

### 3.3 What is a lesson aim & how can it help you build a great lesson?

When adults in the church worship together, the pastor or another person preaches or teaches the Word of God. When the children meet together for Sunday school, a teacher must also teach the Word of God so that they can understand it. This part of Sunday school is called the Bible lesson.

2 Timothy 2:16-17 says that SCRIPTURE is the BASIS of our teaching. (Not something extra added on.)

One of the most important things for the teacher to understand is the lesson aim. This is the main teaching that you want to stress out of all the teaching from the Bible lesson. It is the teaching you want the children to learn and to put into practice. It is not just an idea like a theme, but an actual teaching or principle you want them to understand and act on.

**The lesson aim has two aspects:**

- 1. What Bible principle do I want the children to learn or understand?**
- 2. What do I want the children to actually do as a result of this lesson?  
(How can they put the principle of this lesson into practice in their lives?)**

There are many different teachings or principles in virtually every Bible lesson. If we try to emphasize all of them equally in our teaching, the effect will be overwhelming. The children will not be able to grasp on to any one of them. We teachers should think very carefully as we prepare our lessons. If the children could only hold onto one thing from this lesson, what would we want that one thing to be? Getting across this one thing will be the aim of our lesson.

Out of all the possible teachings from a given Bible lesson, the teacher must choose one teaching that he feels will be an immediate help to his class. (To do this, he needs to think again about what groups of children compose his class—well established believers, new believers, unbelievers, or children from non-biblical church and family backgrounds.)

Example: Let's take for example the lesson found in Acts 16:25-34—The Apostle Paul and Silas in the Prison at Philippi. In this story, we can find all these teachings:

1. Christians should praise God even in times of pain and hardship.
2. God wants us to sing praises to Him all the time.
3. Salvation is only by trusting in Jesus Christ.
4. Even Christians will experience hardships.
5. Believers should be baptized after they have put their faith in Jesus Christ.

Every one of these teachings and probably more are found in this story. But we do not have time to develop all these teachings adequately in just one Sunday school lesson. If we did try to present all these different ideas, probably it would be so much that the children would not really grasp any of it. It would be far better if we were to choose from these ideas just one idea to emphasize. Which of these teachings would most help the children in the class right now?

If there are many unsaved children in the class, the third teaching would be good: Salvation is only by trusting in Jesus Christ. That lesson aim could help them come to salvation. On the other hand, if every child in the class is already a believer, that teaching will not help them much, and they probably already know it. But maybe many of them are new believers who have not yet been baptized. Then the last

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lesson aim listed may help them: Believers should be baptized after they have put their faith in Jesus Christ. If that teaching were emphasized, maybe some of the children would decide as a result to get baptized or to enroll in the baptismal class. If, however, all the children are already baptized, then that lesson aim would not help them much. These children need one of the other emphases, like: Even Christians will experience hardships, or: Christians should praise God even in times of pain and hardship, or: God wants us to sing praises to Him all the time. The teacher must choose the teaching that he believes may help the most children.

Now let’s take another example. For practice, list several different teachings that are found in Acts 19:11-20, the story of the Apostle Paul in the town of Ephesus. Write here the teachings you see in that passage:

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

Now think about the teachings you have found. Out of all these teachings, which of them could help the unsaved?

No(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Are many children in your class unsaved? \_\_\_\_\_ Would lessons for the unsaved help many children in your class? \_\_\_\_\_

Out of these teachings, which could help new believers? No(s): \_\_\_\_\_ How many children in your class are new believers? \_\_\_\_\_ Would lessons for new believers help your class? \_\_\_\_\_

Out of these teachings, which could help children from non-Christian or unbiblical backgrounds? No(s): \_\_\_\_\_

How many children in your class are from such backgrounds? \_\_\_\_\_ Would these lessons help your class? \_\_\_\_\_

Out of these teachings, which could help well established believers? No(s): \_\_\_\_\_ How many children in your class are well established believers? \_\_\_\_\_ Would these lessons help your class? \_\_\_\_\_

Now, eliminate from your list of possibilities the teachings that would not help many in your class. Out of those that are left, you must now choose ONLY ONE to be the lesson aim. Pray about this. Which teaching would help your class the most? Why?

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Now that you have chosen the main teaching to emphasize, ask yourself:

**As a result of this lesson, what Bible principle do I want the children to understand?**

**As a result of this lesson, what do I want the children to do to apply this principle to life?**

Now write out your lesson aim. *As a result of this lesson, the children will understand that \_\_\_\_\_, and they will \_\_\_\_\_ (do what?).*

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Example: Lesson aim—Believers should be baptized after they have received Jesus as Savior. “*As a result of this lesson the children will understand that God wants every believer to be baptized after he is saved, and those who have not yet been baptized will sign up to be baptized.*”

Many times if a teacher is following a lesson guide, a suggested lesson aim will already be given for each lesson. This can help by showing at least one possibility of a good lesson aim for each lesson. However, you the teacher must ultimately decide whether the lesson aim listed in the teaching guide is the best one for your class or not. You can choose to use it, or you can choose another lesson aim. You are not tied to the suggestions in the teaching manual.

One reason it is so important to choose a good lesson aim is that afterwards, you will keep that lesson aim in mind as you plan the lesson and even the entire Sunday school program for the day. You will choose songs and a Bible verse to memorize that go along with and reinforce the lesson aim.

Example: Lesson from Acts 19:11-20. Lesson aim: The children should understand that God hates everything to do with the occult. Therefore we believers should burn everything we have that is connected in any way to the occult. You will keep this lesson aim in mind as you choose songs, so you may choose something like “O Be Careful Little Hands What You Do!-- No witchcraft!. You will keep in mind this lesson aim as you choose the verse to be memorized, so you may choose a verse like Acts 19:19, showing that the believers burned their occult books.

### **Don’t Begin Your Teaching by Telling the Lesson Aim**

It is not wrong to tell the students what the lesson aim is, but many educators feel it is not best. It is not wise. There are several reasons:

1. If they disagree with the point of your teaching, they may begin to get their defenses up and begin mentally planning counter-attacks, arguing with you in their minds before they ever hear the Biblical case you want to present.  
*In this case, students don’t listen because they are angry, too busy arguing against you in their minds.*
2. It allows other students to think they already know what you want to teach, so why listen, since you’ve already told them what you want?  
*In this case, students don’t listen because they are bored. You’ve already told them what they need to know.*
3. Not telling the students allows for the best possible test of your teaching—if you have succeeded, the students will know the lesson aim WITHOUT you telling them directly, “Now today’s lesson aim is \_\_\_\_\_.” When you tell the students directly, you abort your chances for testing your teaching in this manner.

The best teaching does not TELL the lesson aim, but rather guides the students in discovering it themselves. When they discover it themselves, they will remember it longer and own it more personally in their lives. The teacher can help students discover the lesson aim by guiding them through a series of thoughtfully prepared questions.

### **LET’S REVIEW AND LET’S TAKE A LITTLE QUIZ**

Explain in your own words what a lesson aim is:

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Name two other parts of the program that should reinforce the lesson aim:

.....and.....

Complete this statement: The lesson aim shows what the children should \_\_\_\_\_  
as a result of the lesson, and also what they should \_\_\_\_\_.

Is this a lesson aim: “The Birth of Jesus”? Why or why not?

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**LET’S PUT IT INTO PRACTICE**

Read these stories in the Bible. Write down some main teachings you find in each lesson, then choose one as a lesson aim. Put a star in front of the teaching you have chosen. Write the lesson aim in the format we have given:

<u>Lesson</u>	<u>Teaching</u>	<u>Lesson Aim</u>