

Teaching Stories from the Word—Sunday School Workshop

Explore a Variety of Teaching Methods

Ages 3-6

Ready—Set—Go!

Ready?

- Know the story
- Visualize your approach

Set?

- Plan the lesson from start to finish
- Gather supplies

Go!

- Prepare and motivate the students
- Teach, self-evaluate, celebrate!

5-part Lesson Menu

1. Introducing the Story
2. Reading the Story
3. Understanding the Story
4. Responding to the Story
5. Remembering the Story

1. Introducing the Story

Choose one activity to introduce the story.

Activity	Method
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>
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.
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>
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.
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>
Visualize the setting	Have students close their eyes and describe the setting, customs or events that they will hear about in the story.

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2. Reading the Story

Decide how you want to read the story.

Activity	Method
Reenact Miracles as you read	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”. <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>
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.
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.
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.
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.
Build a Felt Board	Invite children to add characters and simple setting pieces to a felt board as you read the story.
Call and Response	When a phrase is use 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).
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).

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3. Understanding the Story

Activity	Method
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.
Drawing	Illustrate one scene of the story.
Terrain Box	Create the terrain of the story in a box using sand, rocks or clay. Use figures to show the action. Invite children to re-create the story using clothespin dolls or puppets.
Felt Board	Invite children to add figures to a felt board to re-create the story.
Puppets	Review the story using simple puppets.
Sequencing	Put pictures or story cards with people or events in the order they appear in the story.
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.

4. Responding to the Story

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

Activity	Method
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 .
Illustrated Book	Students create their own miniature book on a theme e.g. Elisha’s miracles. Depending on how you design the project, this may continue on from week to week.
Class Book	Each student makes a page to be collaged into a class book. Use the book later to review the story.
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!
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.

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Art Projects	<p>The sky is the limit! Here are a few tips to help you :</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Paints—for young children, use one brush per color to slow down “color mixing”.</p> <p>Use a Paper Cutter—to reduce preparation time—stack the paper and cut out multiples.</p> <p>Buy a Rotary Fabric Cutter—layer the fabric and cut once.</p>
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5. Remembering the Story

Memorable experiences help create life-long learners of the stories in the Word. Review what children have learned as you conclude lessons weekly 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 as teaching *or* review tools. Here are a few more to add to your teaching “bank”.

Activity	Method
Story Basket	Review stories learned through taking objects out of a story basket and recounting the relevant stories.
Pictures	Show a series of pictures and recounting the stories.
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.
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.