

What is a life-related lesson, and why is it important?

“Who knows what we studied about last week?” Mrs. Darko asked her class of girls.

Susan twisted her charm bracelet, squinting to read the tiny inscriptions. Paula doodled on a scrap of paper. Karen and Gail whispered and giggled.

“Wasn’t anyone listening?” rasped the teacher impatiently before rattling on. “This week we’re going to study about Joseph. Joseph was a man of God who lived long ago . . . “

Susan began sorting through her purse. Gail pared her nails. “Girls, would you please pay attention to the lesson?” Mrs. Darko was exasperated. “You never listen to a thing I say!”

Across town, another teacher began her class. “What would you do if your parents played favorites with your sister?” Mrs. Proctor asked. Every eye turned toward her.

Having each girl’s attention she continued, “Carrie thought her parents were playing favorites. “Be sure to have the dishes done when we get back!” her sister taunted her when their mother took her on a shopping trip alone. When they returned with a fancy new dress, it was just too much for Carrie!

“I hate her!” Carrie hissed. “I wish my sister were dead!”

“That sounds like our house!” one student interrupted.

“In the Bible we read of some brothers who felt their father played favorites with their younger brother, Joseph. Especially when their father gave him a beautiful coat.” With that, Mrs. Proctor plunged into the Bible lesson.

A Life-Related Approach

What is the difference between these two teachers? They may both present the same material in their lessons. But the girls in Mrs. Proctor’s class listened intently. Those in Mrs. Darko’s class were thinking of many other things.

For one thing, Mrs. Darko’s directness didn’t give the girls a chance to shift their thinking to the lesson. Mrs. Proctor, however, got their attention with a provocative question, “What would you do if . . .?” She followed with a fast-moving original story which related the Bible lesson to circumstances in modern life.

Next week don’t jump into your lesson with a “Now we have to study about . . . “ Stimulate your class’s thinking with a well-planned, life-related lesson approach. You’ll be surprised how interested your pupils can become!

A Life-Related Narrative

But don't stop there. Your pupils are listening. You must now hold their interest throughout the Bible narrative.

Do you believe the Bible is relevant to their personal lives? Then show them how it is! Inject often:

“Maybe you have been treated wrongly, as Joseph was.”

“Have you ever felt you were the only one living for the Lord? Elijah did too.”

“Jehoiakim tore up the scroll of God's Word and burned it. Do you know anyone who would like to do that with the Bible?”

If the circumstances of the lesson are too different from what they have experienced, think of a parallel.

For example, they probably have never been ordered to stop praying as Daniel was. But they may have been afraid to pray in the school lunchroom or maybe even at home – if they come from an unsaved family! They may never face a lion's den, but they should know that if they pray faithfully, as Daniel did, the God who closed the lions' mouths will stand with them against taunts and sneers.

Many times the circumstances need little alteration. Joseph's beautiful coat aroused his brothers' jealousy as surely as a new coat for one daughter would arouse jealousy in the other. Having a teaching goal for each lesson will help you relate the narrative to life. Your goal should be the main object of the lesson. It is what you want your students to know, to feel and to act upon.

I find it helpful to write this out ahead of time. This helps to clarify it in my mind so I can keep directly on target in my teaching.

For instance, suppose next week's lesson is about God's supplying water and food for grumbling, griping Israel in their journey from Egypt to Sinai. Your lesson aim is: To have the students know that grumbling and complaining are sinful; to have them feel grateful for their blessings; to have them act – stop griping!

A Life-Related Application

After you have presented the Bible lesson, you will want to make application. Actually, you have applied the Bible to life throughout the lesson. But now you will summarize and drive home your lesson goal.

There is one application I always make, and it is as life-related as possible. Unless I am positive everyone in my class is saved, I always give an invitation to receive Jesus Christ. But there are ways of doing this too on a personal level.

Mrs. Darko probably would have said, “Is there anyone here who wants to accept Christ?”

Mrs. Proctor would have said, “Would you like to accept Christ?”

Christ’s invitation to the sinner is personal in the Scriptures, and we should keep it so in our teaching.

Do you want your students to listen to what you say? Then begin with a definite goal. Show how the lesson relates to life in the approach, in the Bible narrative and in the application.

If you do, no one will ever hear you complain, “My students never listen to a thing I say!” A life-related lesson will engage their minds and hearts, and that will make all the difference.