

3.7 a. How can we make the Bible lesson more interesting through effective use of visual aids?

3.7a How can we make the Bible lesson more interesting through effective use of visual aids?

1) Through using flannelgraph to hold attention and increase learning

Choosing and identifying flannelgraph figures

- ◆ Make sure the pieces are a set
(Backing, numbering, clothing, photo guides)
- ◆ Make sure the pieces are complete for the lesson you want to teach
(Use photo guides or numbers.) If not, you will learn later to improvise.
- ◆ Make sure the figures are “sticky” enough to adhere easily to the board. You can add other flannel scraps on the back if necessary.
- ◆ Select all the figures for the lesson you will be teaching. Put the others aside back in the envelope.
- ◆ Make sure you understand what each figure represents—WHO it is, WHAT it is.

Placement of the board and the teacher

Board eye level with students

Will they sit or stand? Teacher can sit or stand to reach their level.

Size large enough for all to see

Consider the size of the group, the conditions where you will be teaching, distance from student farthest away from teacher.

Teacher not to block the view

Stand to side, or place an object and walk a step or two away.

Placement of figures on the flannel board

Where to place figures on the board?

- ◆ Aim for a realistic looking picture—like real life
- ◆ Foreground—lower part of board—places near to you—figures larger
- ◆ Background—upper part of board—places further away from you—figures smaller
- ◆ Distance shown by two things—size of figure & placement on lower or upper part of board.
- ◆ Figures about all same size shows they are in one place together
- ◆ Large differences in sizes show distance away
- ◆ Feet must normally be on the floor or ground.
- ◆ Feet go on the colored part of floor or ground, not on the line. For instance, not on the horizon line or the line between the floor and the wall.
- ◆ Use small guide pictures to determine & practice placement

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When to place figures on the board?

Making notes on the lesson outline

- ◆ Numbers or letters, assigned by lesson or self assigned.
- ◆ Draw simple outline in notes.

Timing placement of materials with teaching of lesson]

- ◆ Piece by piece as the lesson unfolds
- ◆ OK to put up backgrounds ahead, but not characters
- ◆ FIRST, TELL the action. THEN, SHOW the action.
Students can be thinking about what you said while you put the piece on the board.
- ◆ Remove unnecessary pieces before adding new pieces.
- ◆ Do not describe the pieces or talk about the pieces. TELL THE STORY.
- ◆ DO NOT say I SEE or ask WHAT DO YOU SEE? Let your storytelling carry the lesson, and the flannelgraph figures illustrate it.
- ◆ Do not say THIS IS...Jesus, etc. It is not Jesus. It is a piece of paper or felt. Tell the story, and when you mention Jesus, put his picture on the board.
- ◆ Practice telling lesson with figures

◆ **Changing the flannel backgrounds**

- ✓ Using multiple boards
- ✓ Using a plain background and a second piece of flannel
- ✓ Using multiple backgrounds
- ✓ Using overlays

Organizing figures for teaching—

Before use:

Stack or lay out in order of usage.

Layout of materials must be within arm's reach of teacher.

If stacking materials, you must know which figures must be reused. Lay them aside or ask a student to hold the piece for you.

After use:

Make sure figures are complete and in good repair. Return them to the envelope with the others from that series. **Attention! Flannelgraph pieces get lost & damaged easily.**

Return them to their place immediately after use to minimize problems.

Simplifying for use with younger children or outdoors

- ◆ For preschool children, simple or no background is best
- ◆ Use only main characters, eliminate other pieces
- ◆ For outdoor use, one simple figure on a small, hand held board can be effective and provides teacher mobility.

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Allowing the children to place the figures

- ◆ With supervision, can allow them to replace figures and retell lesson for review
- ◆ Ask a child to place the figure but point to the spot.
- ◆ Ask him to move it up or down, right or left if necessary.
GOOD! When he gets it right.
- ◆ Make sure hands are clean.

Special problems and suggestions

Problems with outdoor use (same with rooms where wind blows through)

- ◆ Problem with wind affects both pieces and board
 - Helpers can hold pieces/board
 - Plain background attached to board or clip background to board twice on each side
 - Can use small, hand-held board
 - Can use magnetic board or velcro with flannel board
 - Plain flannel board not recommended for very windy situations

Care of materials

- ◆ Keep sets together—return soon after use
- ◆ Collect small pieces in envelope
- ◆ Clean hands
- ◆ Soft eraser removes some dirt
- ◆ Transport in a protective carrying case

Repair/ replacement of materials

- ◆ Call attention to any damage when returning materials
- ◆ Some replacement objects can be drawn on paper & backed with flannel pieces or drawn directly onto flannel.
- ◆ Care of large felt sets—organizing, hand washing, hand-drawn replacements

Other suggestions for using flannelgraph

Key words—For those in school, write one or two key words for each lesson clearly on a strip of paper and back it with flannel scraps. Be sure to choose words and style of writing appropriate for the age and educational level of the class you are teaching. For younger children use simple words like Jesus or Love, but only if they are dealt with in the lesson.

When you mention the word in your teaching, put the word on the board and ask the children to repeat it after you.

Memory verse—For those who can read or are learning to read, you can write some or all of the memory verse on paper strips and back them with flannel scraps. With younger children or with longer verses,

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write very short phrases together. Say the verse slowly as you put up the strips, having the children repeat after you. Later you can remove the strips one by one, testing the children each time to see if they can say it without the words. For a fun review game for older children, scramble the words on the board and have them rearrange them in the right order. Or, give one word or phrase to several students. Have the class recite the verse together. The children who are holding the words or phrases but listen carefully and put their flannel pieces on the board at the appropriate times.

NOTE: We are praying that using flannelgraph lessons effectively will soon help increase the effectiveness of your teaching AND increase your students' attention to your lessons. May God bless you in this important work of teaching the next generation for Jesus Christ.

2) Through effective use of objects and pictures

Jesus was the most effective teacher ever to live. Would we agree on that? Yet He never had flannelgraph, prepared lessons with pictures, films, or any other special props. He used what He found all around Him.

Let's think together. If Jesus had needed these things, don't you think He could have created them on the spot? Why do you think He didn't do so? (Allow for discussion.) Maybe one of the reasons was that He wanted to SHOW US how to teach effectively anytime, anywhere. God has already made and put into His world all we need for effective illustrations.

Using objects common to your area

Sand makes a great natural chalkboard. Jesus wrote on the ground with his finger, but maybe you'd like to grab a stick to write the memory verse, a key word, or a simple sketch. You can draw a line on the ground and make simple playing boards for games like tic-tac-toe. It works best when the sand is slightly damp.

Things from God's creation. A leafy branch can represent a tree. Water can be felt as well as observed. Flowers, shells, snakeskins, honey, birds' feathers, rocks.

Things around the home or the neighborhood or village. A chair or table can represent a mountain, especially when covered with a cloth. Fire is important in several Bible stories. (Be careful!) Coins are found in some Bible stories. A line of chairs can be a boat. Use the imagination God gave you!

Pictures. You may find helpful pictures on boxes, calendars, cans, in magazines or newspapers.

Models. Many African children are highly skilled at making working models of cars, airplanes, etc. out of soft wood. With guidance, they could probably construct a model of the Tabernacle or Temple or almost any object you want.

Steps to follow:

1. Ask yourself, what THINGS are in the Bible lesson? Would the lesson be enhanced if I showed some of them? How could I get, find, or construct those things? Could we indicate over objects to REPRESENT other objects, using our imagination?
2. Ask yourself, what IDEAS are in the Bible lesson that could be represented by objects.
3. Ask yourself what WRITING might be desirable with this lesson. How could we best do that writing? Is paper available in a large enough size? A chalkboard? Sand?

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4. Ask yourself what PICTURES might help. Can you find them or draw them?

3.7.b How can we make the lesson more interesting through student participation?

Think about this: God gave Ten Commandments, but to watch the way some teachers handle their classrooms, you'd think the Eleventh Commandment was "Thou shalt not move!"

Yet God created kids with the urge and the physical need to move! Growth demands movement. The key is to allow appropriate movement and to channel that movement in a productive manner so that it enhances the students' learning experience, while minimizing distraction to others at inappropriate times.

Consider these factors:

- When kids participate, they learn more and remember longer.
- When kids participate, it is easier to hold their interest.
- When kids participate, the need to move is satisfied, so that they can more easily be quiet at important times.

How can kids participate in the lesson? Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Question & answer. (See the section on asking good questions.)
- Games. (See the section on games.)
- Repeat a key word or an important idea in unison, perhaps with an appropriate action.
- Rhythmic repetition. Add a catchy rhythm to something they are to repeat. (Talking rhythmically)
- Sing and/or dance as they repeat a key word or an important idea.
- Give prearranged responses throughout the lesson. (No! Ooooh. Too bad! He was God's man, etc.)
- Carry out prearranged responses throughout the lesson. (Yawning, clapping, walking in place, etc.)
- Act out part of the story as a group.
- Draw a picture showing what is happening.

3.7 a. How can we make the Bible lesson more interesting through effective use of visual aids?

3.7c How can we make the lesson more interesting through storytelling?

Consider this teacher's experience:

As I told the missionary story during vacation Bible school 120 children sat in rapt attention, their eyes fastened on me, hanging onto my every word. Yet in this group were several active, noisy, rowdy children, and a few described as "just plain bratty."

I learned to tell stories by listening and observing. When I saw something that worked I learned what to do, and just as often I saw things that didn't work and learned what to avoid. I'm naturally a shy person the kind that shrinks in front of three people at a party, but through practice, observation, and God's help I've learned to tell stories that would hold the interest of even a large group of people.

There are seven major principles that work for me and for other good storytellers I've heard, perhaps you'd like to try them.

1) Know the story thoroughly but don't memorize it.

First I never try to memorize a story word for word, but I do study it thoroughly so I know the basic plot well. I dislike the canned speeches recited by some sales people. It's easy to spot such a speech by the tone and rapid rate of delivery. A memorized story no matter how perfectly recited can never sound natural. Besides what would the storyteller do if their mind suddenly went blank? If they know the basic plot of the story they won't be totally lost if they forget one part. But if each word is connected to the next one and one link is lost, the whole story is over. On the other extreme is the storyteller who reads the story once, or twice, and then wonders why she can't keep her students under control while she tries to remember the next part. Worse still is the storyteller who just reads to her students. And usually loses her place in the process. Of course reading a story to a group of children as they all cluster around to see the pictures does have its place in the Christian education. I often read to my children. But with larger, and older groups telling the story often holds attention longer and better.

2) Make a simple outline.

In studying the story I sometimes feel the need of a simple outline. I may use a 3 x 5in card if the story is very complex, writing only the main ideas. If I make more than one card I number them in bold numbers with contrasting ink. (What if I drop them?)

Sometimes a simple 4 or 5 line summary will suffice, I sometimes find it useful to write it on the palm of my hand. With flashcard lessons an outline is usually not necessary because the pictures remind me of what is next.

3) Decide how to start and stop.

Even though I don't memorize the entire story I do memorize two parts, a one line opening, and a one line closing. I give considerable thought to these sometimes departing from the published version. I want something snappy to grab my listeners' attention right away and when I speak one line boldly and enthusiastically the rest of the story seems to follow the same. The ending is just as important I want something to signal the end, without saying it. I also want to bring the story home to my students lives. It's hard to adlib a good ending so I memorize this part.

4) Exaggerate emotions.

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When I tell a story I always exaggerate emotions. I never exaggerate facts, but emotions are different. My sad characters are sobbing sad, my happy characters are giggly happy, and when my characters are mad they are lip curled, teeth grinding mad. Hamming it up made me self conscious at first but the children loved it, and I soon forgot my so called dignity and began to experience vicariously the feelings of the characters in my stories. Sometimes I get so involved in just practicing a story that I shed tears. I think this emotional heightening has added more child appeal than any other thing I do.

5) Use contrasting voices.

I have found that children listen better when I use contrast. I speak slowly when it's appropriate and faster and faster as the plot thickens. Slow speech is appropriate for sad portions, and rapid speech for happier sections. I speak loudly then almost a whisper the children hear me because they listen closely. My voice exhibits sorrow, and glee, apprehension, and confidence, timidity, and boastfulness, when appropriate to the story.

6) Get dramatic.

I dramatize the story with action, and facial expression. When happy my characters skip around the room, when bored they slouch. When frightened they may stutter with fright, or their knees may knock. I never simply tell the children "Tommy was excited." I show them Tommy was excited by the volume, tone, and speed of my voice, by jumping up and down, by the look on my face.

7) Except for dramatics, stay natural**Move naturally into the invitation.**

I make a deliberate effort not to pause even for a moment, and not to change the tone of my voice when I move into the application, or an invitation. (this is much more difficult then it sounds.) I have seen a large group sit engrossed in a story but when I start the application half of them yawn, start talking, or get up to leave. I've been able to cut down on this by moving rapidly into the invitation, and using the same tone, and variations I did in the story.

Use a natural voice.

Everyone has probably heard Christians who have a "talking voice" a "praying voice," or a "preaching voice" by avoiding my "preaching voice" I have been able to avoid triggering the off switch in many of my listeners. Then there are less distractions, and The Holy Spirit can work with tender hearts.

Well, that's it. Those are the six principles I have seen work with other story tellers and with myself. To apply these six principles, I practice. Usually I tell a story to my own children at home before telling it to a group. I can identify my weaknesses and strengths that way. I can also tell how well I know the story, if I get the facts mixed up, or hesitate, I practice again. I can also get a feel for the emotions, and tone that belongs. There is more to teaching than storytelling but I've seen a story excite, and affect many people for good. But remember half of the excitement is in the storyteller.

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3.7.d How can we make the lesson interesting through effective use of puppets?

Values of puppets

1. Get & hold interest
2. Child enjoy them
3. Puppets can say things you can't
4. Puppets can lighten things up and still get serious points across
5. One little boy got saved because he felt the puppet was looking right at him.

Kinds of puppets

Marionettes

Dolls & Puppets without moveable mouths

Soft headed puppets with moveable mouths

Sock puppets

Paper sack puppets

Stick puppets, bottle puppets

Finger puppets

Tips on using puppets

Holding the puppet so the kids can see the face

Moving the mouth with the words

Whispering, singing & other ways of talking

Puppet actions

Using puppet voices

Using a script, using a tape, using music, ad-libbing

Ways to use puppets

With a script

With music

To monitor & evaluate the children's performance or behavior

Letting children use the puppets

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3.7.e How can we make the lesson more interesting through effective use of questions?

Questions can be used in many ways. We can understand the different kinds of questions by asking ourselves what the desired response is. For instance:

Getting people to say yes or no

- To get agreement or disagreement
- To decide on the truth or accuracy of certain statements

Getting people to notice, recount or recall facts

- To recall knowledge or events
- To test recall of knowledge
- To help people notice the details of a Bible lesson
- To order events chronologically or logically
- To choose or to recognize the right answer

Getting people to think

- To get people thinking about a certain topic or question
- To encourage people to think about how they could apply certain principles
- To encourage people to think about the motives of characters
- To encourage people to think about cause and effect—how certain actions or choices resulted in certain consequences
- To help people notice the sequence or order of events in a Bible lesson
- To plant a seed for thought

Getting people to react

- To encourage formation or expression of personal opinion
- To encourage people to show how to apply certain principles
- To get people to compare and contrast new information with that which they already have
- To get people to debate
- To make a moral or life action choice

Getting people to discuss an issue or an idea

The kind of response the teacher desires determines the way the question should be asked.

Group Activity

In small groups, discuss ways of asking questions that would evoke each of these responses. Notice that certain words often appear at the beginning of the questions. We call these key question words. What key question words should be used to get each kind of response?

3.7 a. How can we make the Bible lesson more interesting through effective use of visual aids?

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A common error is to ask primarily questions that can be answered with “yes” or “no.” These are usually not the most useful type of questions because they can be answered almost automatically and require little thought. The more thought a question takes, the greater impact it will have on the student.

Another common error is to ask primarily questions involving recall of fact. Certainly there is a place for recounting and remembering facts, but the best questions require thought.

What do you think? Which of these questioning words require more thought, as opposed to just remembering facts?

Who? How? When? Why? How many? What if?

LET’S PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Choose a Bible story of 3-12 verses that you might enjoy teaching children. Write as many questions as you can about the story.

Yes or No Questions

Fact Questions

Thought Questions

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3.7.f How can we make the lesson more interesting through Bible Games?

Consider this family's experience:

"What did you do in Sunday School today?" Jim and Susie's mother ask. Jim wished she didn't always have to ask. After all what is there to do in Sunday School? Except sit?

"Nuthin" Jim answered, "The teacher just talked about some temple or something."

"We played a game in my class!" Susie interrupted. "We got to pop balloons with secret messages in them!"

"Games!, in Sunday School?" "But, what did you learn?" Mother asked.

"Oh we learned about God's temple, David wanted to build it, but God told Solomon, David's son to build it, because he was a man of peace. The temple was all covered in gold, and the teacher said that our bodies are temples, too. Because the Holy Spirit lives in us, if we've trusted Jesus."

All week long mother thought about Jim and Susie. There was such a difference in their attitudes toward Sunday School, and though they had both studied about Solomon's Temple, Susie had learned and remembered all the important facts, where as Jim just remembered that the lesson was about "a temple or something."

Games in Sunday School? Games to teach the Bible? Maybe Susie's teacher didn't have such a bad idea after all. Games in class certainly stirred Susie's interest.

There are at least six ways games can be used to aid teaching in the Sunday School or other children's Bible classes.

First, games generate excitement and break monotony. A child who knows there will be something new and exciting in their class eagerly anticipates going. Even a word game generates interest in children. Ask any group if they would rather hear a Bible lesson or play a bible game, the content may be the same but you can be sure the answer won't!

Second, games can be used to disguise teaching and make it fun. When teaching a Bible verse I often start quoting then stop and point to a child who must recall the next word in the verse. I could announce this procedure by saying "Now let's have a test to see if you were listening." I would probably hear moans from everywhere, defenses would go up, and some children would become nervous, or frightened. But, if I announce "Now let's play a game," the children would cheer, the atmosphere would be far more relaxed and if a child missed a word, they would feel far less dejected because it's only a game. Yet the game would be a method of teaching using repetition and recall.

When teaching a longer memory portion, I once made up a game which had two matching triangles for every verse. The first part of the verse went on one triangle, the second went on a matching triangle. The class divided in to two groups and took turns choosing triangles, and trying to find the matching triangle with the rest of the verse on it. I used this each week as a unit project, and the children became so familiar with the verses that they were able to memorize the passage after repeating it only a few times. They had been learning the verses every Sunday before class, but had enjoyed it because they had been disguised as a game.

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Also, games can encourage attentiveness. When I substitute teach in the public schools, I often tell a visualized version of George Washington Carver's life. Carver was a Christian so the story has the spiritual values I want to emphasize. In order to encourage attentiveness, I tell the children we will play a quiz game after the story. This usually quiets even the rowdiest of them, and they hang on each word and make a mental note of each detail. Then I let them break balloons, or open plastic eggs with quiz questions in them. Or on the spur of the moment I may pit the boys against the girls in a game of tick tack toe, or hangman.

Games can also aid memory. Children remember vividly what they are exposed to through games, since their concentration is increased their minds are open, and expectant. Sometimes I print a series of blanks for each letter, to show a new Bible verse. The children guess what letter goes in the spaces. If they guess a letter that is not in the verse, it gets marked off the list of letters. They try to guess the verse before a specified number of letters get marked off. This aids memory because it forces them to really look at and think about the verse, and to shout each word. It provokes what memory expert Jerry Lucas calls "initial awareness" the basis of all memorization.

Games are especially adaptive to review. How can we train children to retain main facts, and ideas of previous lessons? Recall them often through an exciting game. A child evangelism teacher told me once of her "lollipop tree." She inserts lollipops into a styrofoam base. She then calls upon children to recite verses or to answer a review question, those who answer get to choose a lollipop from the tree. Two of the lollipops are colored on the bottom of the stick, and the children who choose the special lollipops get to choose another one. The children are very anxious to try, hoping that they will choose one of the special lollipops. Another game I learned from the same worker I have used myself with great success. The materials needed are twelve or more circles with flannel backs, and one larger circle with antennae eyes, and a big grin. Each child who answers a question, or recites a verse correctly gets to place one circle on the board, the circles are placed so that they touch each other and when I add my circle, the face, it forms a worm. The children love the surprise of seeing the worm formed for the first time, but they also like to name it a silly name, and form it every week, this is very adaptive.

Bible games recognize and reward diligence and attentiveness. Yet the teacher can introduce some questions easy enough for any student, be sure to call on a certain child that time, so that they have a chance to answer.

Games aren't just for fun. They can also generate excitement and break monotony, disguise teaching and make it fun, encourage attentiveness, force initial awareness, and make the frequent recall of facts enjoyable. Games reward diligence, and attentiveness, and let every child feel successful. Games should not take the place of carefully prepared lessons, but they can be used with such lessons to make Bible classes more enjoyable and more profitable. Perhaps bible games belong in your class.

LET'S PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Which new methods will you try soon? List one from each section.

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