from the story. Make the activity simple or complex depending on the ages of the children. Some programs allow you to create puzzles in appealing shapes.								

5. Remember the Story

Our goal is to help the children be life-long learners of the stories in the Word. Memorable experiences help children retain what they have learned. Review what children have as you conclude weekly lessons and periodically throughout the year. Use the wall space in your building to display project samples and turn your space into a learning environment. Take home follow-up activities provide additional opportunities to discuss what has been learned with parents and other family members. Many activities that are listed above may be used both as teaching and review tools. Here are a few more to add to your teaching “bank”.

Age Group	Activity	Method
All ages	Story Basket	Review stories learned through taking objects out of a story basket and recounting the relevant stories.
All ages	Pictures	Show a series of pictures and recounting the stories.
All ages	Adapt a commercial game	Look for games that are fun for children, but which could lend themselves to Bible stories <i>e.g.</i> Pictionary. Students will illustrate stories or characters from the Word while others guess what they are drawing. Teams advance with correct guesses.
Younger children	Songs	Singing songs that tell the stories from the Word is a great way to review. The powerful pairing of words and music may stay with a person for a lifetime.
10 and up	Students Make up Questions	Students write up a question about the story for other students to answer.
10 and up	Categories Game	Review a story or do a periodic review playing this game: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide the class into 2 teams • Divide questions into 3 categories: Old Testament, New Testament, Writings for the New Church • Toss a coin to determine whether the question will be easy or hard (Easy= which part of the Word contains the books Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? (New Testament) Hard= Name 4 books in the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) • Keep score of correct answers • If students do not know the answers, tell them, so that they will know next time
10 and up	20 Questions	Teacher has a person from the Word, incident or book of the Word in mind. Students are invited to ask 20 questions to see if they can discover the answer. Teacher gives yes/no answers.
10 and up	Bible Baseball	Draw a baseball diamond. Players advance 1-4 bases depending on the difficulty of each question. Players are out if they answer incorrectly. Correct answers may bring teammates home. Each run is a point for the team.