

### **Tools for Exciting Bible Storytelling**

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#### **Help your Sunday school leaders see them selves as storytellers!**

The adults and teenagers who lead kids all become Bible storytellers as they share the biblical drama and their faith. In order to help your leaders feel more comfortable telling Bible stories, encourage them to read the text from their own Bibles *and* a children's Bible Storybook ahead of time, then invite them to *tell* the story in their own words. The storytelling tips below are tried and true, and easy to do. They will help your leaders and kids experience Bible stories in new ways, imaginations will be sparked, and faith will grow!

#### **Tips for Storytelling with Preschool Kids**

Preschool kids love stories, and delight in participating in some way. Leaders of kids this age can use concrete props to help bring Bible stories to life, and will have good storytelling times if kids can be actively involved in the story in one way or another.

*Storybag:* Fill an interesting looking bag or box with pr ops that will help make the story concrete for kids. Stuffed animals, a toy boat, and colorful ribbons will bring Noah's story to life; a child-friendly nativity set can be used to tell the story of Jesus' birth; and a pan filled with sand combined with toy people will be helpful in telling the stories of Moses and the Israelites wandering through the desert.

*Puzzles:* There are many simple floor puzzles available that illustrate Bible stories. As you gather in a story circle, give each child a puzzle piece, and invite them to work together to complete the puzzle, then tell the story about the picture shown.

*Treasure Hunt:* Hide story props in the storytelling space, and before you begin, encourage learners to hunt for them and invite them to bring them to the story circle for the telling.

#### **Tips for Storytelling with Lower Elementary Kids**

Lower elementary kids love to watch storytellers and they also love to participate in the telling. Leaders of kids this age can invite learners to be involved in storytelling in many ways.

*Skits:* Invite the learners to participate as silent actors while you read or tell the Bible story. Provide simple props and costumes, and encourage all the actors to pantomime specific parts during the telling as dramatically as possible.

*Question the Character:* Dress as one of the characters in the Bible story, and tell it from her or his point of view. After the story is told, invite the learners to ask the character whatever questions have come to mind during the telling. Use this technique with some of the more dramatic stories like, Jonah, Moses crossing the Red Sea, Jesus healing the paralyzed man, Jesus turning water into wine, and so forth. Your lower elementary

learners will ask incredibly insightful questions! Answer them as you think your character would have answered them, and gain new understandings of familiar stories.

### **Tips for Storytelling with Upper Elementary Kids**

Generally speaking, upper elementary kids enjoy participating in the telling of stories, and will jump at the chance to be part of a skit in one way or another. Leaders of kids this age can focus their energy on knowing the story well enough so they can help their learners learn the art of storytelling through skits, pantomime, and other techniques.

*Stories and Service:* Tell or read a Bible story, then do a service project tied directly to that story to help it come alive for these older learners. They will remember the story, and will enjoy making connections to their everyday lives. As you tell the story of Moses' rescue by Pharaoh's daughter, decorate the borders of new receiving blankets using fabric paints and donate them to a women's shelter or a crisis nursery. The story of Jesus calming the storm lends itself well to creating storm safety kits for use at home. The kits can include flashlights, batteries, bottled water, prepackaged snack food, and first aid supplies. Use your imagination as you think about how to make service an integral part of storytelling.

*News Broadcast:* Tap into the creative energy of upper elementary kids, and help them create a live news broadcast about the Bible story, where characters can be interviewed, reporters can go to the scene, and everyone in your group can get involved. They will enjoy creating the script and recording the news broadcast, and will enjoy learning how to tell stories in a newsy kind of way.

*Then and Now:* Tell a Bible story, and split the group into two smaller groups. One group will dramatize the story as it happened in Bible times, and the other will create a drama of the story as though it is happening today in your town. When the skits are created, watch them both, and enjoy the "Aha moments" and new insights that will come!

Many of the storytelling techniques mentioned here can be effective with all ages – especially storybags and treasure hunts. Encourage your Sunday school leaders to try a few, and decide which ones work best for them. Celebrate storytelling in your congregations!