Children enjoy a good Bible story! However it is better when that story becomes a Bible lesson. Teaching the Bible to children is one of the most important and vital tasks that anyone can engage in. In this book Dr Sam Doherty, an experienced teacher, shows how to take a portion of scripture and draw out truth to teach and apply to children. He writes - *"I encourage you to 'dig deeply', to work hard and to invest time and effort - in doing so you will be rewarded as the children learn spiritual lessons for life."*

This book will help you not only tell good Bible stories but also to teach effective Bible lessons that God can use to meet the spiritual needs of the children in your care.

Those who teach in training courses for Sunday School teachers or Good News Club teachers, will find this book a useful text from which to share the principles of a good Bible lesson.

Child Evangelism Fellowship Inc.
Specialized Book Ministry
Assisting Children's Evangelists Worldwide
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U-Can Teach and Bible Lesson to Children

Dr Sam Doherty

U can

Teach a Bible Lesson to Children

How to prepare and teach effective Bible Lessons

Dr Sam Doherty

Ucan Teach a Bible Lesson to Children

How to prepare and teach effective Bible lessons

DR SAM DOHERTY, BA, EdD

A series of short 'U-can' training manuals for children's workers:

U-can Know God's Plan for Children
U-can Evangelize children
U-can Teach a Bible Lesson
U-can Lead Children to Christ
U-can Help Christian Children to Grow
U-can Counsel a Christian Child

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INTRODUCTION

It is generally agreed that the teaching of Bible lessons to children is the central and most important part of our ministry to them.

- The salvation of unsaved children is based upon their correct understanding of what the Bible teaches and upon the application of that teaching by the Holy Spirit to their lives and needs.
  "*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10 v17).
- The spiritual growth of saved children is based upon their desire for, and absorption of, God's Word, the Bible.
  "*As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby*" (1 Peter 2 v2).

There are four agents involved in the salvation and spiritual growth of boys and girls:

- ***The child***
  He needs to be saved and he needs to grow.
- ***The Word of God***
  It shows the child how to be saved and how to grow.
- ***The Holy Spirit***
  He gives spiritual understanding of God's Word to the children and applies it effectively to their needs.
- ***The teacher***
  The Holy Spirit uses men and women like you and me to teach and explain the Word of God to children, and He then uses the teaching of that Word to speak to their hearts.

We as teachers therefore play a vital part in God's plan to save and sanctify boys and girls. We have, as a consequence, an awesome responsibility. But, at the same time, it is a great privilege for us. How wonderful it is to be used by God in the

lives of children and to be the vehicle of His blessing to those boys and girls!

We can teach God's Word to the children through singing, through memorization of Bible verses, through conversation and in other ways. But the main way to do so is when we are able to take, say, 20 minutes and explain, teach and apply a passage of Scripture to them. This is known as "teaching a Bible lesson" and that is the subject of the book you are reading.

The goal of this book is to help you, dear teacher and children's worker, to be an able teacher of the Word of God, and to be able to teach a Bible lesson to children as effectively and as attractively as possible.

I trust that this book will be a help to you as you teach the Word of God to children. Its contents are based upon what I have been taught by others down through the years, upon what I have read in the books on this subject written by others, and also upon my own research and upon my own experience when teaching Bible lessons to children during the 57 years I worked with Child Evangelism Fellowship.

I would especially like to acknowledge the help I have received from the teaching and writing on this subject by Jennifer Haaijer. Her book "Teaching a Bible Lesson to Children" has been of great help and substantial parts of that book are included in this book.

I should also point out that this book is a shorter version of my book "*How to Teach a Bible Lesson to Children*" which is now out of print. I believe that this shorter book will be more of a help to Good News Club teachers and Sunday School teachers who do not have time for very detailed study. The basic contents and teaching of both books are similar. The only important difference is that I suggest a shorter and simpler method of finding the central truth in this new book.

"*And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children*" (Deuteronomy 6 v6).

"*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*" (Matthew 28 v19, 20).

Chapter 1:
Remember the Principles of Teaching

Before studying and learning how to teach a Bible lesson you need to understand the principles of teaching which will govern that activity. Then you need to apply these principles so that your teaching of a Bible lesson is in full accord with them. These principles are taught in more detail in my book "*The Principles of Teaching*" which is available from the CEF Specialized Book Ministry.

In this chapter I will just outline the principles briefly, but I would encourage you to study them in more detail and apply them to your teaching.

- *The purpose of our Bible lesson is to teach. We are not just to tell a story, or just to state one or more truths.*
- *The truth we are teaching needs to be thoroughly explained.*
- *The words and concepts used in this explanation need to be simple and easy to understand.*
- *The truth must be repeated a number of times before it is understood – but not just by the repetition of certain words without explanation .*
- *There needs to be clear and relevant illustration of the truth by telling a brief story, or by recounting an incident which sheds light on the truth .*
- *The teacher should focus and concentrate on the teaching of **one** truth, rather than try to spread his teaching too much .*
- *The lesson should be unified around that one central truth .*
- *The lesson should include applications of the central truth, which has been taught, to both the saved and unsaved children.*
- *A Bible lesson is founded upon teaching the Bible, the Word of God.*
- *Teaching a Bible lesson requires an organized understanding of the main truths of the Bible .*
- *Children listen best when a Bible lesson is taught in an attractive way.*
- *Monotony, sameness and continual repetition of the same words should be avoided in our lessons .*
- *We should model our teaching on, and learn from, those who are gifted and effective teachers .*

Chapter 2:
Understand Your Responsibility

God has called you, as a teacher of God's Word, to minister to the spiritual needs of boys and girls. We are, in the chapters which follow, going to see how you can do this. But it is necessary, first of all, to have a clear understanding of a number of important subjects which will vitally affect your teaching ministry.

Understand the Needs of the Children

It is vitally important that you understand, from God's Word, that there are two groups of children and that each group have their own specific needs:

- There are, firstly, children who have not trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.
  The Bible is clear about the condition of children without Christ. They are born with a sinful nature (Psalm 51 v5). They have all gone astray (Isaiah 53 v6; Matthew 18 v12, 13), and they are all lost as far as their position is concerned (Matthew 18 v11). Their sin separates them from God.
  These children are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2 v1), spiritually blind (2 Corinthians 4 v4), and under the dominion and power of sin (Romans 6 v17). If they have reached an age of accountability, responsibility and understanding and have not trusted Christ they are also guilty before God (Romans 3 v19), and if they die in that condition they will be lost forever (John 3 v36).
  These children need Jesus Christ as their Saviour (Luke 19 v10).
- There are, secondly, children who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. The Bible teaches that children—even young children—can trust the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour (Mathew 18 v6). When they do so He gives them spiritual life (John 6 v47), spiritual sight

(Acts 26 v18), forgiveness of all sin (Ephesians 1 v7), the indwelling Holy Spirit (Acts 2 v38), and eternal life (John 3 v16). And, at the same time, He breaks the overall power of sin in their lives (Romans 6 v18), and changes them (2 Corinthians 5 v17).

These children need spiritual food so that they can grow spiritually (1 Peter 2 v2).

Understand the Power of God's Word

As you understand and face these needs which the children have, you may well ask yourself the question—"How could I ever meet these needs?" Your ministry to meet the needs all these children seems impossible—and so it is from a human point of view.

But God has given you something for your ministry which has the power, as the Holy Spirit works, to save unsaved children and to help saved children to grow. God has given you His Word, the Bible, and has called you (Ephesians 4 v11,12) to teach that Word to the children (Deuteronomy 6 v7a; Deuteronomy 31 v12, 13; Psalm 78 v5; Matthew 28 v19-20; 2 Timothy 3 v16).

God has also promised to bless the faithful teaching of His Word and to use it in the hearts and lives of those taught.

*"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater. So shall **My word** be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55 v10, 11).*

God has given us His Word to accomplish seven results in the lives of those who hear it, understand it and believe it. These are outlined in 2 Timothy 3 v15-17:

"And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

These three verses teach us that God's Word is given:

- For salvation.
- For doctrine.
- For reproof—especially with regard to conduct.
- For correction—especially with regard to doctrine.
- For instruction in righteousness.
- That the child be perfect, fitted, ready.
- That the child be equipped for all good work.

Understand Your Two Responsibilities

You, as a teacher of God's Word to children, have therefore two responsibilities and two goals:

- First of all, God wants you to evangelize the children who are unsaved. You want to see each of them trust the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour; and you will make this your goal both in your prayers for them and your teaching ministry to them.
  In other words you will be a fisherman! You will be "fishing" for children who are not saved. Your first and primary role is that of an evangelist and you want to apply your teaching of God's Word to the unsaved children to encourage and enable them to trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.
  The Lord Jesus called Simon Peter to be such a fisherman. "*Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men*" (Matthew 4 v19).
- Your second responsibility is to feed the children who are saved. You want them to grow spiritually and you will make this your goal in your prayers and in your teaching ministry. So you will want to apply your teaching of the Word of God to each of them so that the result will be spiritual growth.
  The Lord Jesus called Peter three years after his first call—to be a shepherd:
  "*Feed My lambs … feed My sheep … feed My sheep*" (John 21 v15-17).

Every teacher and children's worker has therefore two ministries and two responsibilities:

- To fish (or evangelize).
- To feed (or edify).

You are called to teach children by hook (like a fisherman) and by crook (like a shepherd).

Understand What it Means to Evangelize

As you teach the Word of God to children you will use it to evangelize the children who are not saved.

The person who evangelizes children needs to be sure of his five main responsibilities:

- You need to teach the children the truths of the Gospel. These include the following:
  - ✓ that God is holy and that He loves sinners
  - ✓ that they are sinners and separated from God
  - ✓ that Jesus Christ died and took the punishment for their sin
  - ✓ that He rose again from the dead and is Lord of Lords
  - ✓ that they need to be willing to turn from their sin
  - ✓ that they need to trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour
  - ✓ that if they do so all their sins will be forgiven, that God will see them clothed with the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and that they will be "new creatures".

  You cannot of course **teach** all of these truths in one Bible lesson. But when you teach one of them you can mention others which will help in your teaching and application of that one.
- You need to challenge the children as part of the message, to trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour. They need to be shown firstly that if they do this all their sins will be forgiven, and secondly that they will be born again and have a new nature. You need to pray that the children will respond to this invitation **in their hearts**. This may take place during the meeting, or perhaps afterwards. But you need to be clear that no physical response is involved or needed in coming to, or trusting, Christ.
- You need to make yourself available to individual children and let them know that they may come to you after the

meeting concludes if they want, and need, your personal help in coming to Christ.

- You need to be ready to counsel, and lead to Jesus Christ, any unsaved child who comes to you after the meeting, and asks you to help him know how to trust Jesus Christ.
- You need to pray for each of your unsaved children—that they will trust the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Pray for them personally, by name, in your daily Quiet Time.

At no time must pressure of any kind be put upon the children to respond to the Gospel. You can teach, challenge and help - and, of course, pray; but it is the Holy Spirit who draws the children to Christ; and you must not try to do His work.

Understand What it Means to Feed

As you teach the Word of God to the children you want to use it to feed saved children and help them to grow. In other words you will base your follow-up work with, and discipleship ministry to, these children on your teaching of God's Word.

This will involve five main responsibilities:

- You will teach the Word of God to these children. You will not just tell them stories (even Bible stories). You will teach them Bible truths, and you will also apply the truths to their every day lives in a way which is relevant. At the same time you need to pray that the children will apply these truths to themselves.
- You should make yourself available to saved children to speak with them personally and on an individual basis if they want your help or have any questions or problems.
- You need to be ready to talk with, and counsel, any saved child who comes to you after the meeting with questions, or asking for help.
- You should pray for each one of the saved children regularly, personally and specifically.
- You should be a good witness and an example to them of how a Christian should live, act and speak.

Chapter 3:
Learn How to Tell a Story

There are basically two types of Bible lesson:

- Bible lessons which are based on a Bible truth or doctrine.
- Bible lessons which are based on a Bible passage, story or narrative.

Bible Lessons Based on a Bible Truth

The first type of Bible lesson is one which has, as its starting point, a Bible truth or doctrine which the teacher wants to explain, and teach, to the children. For example: "God Is Holy", or " The Holy Spirit lives in all believers", or, "God is faithful and answers our prayers", or "Sin separates us from God".

He teaches this truth in a series of logical steps with illustrations either from the Bible or from modern life. He will generally use several illustrations to help teach the lesson because he does not have a story narrative on which to base the lesson and give it continuity and interest. Consequently the interest is maintained by the use of these frequent illustrations. It is important, however, that these illustrations should all be centred on the one Bible truth which is being taught, otherwise there will be a lack of unity and continuity in the lesson.

The teacher who uses this type of lesson will often produce and use a number of flashcards, each of which has a key sentence helping to explain the truth being taught. Each sentence is accompanied by a picture to visualize that sentence.

This type of Bible lesson is therefore a systematic visualized presentation of one doctrinal truth. It is dealt with in considerable detail in my book "*How to Teach Bible Doctrines to Children*". If you don't have a copy of it and you feel it would be a help to your ministry write to the address at the beginning of this book and we will send you one.

We in the Specialized Book Ministry of Child Evangelism

Fellowship Inc. have produced several series of doctrinal lessons using this method, and these are listed at the beginning of this book. We would be glad to send any, or all, of these to you if you want to have them and use them to teach this type of Bible lesson to children (With your request please inform us of your ministry to children and how these lessons would help you).

Bible Lessons Based on a Bible Story

These are Bible lessons which have, as their starting point, a story or narrative from a Bible passage. For example: "The creation of the world" (Genesis 1) or "Noah and the great flood" (Genesis 7, 7 & 8) or "The healing of the ten lepers" Luke 17: 11-19). This is, by far, the most common type of Bible lesson, and it is the one we will concentrate on during the remainder of this book.

The Bible story is used as a basis for teaching truth to the children and it also provides the narrative which keeps the interest of the children right throughout the lesson.

Because this type of Bible lesson is based upon the telling of a Bible story it is necessary, first of all, to understand the best way to tell a story, and especially a Bible story. Once you know how to do that, you will be ready to learn how to base your lesson on a story.

Learn How to Tell a Story

A story is one of the best and most effective "tools" for a teacher to have and use. The story method is to the teacher what a saw is to the carpenter. Whatever else the carpenter has he must have that. In the same way, you, as a teacher, need to be able to tell a story and to tell it well.

Everyone loves a story—especially a story which is interesting, relevant and well told. This is especially so with children. They love stories! They arouse curiosity; stimulate the imagination; help the children's reasoning and understanding ability; and provide food for the memory. That is why a Bible lesson based upon, and, using a Bible story, can be so helpful and even fascinating for the average child.

The Lord Jesus, the Master Teacher, and our Example, often used story telling as a means of teaching divine truth. He was indeed the Master Story Teller.

There are many examples of the power of stories in the Bible. One classic example is when the prophet Nathan confronted King David after he had sinned with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12 v1-6) and used a story to capture his interest, stir his conscience and convict him of sin. Truly, a well told story is a powerful weapon in the hands of a dedicated and skilled Christian teacher.

Story telling is an art; it is one which can be achieved through much preparation and frequent practice.

The Preparation of Your Bible Story

When you are preparing your story there are several simple introductory steps which you need to take if your story is going to be effective:

- Pray and ask for God's guidance and help.
- Read the Scripture passage on which the story is based through a number of times.
- Make a list of the Bible characters in the passage or story visualizing each of them in your mind's eye.
  Think through all the events of the story in their proper sequence.
- Develop the plot of the story in your mind.
- Divide the story into several scenes.
- Create in your mind the atmosphere and the background of the story in the following ways:
  - ✓ Picture the things which stand around in the story. Imagine the road, fields, houses, people, clothes, attitudes etc.
  - ✓ Feel the heat or cold, the wind etc.
  - ✓ Smell the scent of the flowers, the sea etc.
  - ✓ Hear the people talking, all the noises etc.
  - ✓ Understand the feelings of those in the story—especially those of the main character. Try to see the story through his eyes and imagine what he would have been thinking about and feeling at each point.

- Use your imagination. But be careful in doing so. Don't overdo it. Keep as close to the text and its meaning as possible.
- Now you are ready to "start work" on your story.

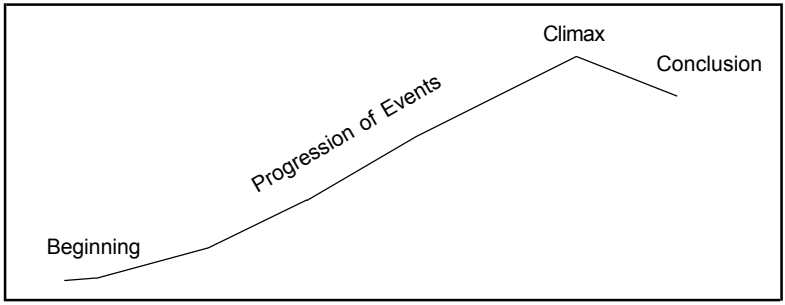
The Structure of Your Bible Story

A story teller needs to follow a plan. His plan is like an architect's blueprint, a traveller's road map, or a cook's recipe book. His plan guides him step by step in his presentation. To begin building without a blueprint, to go on a motoring journey without a road map, or to try to cook a special dish without a recipe is to flirt with failure and to ask for trouble.

Every good story should have four parts:

- *The beginning.*
- *The progression of events.*
- *The climax.*
- *The conclusion.*

And you need to work on the preparation of each of those parts. These four parts are illustrated in the following diagram:



The Beginning of Your Bible Story

This is the best place to gain attention and the worst place to lose it. Well begun is half done! Try to establish a point of contact with the children at the very start. Talk about something which is within their experience, something with which they can identify, or something which will arouse their curiosity.

➢**Wrong Ways to Begin**

- ✓ "Today's story is about a man called Jonah."
- ✓ "Now, sit still while I tell you a story."
- ✓ "Have you heard the story about the boy with the five loaves and two fishes?"
- ✓ "Would you like to hear the story of Daniel?"
- ✓ "I am sure you have heard this story before, but there are some important lessons to be learned from it."

It should be obvious to you that none of these are suitable beginnings; nor would they attract the interest and attention of the children. Indeed they might do the opposite!

➢**The Right Way to Begin**

There are several points to remember when planning your beginning:

- ✓ The beginning should always be interesting and able to attract the attention of the children.
- ✓ The beginning should have a clear link into the story which follows. There is no point in having an interesting beginning and then for that beginning to have no connection with the following story. The beginning should be "a stepping stone" to the rest of the story.
- ✓ The beginning should be brief. Remember that the main body of the story has to follow.
- ✓ You will find it a help to memorize the beginning of your story, as this will get you off to a good start!

Four Ways to Begin

There are four main ways to begin a story or a lesson and you should choose one of them.

The story or lesson on Naboth's vineyard, for example, as outlined in 1 Kings chapter 21, could begin in any of the following four ways:

➢**A Direct Approach**

You could start with the action of the story, and get right into it from the beginning. You could think of several sentences which could capture the attention of the children right away.

For example:

> *"It was just the vineyard he wanted and it was right beside his summer palace. The king thought about it and thought about it. You see he had a big problem. The vineyard did not belong to him."*

But if you are telling a well known story and you use this type of beginning do not reveal the names of the main characters at the beginning or you may hear someone say, "We know that story." Or, "I heard that story in school and I don't like it."

➢A Question

You could ask a question which would lead naturally into the narrative. For example:

> *"Is there something you would really like to have?* (Listen to the answer). *There was something king Ahab would very, very much like to have had but he couldn't have it."*

If you teach a small group of children this is a good way to get them involved—by answering your question. But remember that children's answers can be very long. Therefore you need to control the questions and answers so that you do not waste valuable time.

➢An Exciting Part of the Story

This is the flashback approach when you begin with an outstanding part of the narrative and then, afterwards, go back to the beginning to tell how it came about. But be careful not to give away the "secret" of the story right at the beginning. For example:

> *"He had lots of money, servants, lovely food, the best house in the land—and he was king. You would expect him to be happy. But just look at him. He is in bed sulking! Whatever is wrong? I will tell you what happened."*

This type of beginning can be very effective if it is presented in an interesting and attractive way.

➢**An Illustration**

You may begin with a little everyday story with which the children can identify. Make sure that it is kept short and that there is a clear link between it and the Bible story which follows and into which it should lead.

For example:

"The gleaming racing bicycle shot past Philip once more. 'I wish I had it', he thought, for the hundredth time as he pedalled his very ordinary and very rusty bike. When he arrived at school there it was again. He stopped and looked at all those extra fittings. He never wanted anything as much as he had wanted that bike. King Ahab felt just like that – not about a bike, but about a vineyard."

In the light of the previous paragraphs which of these two beginnings do you feel is more effective for the story of Elijah and Ahab in 1 Kings 17?

- ✓ *"This is a story of a prophet who told Ahab it would not rain and then hid in the wilderness while this prophecy came true. I hope you have not heard it before."*
- ✓ *"Nobody could stop him! He dashed into the courtyard, past the guards, up the steps, and into the throne room - right up to the king himself. 'As the Lord lives', he said, 'There shall not be dew or rain these many days except according to my word.' The king cried out for the guards to stop him, but he turned on his heel and disappeared into the crowd. The king would not see him again for three and a half years."*

The Progression of Events

This is the main part of the narrative. This is not a list of unrelated happenings, but a sequence of events held together by the main thread of the story. It is a **progression** with one event leading to the next. You need to keep to your story and not be sidetracked into including incidents which are unrelated

to the narrative.

List the progression of events in the story plan in the order in which they appear, using simple phrases to summarize each event.

The progression of events for example in the story of Naboth's vineyard could be written as follows:

A. ***Ahab covets Naboth's vineyard***
B. ***Ahab asks Naboth for it***
C. ***Naboth refuses sale or exchange***
D. ***Ahab sulks***
E. ***Jezebel intervenes***
F. ***Jezebel writes letters***
G. ***Naboth is tried***
H. ***Naboth is murdered***
I. ***Ahab goes and takes the vineyard***
J. ***Ahab meets Elijah***

Having this list (and writing it down) will help you in your story. Each event leads to the next event, and there will be a clear development or progression in the story.

The Climax

This is the high point of the story (as you can see in the illustration on page 10). The other events have all led up to this point. This is where the hero wins, the problem is solved, or the mystery ends. At this moment, the children's interest is most intense, and you satisfy their curiosity, suspense or anxiety as the threads of the plot are untangled.

The climax of the story on Naboth's vineyard could be—

Elijah's warning from the Lord ,"Where Naboth died you will die."

Work on the climax to make it really exciting.

In some stories there will be several possible climaxes. Choose the one which ends the action of the story. If you don't have the climax close to the end of the story you run the risk of having an anti-climax.

The Conclusion

This should come immediately after the climax. Sometimes teachers have finished but cannot stop! They resemble an aeroplane which has come to the airport and, because it is not able to land, it circles and circles! This "dragging out" can spoil a good story. The story should end as soon as possible after the climax. The conclusion should be brief, and it should "round off" the narrative. Do not try to review the whole story in your conclusion!

It is important to give careful thought to your conclusion, and you may find it a help to memorize the conclusion so that you can bring your story to a good and quick ending.

The conclusion to the story of Naboth's vineyard, for example, may be like this:

"What happened to Ahab and Jezebel? Ahab went out to fight in a battle. He disguised himself so that the enemy would not know he was the king, but he was struck by an arrow and he died. Some time after that, Jezebel, his wife, was thrown down from a high window by her enemies and was killed, and so what God said would happen to them did happen. What use was Naboth's vineyard to Ahab now?"

Your Story Plan

When preparing your story it is therefore essential that you have a structure and a plan to outline that structure. You should have your plan written down on a piece of paper which you can keep glancing at to guide you in your presentation.

You will see, below, a sample plan, or structure, for the story of Naboth's vineyard based upon the preceding pages and paragraphs:

I. ***Beginning***
The gleaming racing bicycle shot past Philip once more.

II. ***Progression of Events***
A. ***Ahab covets Naboth's vineyard***
B. ***Ahab asks Naboth for it***

C. *Naboth refuses sale or exchange*
D. *Ahab sulks*
E. *Jezebel intervenes*
F. *Jezebel writes letters*
G. *Naboth is "tried"*
H. *Naboth is murdered*
I. *Ahab goes and takes the vineyard*
J. *Ahab meets Elijah*

III. *Climax*
Elijah's warning from the Lord.
"Where Naboth died you will die"

IV. *Conclusion*
Ahab dies
Jezebel dies

To help you better understand the idea of a story plan I have outlined another one, this time from the New Testament. It is the story of Bartimaeus as found in Luke 18 v35-43. This story plan includes more detail than the previous one.

I. *Beginning*
What would it be like to be in darkness all the time? Close your eyes and imagine what it would be like.

II. *Progression of Events*
A. ***Bartimaeus sat by the road begging (verse 35).***
B. ***He heard the crowd of people passing by (verse 36).***
C. ***He asked what the excitement meant (verse 36).***
D. ***They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by" (verse 37).***
E. ***Bartimaeus cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (verse 38).***
F. ***They told him to be quiet (verse 39).***
G. ***Bartimaeus called all the more (verse 39).***
H. ***Jesus stopped (verse 40).***
I. ***Jesus told the men to bring Bartimaeus to Him (verse 40).***
J. ***Bartimaeus came to Jesus (verse 40).***
K. ***Jesus asks him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" (verse 41).***

L. ***Bartimaeus answered, "Lord, that I may receive my sight" (verse 41).***
M. ***Jesus said, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."" (verse 42).***

III. *Climax*
Immediately he received his sight (verse 43)

IV. *Conclusion*
Bartimaeus followed the Lord Jesus Christ and glorified God (verse 43)
All the people praised God (verse 43)

The Teaching of a Bible Lesson

This chapter has dealt with the telling of a Bible story. It is essential that every teacher of children knows how to prepare and tell a Bible story, because most of our lessons are based upon, and derived from, a Bible story.

But it is not enough to tell a Bible story. Your main responsibility is to teach a Bible lesson which is based upon that story. Everything contained in the previous pages about preparing and presenting a Bible story also applies to the preparation and presentation of a Bible lesson. But there is much more involved in teaching a Bible lesson, and in the chapters which follow we will learn how to do this.

REMEMBER—YOUR PURPOSE IS TO TEACH BIBLE LESSONS AND NOT TELL BIBLE STORIES.

Chapter 4:
Look For the Best Method

Before examining in detail how to teach a Bible lesson we need to remember that the method used (and the message taught) should be governed by the principles of teaching, a number of which we looked at briefly in chapter 1, and which are studied in great detail in my book "The Principles of Teaching".

Apply the Principles of Teaching

You need always to keep in mind the principles of teaching outlined in chapter 1—and measure the method you use by how closely you conform to these principles.

There are several different ways to teach a Bible lesson to children; and it is up to you to choose the way which you feel fits in best with the relevant principles of teaching which you have already studied. On the basis of these principles you need to ask yourself a number of questions about the Bible lesson you plan to teach.

Principle 1 - *Does the Bible lesson really teach something and not just say something?*
Principle 2 - *Is the truth really explained?*
Principle 3 - *Is the language and are the concepts simple and easy to understand?*
Principle 4 - *Is the truth repeated—but does it avoid the simple repetition of words?*
Principle 5 - *Is there adequate illustration of the truth being taught?*
Principle 6 - *Does the lesson concentrate on one truth and avoid the danger of trying to teach too much?*
Principle 7 - *Is there a unity in the lesson and is it focused on this one truth?*
Principle 8 - *Are there clear applications of the truth to both the saved and unsaved children?*

Principle 9 - *Is the lesson based upon the exposition of the Word of God as contained in the passage on which the lesson is based?*
Principle 10 - *Is there evidence in the lesson of a clear organized understanding of Bible truth?*
Principle 11 - *Is the presentation of the lesson attractive enough to encourage the attention and interest of the children?*
Principle 12 - *Is there a certain amount of variety from one lesson to another?*
Principle 13 - *Is there any evidence of improvement in lesson presentation through listening to, or watching, a more experienced and more capable teacher?*

Does this sound complicated? It is not! I believe that we can find a method of Bible lesson presentation which will fulfil all these conditions—and yet be, at the same time, simple and, above all, enjoyable to teach.

Stories Are the Best Basis for Teaching

Everyone loves a story, and most people (especially children) will listen to a story when they will listen to nothing else. Not only do they listen; they often learn from a story more than from any other source—if it is properly presented.

The Lord Jesus, the Master Teacher, knew this of course; and that was why He used parables so much in His teaching ministry. A parable is "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning".

When an argumentative lawyer asked the Lord Jesus the question, "Who is my neighbour?" the Master Teacher did not start an argument nor did He give a long discourse under three headings (Luke 10 v29-37)! He told him a simple story which left no room for argument, and the meaning of which was crystal clear. It was a story with one central truth which answered the question in a simple yet clear way. The central truth could be written as a simple statement "Your neighbour is anyone who has a need"; and the application was "Love and help your neighbour." About forty of these parables are recorded, and each of them teaches a basic central truth in an attractive and

understandable way.

The Bible is made up, to a surprisingly large extent, of stories; and we can learn from these stories the truths which we need to understand and apply. Indeed we often learn more effectively from these stories than from a book of systematic theology!

Consequently, our teaching ministry to children should be based upon the telling of stories from the Word of God. The Bible is a mine of stories, and the truths of the Bible can best be taught to children through the telling of these stories. A good story is interesting, dramatic, full of action and true to life. There is no better way to gain and hold the attention of children. Therefore every teacher needs to learn the art of story telling as outlined in the last chapter. "I was never any good at telling a story", some teachers say. But if they are involved in some unusual incident during the day, no one can stop them telling their story when they get home!

However, there are two dangers or extremes you need to avoid:

- *Some teachers place too much reliance on story telling and are tempted to think that their "lessons" should consist of nothing more than the telling of fairly well known Bible stories, sometimes with a moral or application attached onto the end. They rely too much on the story, and overlook the fact that it should only provide the basis for a lesson, a lesson which should be taught and applied.*

- *Some teachers rely too little on the story method, and don't see that a spiritual idea or truth needs to be illustrated if it is to be interesting, understood and applied in the children's lives. The Bible stories provide these illustrations.*

Stories and Lessons

We need to see the difference between a Bible story and a Bible lesson—and, at the same time, the close relationship there is between them.

- *A Bible story is purely and simply a narrative, and a sequence or series, of connected and related events – told in an interesting way.*
- *A Bible lesson aims at teaching truth, and its purpose is that the children will understand some truth which will help them come to Christ for salvation or grow spiritually.*

There are four ways teachers can use a Bible story in their preparation, and in their teaching of a Bible lesson:

- Some teachers tell stories – but with no truth being taught.
- Some teachers tell stories and then add truth on at the end.
- Some teachers tell stories but try to teach too many truths through them.
- Some teachers tell stories and use each story to teach one central truth which is woven through the story.

Our task is to find which of these four ways is the best, the most effective and the one most fully in agreement with the principles of teaching – and then use it in our teaching of a Bible lesson. I am convinced that the fourth way is the best and most effective, and it is the one taught in this book.

Only a Story

The first group of teachers mentioned above feel that their responsibility is to tell Bible stories to the children, but they do not see their need to teach or apply truth. They feel the story on its own is sufficient. This method is usually very attractive and interesting, and it generally holds the attention of the children very well. That is probably why this method is used so often. However it is not a lesson - it is only a story.

But, when there is no real teaching in the story and no application of truth, there will probably be few permanent results in the lives of the children. The children need truth!

A Story with Application at the End

A step forward from the previous method is to tell a Bible story, and then, at the end, to **add on** a truth which can be deduced from the story and, at the same time, to give the application to the children of what that truth means.

But I believe that this method infringes a number of teaching principles:

- *There is little or no time for the adequate explanation, or application, of the truth.*
- *Repetition and illustration are almost impossible.*
- *The main part of the lesson is interesting but the attention of the children wanders when the truth and application are added on at the end.*

Too Many Truths

The third group of teachers sees the importance of teaching Bible truths (unlike the first type of lesson), and they weave the teaching and application of the truths into the lesson (unlike the second type of lesson) instead of leaving them until the end. Weaving truth into a Bible lesson is a vital and important part of any presentation and is absolutely essential.

But they try to weave in too many truths. This is what I tried to do, years ago, in my Bible lessons. I attempted, in every Bible lesson, to weave in six Gospel truths for the unsaved child, one teaching point for the saved children, and, where possible, one of God's attributes. The "weaving" was a help. The problem was that I was trying to teach **too many** truths in my lesson. As a result most of the truths were being mentioned but not taught.

There were several conclusions I came to eventually:

- *I concluded that the use of this method did not allow me enough time to explain all the truths, to repeat them and to illustrate them.*
- *I came to realize that it would be better to concentrate my teaching, and to teach less truth, but to do it more thoroughly.*

- *I saw that by having two completely separate lines of "teaching" for the two groups of children my lesson was not unified.*
- *I discovered that I was repeating the same truths from week to week, and leaving out other key truths. There was not enough variety in my teaching.*

As a result I wanted to find a method of Bible lesson presentation which would avoid these problems.

A Central Truth

Is there another way to teach a Bible lesson (using a Bible story as its basis) which is more in agreement with good teaching principles and which is therefore more effective? I believe that there is and the rest of this book will deal with it more thoroughly.

But here is a simple outline of what I am suggesting to be the best method or way of Bible lesson presentation:

- *Find the central truth of the passage on which your story and lesson will be based.*
- *Teach that truth thoroughly and weave it in throughout your story and lesson to both groups of children – the saved and the unsaved.*
- *Apply that truth (if at all possible) to the unsaved children and, on the basis of it, challenge them to respond by trusting Christ.*
- *Apply that truth (if at all possible) to the saved children and, on the basis of it, challenge them to respond to it in their Christian lives.*
- *Include or mention other truths which will help you to explain the central truth or either of the applications. These "other truths" do not need to be in the passage on which your lesson is based. You are just mentioning these other truths and not teaching them. The purpose of their inclusion is to help you teach and apply the central truth.*

I personally have found this to be the best way to use a Bible story as the vehicle and channel for a Bible lesson. This is a very

simple and practical method of Bible lesson presentation, and it is also very effective. At the same time, I believe that it agrees with the principles of teaching we have been looking at in the earlier part of the book.

- *You will be teaching a truth and not just mentioning it or referring to it.*
- *You are only teaching one truth. So you have time and opportunity to explain it thoroughly and your lesson will have more content.*
- *Because you are concentrating on one truth you have time for repetition, simplification, illustration and two applications.*
- *Because your lesson is focused and based on that one central truth your lesson will be unified.*
- *Because you are teaching or weaving the central truth right through the lesson (at the same time as you are telling the story), you are more likely to hold the attention of the children.*
- *Because the central truths will vary from week to week there will be variety in your lessons.*
- *Because a lesson taught like this will strengthen your evangelism of the unsaved children and your feeding of the saved children.*

But how can you prepare and present a Bible lesson like this on the basis of the Bible story you are telling? What are the simple steps to follow?

The answers to these questions will be found in the remaining chapters of this book.

Chapter 5:
Understand the Purpose of a Bible Lesson

A Bible lesson has, or should have, four main purposes or aims; andyou need to make it your goal to achieve all of these in your Bible lessons.

1. Teach Truth

The first purpose of a Bible lesson is to teach truth.

We have already seen that our ministry is to teach truth, and not just to tell stories or to outline facts. The Bible is more than a story book and this should be evident as you teach it.

Which goal is more important?

- The children knowing all the details of the places, names and happenings in a passage of Scripture?
- The children knowing the truth contained in that passage?

It should be obvious that the truth is more important and, as a result, we should therefore teach truth.

*"And you shall know the **truth**, and the **truth** shall make you free"* (John 8 v32).

"So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading" (Nehemiah 8 v8).

They read the law of God making it clear **and giving the meaning** of what they read. **That** is also our responsibility.

"In the end Gideon had only 300 men! Each one had a pitcher and a piece of burning wood (that was a torch in those days). Suddenly they all smashed their pitchers and shouted, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.' Well, the Midianites were scared. They ran all over the place killing some of their own men. I wish I had been in Gideon's army! Why don't things like that happen today?" Philip was telling his mother what he had heard in Sunday School.

Alan had been to Sunday School also, but he was in a different class. "I'm sure Joseph was puzzled when God let him be sold as a slave; but many years later he saw it was all part of

God's plan. He has a plan for me too; so even not being chosen for the football team must be part of it."

Philip had heard a story; Alan was taught a lesson and had learned a truth. He had been encouraged to think about the sense and the meaning of the story, and that is the difference between a story and a lesson. A Bible story is the recounting of events. The child enjoys the narrative and enters into it. A Bible lesson is the teaching of Bible truth through the narrative.

> *It is our responsibility to teach truth in the Bible lesson, and not just tell a story. The story must always be the servant of the message or truth. It is the truth which is important. The story is simply that which contains the truth, illustrates it, reinforces it and carries it safely through into the children's minds.*

The teaching of biblical truth is the basis of both evangelism and edification. This fact underlines the absolute necessity of teaching truth in every Bible lesson.

2. Teach the Truth in the Passage

We must teach the truth from the passage or story on which the lesson is based—and contained in that passage. We should not "push" truth into the passage which is not there, nor should we feel that there are certain truths such as the love of God, the universality of sin or the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, important and vital as they are, which we **must** actually find in every passage of Scripture and which we must then use as the basis of our teaching of the lesson.

Such truths can, and should, be mentioned in your lesson if they help you to teach and apply the central truth. But they don't necessarily have to be found in or deducted from the passage on which your lesson is based.

For example, one eager student felt that she must, somehow "find" the Blood of Jesus Christ **in the biblical text** of the story of Noah and the great flood. So when she told her story she said, "And just as the rains came down and covered the earth so the Blood of Jesus Christ comes down and covers our sins." This is certainly not good exegesis.

Another children's worker felt it was necessary to, somehow, bring the truth of God's love **into the actual text** of Esther chapters 5 and 6, and this was the result, "We read in the first verse of chapter 6 that the king could not sleep that night because he was so concerned and I know someone else who does not sleep. God does not sleep because He loves you and is concerned for you!" Again—this is not good exegesis.

And just one more example by someone who was teaching the story of Peter's release from prison in Acts chapter 12 and wanted to find **in the Bible text** a direct challenge and invitation to the unsaved children to trust Christ and so he said, "Peter came to the house of Mary and knocked at the gate or door. Rhoda heard the knocking but did not, at first, open the door. The Lord Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart. Don't be like Rhoda. Open the door immediately and let Him in." This is another example of bad exegesis.

Of course truths such as these—the Blood of Jesus Christ, the love of God and the need to trust or receive the Lord Jesus, need to be included in our lessons if they help to teach and apply the central truth—**but it is not necessary to find them in the Bible passage being used**. You should be able to bring in whatever you want to bring in quite freely.

I feel, therefore, it is better not to have, or use, a list of truths which **must** be found in the passage and which must be "taught" from the passage. It is true that you do need to know, beforehand, the truths to look for in the passage. But it is the Bible passage which comes first and it is the Bible passage which should determine what you should teach.

You must let the Bible speak, and not force it to say what you want it to say. It is important that the message or truth you are teaching should lie in the actual story as it originally took place, and not have to be forced into it by means of some kind of allegorical interpretation. Also you should not spoil a good story and lesson by giving the passage a meaning which it did not originally have.

Exegesis is the theological name given to the art and practice of finding out what the Bible passage teaches. Every teacher therefore needs to be an exegete and needs to know how to find the main truth contained in each passage.

3. Teach One Truth Thoroughly

As you read and study a passage of Scripture you may see many truths in that passage. If you try to teach all, or even a number, of them the children may become confused and not learn any of them.

It is therefore important to be selective and to choose the truth which dominates the passage, the truth which is apparent several times in the narrative, and the truth which your children most need. Then you will teach this truth, the central truth, thoroughly in, and throughout, your lesson. **That** central truth is the main truth which you want to teach the children through that particular lesson. You will not try to **teach** the other truths because they would detract from your teaching of the central truth. However, you might mention some of these other truths if they help you to teach the central truth.

4. Apply That One Truth to the Two Groups

As we will see later it is absolutely essential that the truth which is being taught should be applied clearly, directly and relevantly to **all** the children present. The Bible shows us clearly that we should both teach truth and apply it. The two mistakes which you need to avoid are:

- The teaching of truth without applying it.
- The application of truth without teaching it.

There are usually two groups of children present in our meeting:

- Those who have trusted Jesus Christ, who have been born again and who are saved.
- Those who have not trusted Jesus Christ, who are not born again and who are not saved.

Therefore the teacher should ask himself two questions:

- How can I apply this truth to saved children to help them grow spiritually?
- How can I apply this truth to unsaved children, to evangelize them and help them to trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour?

We will see later in this book how this can be done.

Chapter 6:
Understand what a Central Truth is

You need, first of all, to understand what exactly is meant by a central truth so that you should know what you are looking for when preparing to teach a Bible lesson to children.

It is therefore necessary to ask yourself three basic questions:

- What is a truth?
- What is a central truth?
- How should I state a central truth?

1. What Is a Truth?

According to the dictionary, a truth is "something which is true or right or accurate". God's Word is truth in its entirety and it consists of many truths which can be applied to our many, varied needs. Each of these truths, which the children need to hear, understand, learn and apply to their lives, can be summarized in a short sentence or statement.

When we teach a Bible lesson to children our goal is to teach them a truth—our choice of that truth being determined by the passage on which the lesson is based, and by the needs of the children. We then summarize that truth in a statement or short sentence.

A truth is therefore a statement which gives teaching about one of many subjects, such as the following:

- something about God,
- something about Jesus Christ,
- something about the Holy Spirit,
- something about sin,
- something about salvation,
- something about sanctification,
- something about the Bible,
- something about the church,

- something about ourselves –

It is especially important to remember that the primary purpose of the Bible is to tell us, reveal to us, and teach us what God is like, what God has done and does, and consequently what God wants us to do or not to do. Very often therefore the truth or statement we are looking for is something God wants us and the children to know and learn about Himself or something He wants to do for us or something He wants us to do (or not do). For example:

"God is holy and pure."
or "God is powerful and can do anything."
or "God promises to be with His children at all times."
or "God wants us to obey our parents."
or "God does not want us to tell lies."

Can you think of five Bible passages which could be used to teach each of these five truths about God?

Other examples of truths using the other nine categories given on the previous page are:

Something about Jesus Christ: "Jesus Christ loves sinners and died for them."
Something about the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit lives in the hearts and lives of all true believers."
Something about sin: "Sin always has bad results."
Something about salvation: "Salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone."
Something about sanctification: "Christian boys and girls should become more and more like Jesus Christ."
Something about the Bible: "The Bible is God's Word and absolutely true."
Something about the church: "When a person trusts Christ he becomes a member of Christ's body the church."
Something about ourselves: "God wants us always to obey Him."
Something about another subject: "Heaven is where God lives, and where believers go when they die."

Can you think of nine Bible passages or stories which could be used to teach each of these nine truths?

It is vital that our teaching should always concentrate on the teaching of statements of truth such as these. On the one hand it is impossible to evangelize children without teaching them what the Bible says and teaches about God, sin, the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, faith—and many other subjects. On the other hand, Christian children need to be taught such truths in order to establish them in their faith.

Consequently, when you are teaching, for example, a lesson from the life of Joseph (Genesis 37 - 47) you should not just tell the story, exciting though it is, but you should teach the children the great **truth** that God is wise and that He has a plan for our lives.

2. What Is a Central Truth?

As we have seen in the previous chapter the central truth is the **main** truth of the passage of Scripture upon which your lesson is based. It is what God especially wants you and the children to know and understand through this passage. It is a short one-sentence statement of the message you are bringing to the children through the lesson you are teaching—and which you want them to understand and remember as a result of that lesson. Your central truth is the "spine to the skeleton", the "foundation to the house" and the theme which holds your whole lesson together.

If you try to teach too many truths you will not succeed in teaching any of them. It is better, therefore, that you concentrate your teaching on that one central truth which you have selected.

A number of lessons will contain many different truths or facts which you would like the children to know, understand and believe. You should select the main one of these and teach it thoroughly. **That** will be the central truth.

For example in the lesson on Adam and Eve in Genesis 2 and 3 you can easily find at least six truths:

- The first man was created from the dust of the earth (2 v7).
- Satan tempts people to do wrong things (3 v1-5).
- Sin is disobedience of God's command (3 v6).
- God always judges and punishes sin (3 v9-19).
- Jesus Christ has defeated Satan (3 v15).
- Sin separates us from God (3 v22-24).

You should therefore choose **one** of these six truths—and teach it as your central truth. The next time you come back to teach this lesson you could then choose another of these truths as your central truth; and this would bring more variety into your teaching.

You can find more information and help about central truths in the chapters which follow this one.

3. How Should I State a Central Truth?

There are three words which should describe the statement of the central truth you are going to teach:

- The central truth should be a **simple** statement of something which is true and which the children need to hear, understand and believe or obey. Children should be able to understand it without any difficulty.
  Which of these is better?
  - ✓ "God's plan and purpose for believers is a sanctification which culminates one day in glorification."
  - ✓ "God wants His children to be like Jesus Christ."
- The central truth should be a **short** concise statement of truth. It should not be long, detailed or involved.
  Which of these is better?
  - ✓ "In the Bible God has, over and over again, revealed that He is completely separate from sin, that He is Himself without sin, and that sin can never be allowed to come into His presence—especially in Heaven which is a place without sin or impurity."
  - ✓ "God is holy and pure."
- The central truth should be a **complete** sentence which can stand on its own and which makes sense by itself.
  Which of these is better?
  - ✓ "Witnessing"
  - ✓ "God wants His children to tell others about Him."

It should be clear that for obvious reasons the second statement is the better in each of the three above examples. In the first example the first statement is too complicated, in the second example the first statement is too long and the first part of the third example is a word—not a statement.

Chapter 7:
How to Find the Central Truth

Many teachers of children discover that the most difficult part of Bible lesson presentation is to find the central truth of the passage on which their lesson is based. This difficulty can sometimes result in any one of several unfortunate consequences:

- A lesson which consists of narrative and facts but no central truth.
- A lesson with a confusing mixture of narrative and truth with no one (the teacher sometimes included) being aware of what the central truth is.
- A lesson which includes too many truths with none of them being really taught.

However, it is not really difficult to find the central truth of the passage if you follow these eight steps:

1. Pray for Guidance

Pray that the Holy Spirit will enable you to see and understand **all** the truths in the passage of Scripture on which the lesson is based, and that later He will help you to have the discernment to know which of these is the central truth which He wants you to teach the children. Different teachers may find different central truths for the same Bible lesson. Also a teacher who returns to the same lesson at a later time may find, and want to teach, a different central truth from that which he taught the first time.

Both of these possibilities are perfectly normal and they are possible because of the depth and the richness of the Word of God.

2. Know What You are Looking for

The previous chapter should have helped you to understand what a central truth is. So you should have a good idea what you are looking for. You are looking for a central truth which

you will teach to your children.

There are several words which would describe and should help you to identify the truth(s) you want to teach the children through your lesson, and these words will help you in your search:

- A truth should be **biblical** and therefore true and accurate! That is obvious. The source of all truth is the Word of God; and you always need to be sure that any truth you are teaching comes from the Bible, and specifically from the passage on which your lesson is based. It is therefore helpful to include the word "God" in many of your truths - e.g. "God wants you to ..." or "God does not want you to ..." This shows that the truth is based upon God and what He is saying and teaching in the passage and this strengthens the truth.
- A truth should be **relevant** to the children. It should be helpful to them in their relationship to God, or in their relationship to others, or a truth which will help meet their own needs.
- A truth should be **interesting** to the children; and it will be of course if it is relevant. It is especially good if it arouses their curiosity at first, and if they are encouraged to see themselves as seekers after, and searchers for, the treasures of truth.
- A truth should be **simple**—and easy for the children to understand. You should therefore avoid any complicated theological language.
- A truth should generally be stated in the **present tense** as this makes it more interesting and relevant.

The central truth you are looking for will come into one of the following five categories.

- **"What God wants you to understand and believe"** (A fact or doctrine to believe)

Very often the central truth is a doctrine or important Biblical fact for the children to understand, learn and believe. The main truth in Genesis 1, for example, is "God is Creator".

It is vital that our teaching should have this doctrinal

emphasis, for it is impossible to evangelize without teaching the doctrines of God, sin, the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance and faith. Also Christian children need to be taught doctrine in order to establish them in their faith. As you look for the central truth ask yourself, "Does the passage teach something about God, sin, the Lord Jesus Christ, the way of salvation, the Christian life?" In some lessons you will find many different doctrines or facts. Select the main one and teach it thoroughly.

The following are examples of lessons which could be used to teach facts or doctrines to believe:-

'Christ tempted in the wilderness' (Matthew 4)	Jesus Christ was tempted but never sinned.
'Jeremiah and Baruch' (Jeremiah 36)	The Word of God is everlasting.

This first category is the main type of central truth, the easiest to find and the most needed by the children. It is also easier, simpler and more logical to apply this type of central truth to the children.

- **"What God wants you to do"** (A command to obey)

Perhaps the main character in the narrative obeys a command, which God has given in the scriptures and which you can relate to the child. If you were teaching the lesson on the Shunammite woman's kindness to Elisha in obedience to God's command. (2 Kings 4:8-17), you could teach: "God commands His children to love one another."

Or it may be that in the narrative the command was disobeyed. For example, in the lesson on the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-31) the central truth could be: "The Lord Jesus says, 'Follow me no matter what it costs'."

The following are examples of lessons which could teach commands to obey:-

The call of Joshua (Joshua 1:1-9))	God commands, "Obey my Word"
The Great Commission (Mark 16:9-15)	The Lord Jesus commands, "Tell others about me and my salvation"

➢ **"What God does not want you to do"** (A warning to heed)

There may be a warning to the Christian child about the results of disobedience, or about God's correction. For the unsaved there may be a warning about the results of rebellion and unbelief. The narrative may be about a Bible character who did not heed the warning, or learned the hard way; you will be urging the children **not** to be like this person.

The following are examples of lessons which could be used to teach warnings to heed:-

'Annanias and Sapphira' (Acts 5)	God does not want you to lie to Him.
'Samson and Delilah' (Judges 16)	God wants you to keep away from bad company.

➢ **"What God wants to do for you"** (A promise to receive)

The Bible passage may bring to your mind a promise of God; the events in the narrative show this promise to be true. As you read about Daniel's promotion in Babylon, you may think of God's promise: "Them that honour me I will honour". Or, as you teach how God called Joshua, the central truth could be: "God promises to be with His children, whereever they go."

The following are examples of lessons which could teach promises to receive:-

'The conversion of the Philippian jailor' (Acts 16)	Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved
'Elijah is fed by ravens' (1 Kings 17)	*"My God shall supply all your need"* is God's promise to every Christian.

➢ **"Who God wants you to be like"** (An example to imitate)

The lesson may be about a Bible character, who exemplified some Christian virtue or carried out some aspect of the will of God, whose example you want the children to follow. Do not simply teach the children "Be like Stephen". but be specific about how they should be like him. "Christians should be willing to do anything for the Lord Jesus, as Stephen was." This could be

the central truth in the lesson on the death of Stephen (Acts 6:8-7:60).

The following are examples of lessons which could be used to teach examples to imitate:-

'Joseph as a slave in Egypt' (Genesis 39)	God wants His children to be true to him as Joseph was.
'Daniel in the den of lions' (Daniel 6)	God wants His children to pray to Him each day as Daniel did.

3. Read and Study the Bible Passage Carefully

Read the passage closely and carefully five or six times. Approach it with an open mind. Allow the Scripture passage to determine the truths to be taught rather than basing them on any preconceived ideas of your own. The passage decides the truth. Your task is to find the truths which God is using to teach in this passage .

The truths (and especially the central truth) you are looking for could be compared with treasure. It is as if you are looking for treasure in the depths of the ocean.

Also be sure to read the passage in its context, that is, in connection with what is written previously and with what follows afterwards. In addition, be sure to read parallel passages in other books of the Bible if there are any. For example a number of stories are recorded in more than one of the Gospels, and it is necessary to read and study each of them, and not just one. In this way you will see "the complete picture".

Also if you have access to a book, or books (like a commentary, Bible dictionary or Bible atlas) you should read them to obtain background information which will help you better to understand the passage.

As you read and study and see truths in the passage, write them down, one underneath the other—each one as a short simple statement. At a later time you can select the one you feel is the central truth.

4. Ask Yourself Questions

We have already learned that there are five categories of central truths (see pages 34 - 36). So in the light of this you need to ask yourself five questions - and the answers to these

will help you to identify the central truth

- Is there some fact of doctrine in the passage which God wants the children to understand and believe?
  This could be a fact, doctrine or truth about God, or Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit, or the Bible; or it could be a truth about sin, or salvation or the future.
- Is there something in the passage which God wants the children to do - a command to obey?
- Is there something in the passage which God does not want the children to do - a warning to heed?
- Is there something in the passage which God wants to do for the children? (A promise to receive or claim)
- Is there someone in the passage who God wants the children to imitate? (An example to follow or imitate)

You will proably find several truths in the passage - perhaps in different categories. Write each of them down in one short, simple and complete sentence statement.

5. Choose Your One Central Truth

How should you choose the central truth if there are several possible truths, all of which stand out clearly in the passage on which your lesson is based? In some lessons the central truth will stand out alone and right from the start. But in many Bible lessons you will find that you have several answers and therefore several possible central truths.

For example, the story of Noah and the flood in Genesis chapters 6, 7 and 8 is a well known Bible story which has often been used as the basis of a Bible lesson taught to children.

Please study these chapters for yourself and note down how many truths you can find in them. It should be obvious that you cannot teach (or even mention) all of these truths. But my recommendation is that you select one of these truths, make **that** truth your central truth, and teach it thoroughly.

I can find the following truths in this passage:

- God is just and must punish sin (Genesis 6 v6).
- There is only one door (one way) of salvation (Genesis 6 v16;7 v7, 16).
- Man is sinful in his nature and actions (Genesis 6 v5).

- God is faithful and always keeps His promises (Genesis 6 v7; 6 v18:7 v21; 8 v1, 18, 21, 22).
- God cares for and looks after those who obey Him (Genesis 6 v18; 8 v1).
- God is powerful and can do anything (Genesis 6 v13; 7 v11, 12; 8 v1).
- God does not want us to allow other things to take His place (Link passage with Matthew 24 v37-39).
- The person who trusts God is saved and blessed by Him (Link passage with Hebrews 11 v7).
- God promises to keep safe all those who enter through the door of salvation (Genesis 6 v18; 8 v18).
- God wants you to obey Him as Noah did (Genesis 6 v22; 7 v5 etc).

There are at least ten truths in this passage. Any one of these could be a central truth.

But we have already seen that effective teaching concentrates on one truth. Therefore you should not try to teach all of these truths but choose and concentrate on one of them.

There are, first of all, three basic questions which you need to ask yourself—and your answers will help you to see which of the truths is the central truth of the passage:

- ***Is there a truth which appears several times in the passage—and which is obviously the dominant truth?*** *The more dominant it is, and the more often it appears in the passage, the easier it will be for you to weave it into your lesson and teach it thoroughly to the children.*
- ***Why has God put this passage in the Bible?*** *There must be a reason and purpose for it being there, and seeing that purpose will help you to see the main teaching and the central truth of the passage.*
- ***What does God the Holy Spirit especially teach yourself through this passage?*** *This is probably the most important question of all. As you study the Scripture passage, and note the different truths in it, God will speak to* ***your*** *heart and life; and one truth will especially grip your heart and become part of you. What you learn in this way will best enable you to teach others.*

And you also need to ask two additional and very practical questions:

- ***What are the needs of your children?***
  It is important that the truth being taught is relevant to the children and their needs.
  Which of these truths would help meet their needs in the best possible way? What new knowledge would you like the children to acquire? What changes would you like to see in them?
  - ✓ *If they are a new group of children, who know very little, you should teach them the most basic truth.*
  - ✓ *If all or most of the children are unsaved you should choose a truth which especially lends itself more to evangelism.*
  - ✓ *If all or most of the children are saved you should choose a truth which would especially help them grow spiritually.*
  - ✓ *If both groups are more or less equal in number you should choose a truth which would allow two clear and separate applications for these two groups of children.*

  Effective teaching must have definite and clearly understood aims which are based on the needs of the children. The teacher can discover the children's needs by getting to know them personally. Therefore as you teach this lesson your objective is to meet those needs.
- ***What truths have you previously taught?***
  You are endeavouring to give to the children a comprehensive understanding of the truths of Scripture. Over a period of time you want them to hear and learn "all the counsel of God". Do not therefore keep teaching just one truth or a few selected truths over *and over again. This would result in the omission of many other truths.*

Write down your answers to help you in your choice of the central truth.

At this time in your preparation for teaching it would be good to consult any teaching materials, outlines or books related

to the passage you are studying and the lesson you are teaching. You could then compare the conclusions they have come to with your own. Perhaps they are better than yours, and you may want to change. But you should only change if you are absolutely sure that their conclusion is better than yours. Your own research and conclusions are to be preferred; and that is why you should do your own study before consulting the studies of others.

Also you need to be completely sure that any material you are consulting is thoroughly biblical and evangelical. There are many books and materials on the market which are not, and you need to keep away from them. However, you can always depend upon the materials produced by Child Evangelism Fellowship.

6. Write the Central Truth Down

You now need to summarize the central truth as concisely as possible and write it down in a brief sentence using a child's vocabulary. **It should be brief enough to remember, clear enough to understand, and specific enough to be achieved.** It will be a help to your teaching if you write down the central truth at the top of the page on which you have written, or will write, your lesson plan. You could also write it down in large letters and pin it upon the wall, or place it on your flannelgraph board so that it can be visible to the children. Perhaps the best way is to write it down on a piece of cardboard, which you could then hold up each time it comes into your lesson. This really helps to focus the minds of the children. This piece of cardboard could have a symbolic shape which would fit in with the central truth e.g. a cross, a heart or a Bible.

Your central truth should, therefore, always be a single, concise, complete statement. Make sure that you do not include a number of "and's" and "but's".

The following are good examples of central truth statements:

- *God, the Holy Spirit, lives in every believer.*
- *God is everywhere.*
- *Jesus Christ is the only Saviour.*
- *Sin separates us from God.*

- *God promises to be with His children at all times.*
- *God warns us not to be jealous.*
- *Jesus Christ commands us to follow Him.*
- *God wants us to talk to Him as Daniel did*

Remember to keep your central truth simple, short and complete (see page 32)

- You should avoid complicated statements as central truths. For example:
  "Salvation involves and results in the justification, regeneration, and adoption of lost sinners."
  Keep your central truth simple. It would be better, in this instance, to restrict it to "God forgives all the sin of the boy or girl who trusts Jesus Christ."
- You should avoid long detailed statements which would not be suitable as central truths. For example:
  "We all need a new heart because of our fallen nature and God gives us a new heart when we trust the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit comes to live in us—and He will live in us for ever."
  These truths must be taught, at some time, but this sentence is too long, includes too many truths and uses theological terms which the children would not understand.
- You should avoid vague or incomplete sentences as central truths.
  - ✓ For example "The Holy Spirit" is too vague and is neither a statement nor a sentence. Instead you could have "The Holy Spirit convicts sinners of their sin."
  - ✓ "Jesus calming the storm" is a title but it is not a sentence and doesn't really say or teach anything. Instead you could have "Jesus Christ shows us He is God by calming the storm."
  - ✓ "Loving others" or "Being a Christian" are likewise incomplete statements and not central truths. Instead you could have "God wants Christians to love other Christians at all times" or "A Christian is a person who has trusted Jesus Christ as his Saviour".
  - ✓ "Following Jesus" is not a good central truth. Instead,

a good central truth statement would be "The Lord Jesus commands us to follow Him".

- Also, you should, if possible, avoid using the word "you" in the central truth unless it can be applied to both saved and unsaved children. You could use "God created you for His Glory" as a central truth because the "you" could be applied to both groups. But you should not have a central truth such as "God the Holy Spirit lives in you." This truth is only for those who have trusted Him. Rephrase it to read, "God the Holy Spirit lives in those who have trusted Christ." The word "you" can then be used in both applications.

Central truth "God the Holy Spirit lives in those who have trusted Christ".

- ✓ *Application to the saved children "(Therefore) Be careful where you go and what you say."*
- ✓ *Application to the unsaved children "(Therefore) Trust Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit will come to live in you".*

7. Vary Your Central Truths

Your ministry is to teach "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20 v27), and you must be aware of the danger of concentrating on the teaching of a few central truths over and over again to the exclusion of many others.

There are several truths which could easily be found in many lessons.

- ✓ "God is all-powerful" could be the central truth in "The crossing of the Red Sea", "Gideon's victory", "Creation", "The fall of Jericho", "God's care for Elijah during the drought"—and many more.
- ✓ You could teach "Jesus Christ is God" in many of the lessons on the earthly life of Jesus Christ.

But there are other possible truths in these lessons which the children also need to hear and learn.

Also if you keep choosing the same truths over and over again you will lose the attention and interest of the children.

If you exegete, properly and thoroughly, the passages on which your lessons are based and if you teach the truths which are actually in those passages, there is certain to be a real variety in your teaching. The Bible contains a wide panorama of truth and does not concentrate on a few truths which are repeated over and over again.

Varying your central truths as much as possible will bring vitality and depth to your teaching. You may teach stories and lessons which the children have heard before but, because you use them to teach new truths, they will come with freshness to your hearers. The children will be less likely to feel that they have outgrown Bible stories. They will learn that no matter how often we come to a familiar passage of Scripture, God has always something more to teach us.

However there are a number of key Bible truths which will normally, and naturally, appear more often than other truths, and you should recognize and incorporate that fact in your teaching. Such truths would include, for example, the following:

- *Jesus Christ died on the cross for sinners.*
- *God is holy.*
- *Salvation is by faith alone.*

8. Keep a Record of Your Central Truths

You should have a note book, or a recording system of some kind, into which you write the central truth which you teach each week. A sample of a planning sheet is included on page 45.

You can then periodically look back over what you have recorded, and see if there are any truths which you haven't taught, or if there are other truths which you have included too often.

Truths which have been omitted could be included in future lessons as the exegesis of the passage allows it; or could even be included as a flashcard lesson focused on that "missing truth" or in a song which you could introduce to the children to help you teach it.

Planning Sheet for Teachers' Use

Explanation: The first three columns need to be used for every lesson.
You will, in addition, use one or both of the other columns.

Date	Lesson	Central Truth	Application for Unsaved Child	Application for Saved Child

Chapter 8:
How to Teach the Central Truth

Teaching is, as we have already seen, much more than just saying, mentioning or telling. Teaching is helping the children to learn. A truth has only been taught when a child has grasped it with his own understanding. This will not normally take place, if you merely refer to a truth in a Bible lesson—or even if you repeat the same sentence at different times.

If you say, for example, "God is holy", it is unrealistic to expect this great truth to have become part of the child's understanding even if you repeat these three words over and over again. This truth needs to be **taught** and taught thoroughly.

There are six main steps to follow in your teaching if you want to be effective and ensure that every child leaves your class or meeting knowing, and understanding, the central truth of the lesson, and what it means for each of them personally.

1. Understand the Central Truth

It is not possible either to simplify or explain a central truth if you don't understand it yourself. So before asking yourself the question "How can I teach this truth to the children", you need to ask several other questions.

> *"What does this central truth mean?"*
> *"What is its application to me, myself?"*
> *"Has this truth had an effect on my own life?"*

The more you yourself understand a truth and the more you apply it to your own life, the better you will be able to teach it to the children.

2. Simplify the Central Truth

We have already looked at the question of simplicity earlier in the book, and we have seen that the central truth should be a **simple**, complete, concise statement.

- *It needs to be simple with regard to the words which it uses and they must be words which a child can understand.*
- *It needs to be simple with regard to the concepts being taught. These concepts should all be understandable to the average child if properly and thoroughly explained.*

The truth will be simple if it is well understood by the teacher. The more and better you understand it, the more simply you can teach it. The reverse is also true.

It is especially important to watch the words which you use. You need to avoid evangelical terminology and clichés unless they are properly explained.

For example:

- What does the word "save" mean to the average child if it is not explained?
- Can a child understand the concept of "eternal life" without explanation?
- Is the phrase "into your heart" clear to a child with no Bible background?
- What about phrases such as "the Bible is inspired"? Or "you need to be born again"? Or "redeemed"?

It is necessary to use words which all children will understand—especially those with no Bible background or, if the words are "new", you need to explain them.

To children like these, the word "converted" is meaningless; but the words "turned around" are clear (especially if a visual is used). It is possible for these children to understand that God wants them to turn from sin to goodness, from Satan to God, and from death to life.

3. Explain the Central Truth

It is not sufficient to say one or two sentences about the truth

and to hope that, by doing so, you have taught it. Detailed explanation of the central truth is necessary - especialy for today's children who know so little about God and the Bible.

You should try to include your central truth in the lesson at least four or five times where the Bible passage allows you to do so. The first time you introduce the truth into the lesson, you should give a simple basic introduction to it, and an explanation of it. After that, each time it comes into your lesson, you should develop it, and take it one step further—building on that first simple introduction.

If, for example, you were teaching "God is just" (or fair), you could, at the first opportunity, give an explanation of the word "just". You could then later, and as the passage allows, explain how God can be just - that He knows everything and all His decisions are right and correct. Then, still later, you could include teaching on how the Death of Jesus Christ on the cross shows God's justice, and how He can forgive sinners and still be just. These different aspects and explanations of the central truth would be woven into the narrative of the story with a **short** time spent on each.

We have said, over and over again, that telling is not teaching and that saying something is not teaching it. Truth needs to be explained.

The three key words are—explanation, repetition and illustration.

It would be a great help to you in your explanation of a truth if you would ask yourself a series of questions concerning the central truth you are teaching and then ensure that you answer those questions in your explanation.

For example if your central truth is "Jesus is Lord", you could ask yourself several questions and then endeavour to answer them in your teaching here and there during the narrative:

- What does the word "Lord" mean? He is in control.
- Over what is He Lord? Over all people and everything.
- Why is He Lord? Because He is God and has died on the cross.
- For how long is He Lord? Forever.
- What should you do? You should obey Him by repenting and turning to Him.

- What will He do? He has the power to save and to make you holy.

Then as you tell your story and teach your lesson, you would answer one of these questions each time you introduce the Lordship of Christ. By the time you have finished you should have explained thoroughly what the central truth means.

> *You need to take time throughout the lesson to make sure that the children understand the truth being taught. Use simple and concrete terms and make your explanations interesting and as clear as possible. You cannot impart spiritual understanding, but you do have a responsibility to teach truth thoroughly and carefully.*

➢ Include Other Truths

Many teachers when introduced to this concept of teaching one central truth to **all** the children ask this question:

"*Should I restrict my teaching to the central truth or can I include other truths*?"

The answer to both questions is yes.

> - *Yes, you should confine your **teaching** to the central truth.*
> - *Yes, you should include other truths – not to teach them, but to help you teach and apply the central truth.*

We have already seen, over and over again, how necessary it is to teach one central truth and to do it as thoroughly as possible.

However it is difficult to teach one truth in isolation. Other truths are generally needed to help in the understanding and application of the central truth.

Therefore to concentrate your teaching and application on one central truth does not mean the elimination of other truths. However, a clear distinction needs to be made, and understood, between the teaching of truth and the mentioning of truth.

> *You need to remember the TMO formula. This formula is vitally important.*

- ***T**each one truth.*
- ***M**ention other truths which help in the teaching and application of the central truth.*
- ***O**mit the remaining truths.*

Although it is best to concentrate your teaching and applications on the one central truth, you will generally need to introduce other truths to help in the understanding and application of that central truth.

These other truths may be included provided the following "rules" are understood and obeyed:

- Other truths may be included provided it is understood that these other truths are not truths to be taught. It is the central truth which is being taught, and the purpose of these other truths is to help in the teaching of **that** truth. Do not include too many 'other truths' in case you obscure or distract from the teaching of the central truth.
- Other truths should therefore only be included if they are linked to and will help teach and/or apply the central truth.

  It is difficult, and even unlikely, to teach a central truth in absolute and complete isolation. Other truths are generally needed to make the central truth understandable.

  For example, if the central truth is "Salvation is only by faith in Jesus Christ", it would help in the teaching of this truth if the following truths could be mentioned:
  - ✓ "The holiness of God makes salvation necessary".
  - ✓ "Because of sin, salvation is necessary".
  - ✓ "Jesus Christ died to make salvation possible".
  - ✓ "Jesus Christ lives today to save those who trust Him."

  You are not teaching these other truths. You are mentioning them to help you teach your central truth. Don't include too many "other truths" in case you obscure or detract from the teaching of tyhe central truth.
- The other truths you are mentioning may be in the passage being taught and may be part of the story. In this case attention can be drawn to them in the story as the lesson develops and as the central truth is being taught.

However, truths which are in the passage may be omitted if they do not help to teach or explain the central truth.

- On the other hand, and this is more common, the other truths you are mentioning do not need to be in the passage on which your lesson is based. You should feel free to introduce them anyway—provided they help in the teaching (and application) of your central truth. It is, of course, a real help if these other truths have been taught previously to the children, and this is quite possible when you have a regular ministry to these children.

For example if I am teaching about the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), I could take as my central truth "God wants sinners to turn from sin and trust Jesus Christ." While the central truth focuses on the two-fold response of the unsaved child in repentance and faith, it would be necessary to mention the love of God which welcomes a sinner who comes to Him (a truth which appears in the passage), and to mention the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (truths which do not appear in the passage) which make it possible for the sinner to come. I would not be teaching these truths. I would include them because it helps me to teach and apply my central truth.

This principle of including other truths is a very liberating one. I and many others in CEF previously used a method of Bible lesson presentation which required us to FIND six gospel truths plus a truth for saved children and a truth about God actually in the passage on which the lesson was based. I found that this was very difficult (especially with some Old Testament lessons), and I also felt it to be binding and restrictive. One children's worker from Africa wrote to me and said, "At times we find it difficult to weave some of the Gospel points into a Bible passage—especially in the Old Testament." I understand what he means, having been in the same place myself. He was trying to find a number of Gospel truths in the Old Testament passages on which his lessons were based; and in many cases they just were not there!

But now I have the freedom to introduce whatever truths I wish (provided they help to teach and apply the central truth) without having to find them in the passage.

➢ **Teach a Bible Verse to Back Up the Central Truth**

It is important to select a Bible verse which helps to clarify and explain the central truth. You will then quote this verse during your Bible lesson and you will encourage the children to memorize it as their 'memory verse'. Remember that there is power in the Word of God, and that is why you want to be sure to include quotations from the Word of God in your explanation of the central truth. At the same time you must be sure to explain what the verse means and show how it links in with the central truth.

For example, if you are teaching the central truth "God is holy" you could use 1 Peter 1 v15a as your key Bible verse.

"But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy ……"

Or if you are teaching as the central truth " Jesus Christ died to save you and He will if you ask Him", you could use Romans 10 v13:

"For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

If you have enough time you should also encourage the children to memorize this key verse.

4. Illustrate the Central Truth

One of the most important and most valuable ways to help children understand the great truths of Scripture is by the use of illustrations.

These illustrations are either stories or examples from every day life which throw light on the truth you are trying to explain— or they might be stories from another part of the Bible. They are like windows which let in the light of understanding. They are introduced during the lesson to shed light on what you are teaching.

Obviously the more light you can throw on a subject the better. But you should not ordinarily use more than two or three illustrations in one Bible lesson.

It is interesting to see how often the teaching of truth in the Bible is assisted and encouraged by the use of illustrations:

- In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord Jesus uses salt and light to illustrate the responsibility of the believer

(Matthew chapter 5 v13-16), the birds and the flowers to teach God's care for His children (6 v24-34), and He shows the difference between believers and unbelievers by using the illustrations of two trees (7 v15-20) two ways (7 v13, 14) and two houses (7 v24-29).

- When Paul was teaching the truth of justification by faith to the Romans he used the illustration of Abraham from the Old Testament and how he believed and was justified (Romans 4).

If for example you were teaching the children that they could only come to God through Jesus Christ you could use the following illustration:

"The little boy was very upset as he leaned against the wall beside the palace gate. 'Why wouldn't the guard let me in?', he thought, 'I do want to see the king.' But the guard wouldn't allow him through the gate. Just then the little boy saw a young man coming near the gate, who stopped beside him and looking at his tear –stained disappointed face, he kindly asked, 'What is the matter?'

'I want to see the king but they won't let me in', he replied.

'Come with me', the man said. And he took his hand.

Together they approached the guard who saluted and opened the gate through which they passed. On they went until they entered the great front door of the palace. The young man led the way along the corridors and right to where the king was.

The little boy was very excited and very puzzled. At last he plucked up enough courage to ask, 'Why did the guard let you through?'

'The king is my father', was the reply.

Of course if a Bible story is the basis of your lesson the narrative of the story itself is, or should be, an illustration of the central truth you are teaching. There will then be less need for illustrations.

For example if you are teaching a lesson based on Elijah's life during the years of drought and your central truth is "God cares for His children", the story itself will provide you with adequate illustrations of this truth.

On the other hand if you are teaching a straight forward doctrinal lesson using flashcards on, say, the truth that "God is holy", you will need several illustrations to shed light on the different points which you include because you do not have a Bible narrative on which to base your lesson. These illustrations

could be from the Bible itself (e.g. Moses receiving the Ten Commandments) or from everyday life. Such illustrations will help you get and hold the attention of the children in the absence of a story narrative.

There are several important points to remember with regard to illustrations.

- Be sure that the illustration used does illustrate and explain the truth you are teaching—or the result will be confusion.
- Do not use tear-jerking illustrations which will merely arouse the children's emotions.
- Be sure that your illustrations are not too long or too vivid or too funny—as they may be a hindrance. There is a danger of the children remembering the illustration, but not knowing or remembering what it was supposed to help teach.
- Do not lose the thread of the story by the use of too many illustrations.

You can find hundreds of good illustrations of Bible truth in my book "Now I See It".

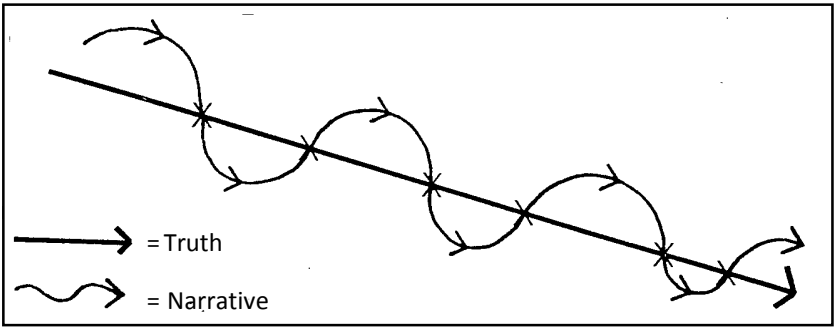
5. Repeat the Central Truth

Repetition is an essential part of teaching. Children are more likely to understand and remember truth which has been repeated and reviewed.

Remember, however, that when you repeat the central truth you should vary your way of presenting it, and you should not just repeat the words of the central truth sentence. A teacher should present and repeat the same truth a number of times, approaching it in several different and interesting ways. If you follow the method of explanation which is outlined on pages 47 to 49 you will repeat the truth several times during your lesson—in a deeper and more progressive way each time.

You can see this illustrated in the following diagram. As you tell your story and give the narrative of that story you will plan to come into contact with, and include, the truth you are

teaching (as indicated with an X) from time to time. But you will not do so at the same level or with the same words each time. Instead you will aim to teach the truth at a deeper level every time you come to it:



You should therefore repeat the central truth several times in the lesson you are teaching. You should also make it your goal to repeat the central truth in other parts of your teaching programme—through the selection of appropriate choruses (which also teach or refer to the central truth), by learning a related memory verse, and by telling a missionary story which illustrates that truth. Also you should frequently return to the central truths you have taught in later meetings to revise and reinforce them.

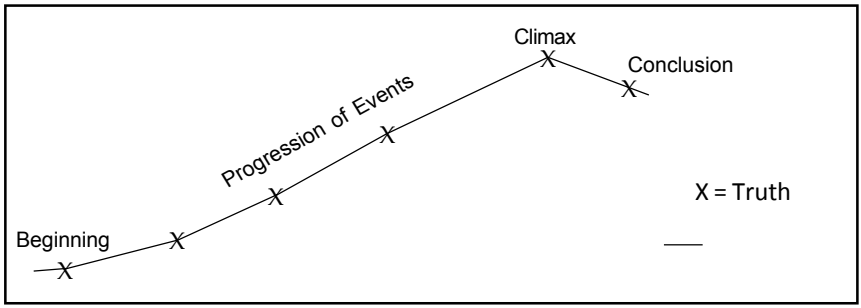
➢ Weave In the Central Truth

One concept which has been of great help to those teachers who want to repeat the central truth several times in their Bible lesson is called "weaving in the truth".

Earlier in this book we looked at a method of Bible lesson presentation which, I believe, personally to be relatively ineffective. That method consisted of a story with the teaching and application of a truth added on at the end. Those who have used this method usually find that, when the moment comes to teach the truth of the lesson, the attention of the children is elsewhere.

The "secret" and the answer to this problem is to weave and repeat the truth throughout the story as you would weave a thread through a piece of tapestry. The central truth should

be an integral part of your Bible lesson or story and woven throughout it. The truth should, in this way, be closely linked with the story and you will teach it as you narrate your story. You can see how this is done in the diagram below. The truth will be taught at each point marked with an X, and will not be left until the end of the lesson:



In this way you will keep the flow and continuity of the narrative, and hold the children's attention. It must however be remembered that it is not sufficient just to state the truth in a short sentence from time to time in the lesson but, as we have already seen, you will need to explain it and apply it and not use the same words each time.

The central truth is thus brought into your lesson or story each time it emerges naturally from the narrative. If you are teaching the main truth contained in your Bible passage you will normally find that it appears in, and comes out from, the text of the passage a number of times.

This method of "weaving in the truth" has two results:

- *It overcomes the problem which arises when you "attach" the truth on at the end of your story and you lose the children's attention at the very moment when it is most needed. When the truth is woven into the lesson or story the children will listen and learn because the truth you are teaching is part of an integrated and interesting lesson.*
- *It means that the truth you are teaching will be repeated at least four or five times during the lesson, usually with different words and in a different way. This repetition helps the children to understand it and learn it.*

For example if you were teaching a lesson on Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 2 with the central truth "God knows everything" you can introduce it by saying:

"*I wonder who is the most clever person in the class? Let's say it is Michael, and we get him to read every book in the library. He remembers everything he reads! He would know many, many things and everyone would think he was brilliant. But he would know very little compared to what God knows, for He knows everything. No one could ever think of a question that God doesn't know the answer to. And then there is another thing …….. Michael would have to do a lot of reading and learning but God never had to learn. He always knows everything*."

Later you could repeat the truth in the context of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream:

"*Give me some time", Daniel pleaded with the king. How was Daniel so sure he could help? All the cleverest men in the kingdom had tried and failed. Daniel knew that God would help him. He knew that God knows what goes on in people's thoughts even when they sleep. He knows every secret. He knows how people feel when they really are pretending to be happy. He knows the things we have done and the things we have tried not to let anyone know*."

As the lesson develops and as you teach the central truth again you could, perhaps, say when Daniel gives the correct interpretation of the dream:

"*Let's see how many stars we can name. Yes, that is quite good. We have got fourteen. How many stars are there? Billions! So we got fourteen out of billions. Listen to what the Bible says about God and the stars,* 'He calls them all by name' *(Isaiah 40 v26). We just cannot take in how much God knows*."

If you are teaching a lesson based on Acts chapter 2 v1-40 (the day of Pentecost), your central truth could be "The Holy Spirit lives in all believers."

You could weave this truth in at various places in the lesson and include a different aspect of the same truth each time.

- Verses 1-4 The Holy Spirit came to live in all the disciples (*The Holy Spirit does not just live in special Christians. He comes to live in all Christians).*
- Verse 17. The gift of the Holy Spirit was promised in the Old Testament (*God always keeps His promises, and He will keep His promise to live in you if you trust Christ*).
- Verse 33. It is Jesus Christ who gives us the Holy Spirit (*Just as eternal life was a gift from Jesus Christ, so is the Holy Spirit*).

- Verse 37. The Holy Spirit Who now lived in the disciples convicted their listeners of their sin and their need (*He will also help you in your witness*).
- Verse 38. The Holy Spirit comes to live in anyone who turns from their sin and trusts Christ (*This gift is for you if you will trust Christ today*).

It is clear, of course, that what is being taught in each of these five places is part of and included in the teaching of ONE central truth - the Holy Spirit lives in all believers.

You could also, in this lesson, use the illustration of a house and its resident as based on 1 Corinthians 6 v19 "*Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit*". The children are like houses into which the Holy Spirit comes to live. The house has a new resident and a new owner. What a difference He makes!

If you are teaching a lesson based on the story of Noah and the Great Flood (Genesis chapter 6-9), your central truth could be "God is just (or fair)". You could then weave this truth into various parts of your lesson or story explaining a different aspect of the truth each time you include it.

- Chapters 6 v5-7 God is fair and must punish sin. (*God is always fair – today as then. He must do what is right*).
- Chapter 6 v18, 7 v1. God rewards those who are obedient to Him. (*He still does. If sinners obey Him by trusting Christ, He will save them*).
- Chapter 7 v21. God punishes those who do not obey Him. (*If boys and girls do not trust Christ, they will be separated from God forever*).
- Chapter 7 v20, 24 and chapter 8 v1. God has the power to put His decisions into practice. (*He still has that power and there is no escape or excuse for those who do not trust Christ*).
- Chapter 9 v8-17. God gives promises to those who are obedient and He will keep those promises. (*God still keeps the promises He has made in His Word).*

You can see that in this way you are teaching the ONE central truth throughout your lesson because each point helps the children more and more to understand that God is just.

It is important that when you move from the narrative of the story to teach the central truth that you do so smoothly and gently by using a good link sentence. The following example is taken from the lesson on Elijah fleeing from Jezebel. (1 Kings 19)

The central truth could be "God is patient".

"*The man who had done so much for God ran away from a woman! Did Elijah not believe that God would keep him safe? This time he didn't ask God what to do; so he made a great big mistake* (this is your link out of the story into your teaching*). I have done that, and I am sure you have done that too. You are a Christian, but you sometimes forget to ask God to show you what to do. But God did not say, "I am not interested in Elijah any more. Just look what he did." God doesn't say that to you or me. He still works on in His children's lives. He speaks to them gently, and He shows them where they have gone wrong. He is very patient ……"*

When you return to the narrative or story again you need a good linking sentence so that the lesson remains a unity and flows smoothly. In this example you could return to the narrative by using the following sentence "*God is very patient* (this is your link back into the story again) *and so He allowed Elijah to have a good sleep*."

6. Apply the Central Truth

Careful and discriminating application of the central truth to both saved and unsaved children is necessary - to show them what this truth means for them personally.

This will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Chapter 9:
How to Apply the Central Truth

The subject of application is so important that I feel a whole chapter should be devoted to it! There are seven steps you need to follow. with regard to application

1. Understand the Need for Application

Understanding must always precede action. But action should always follow and be the result of understanding. It is therefore essential that when you are preparing and presenting your Bible lesson to hildren, you should understand clearly what it means to apply the truth you are teaching, and why it is necessary to do so.

There are four facts about the application of Bible truth which you need to understand:

- Application is essential.
- Application is biblical.
- Application is a bridge between truth and actions.
- Application should be discriminate.

➢ Application Is Essential

It is not enough to teach the central truth. Teaching should lead to application. As I have already said, understanding comes first and this should then be followed by action. Therefore it is vital that the central truth is applied clearly and carefully to **all** the children present. Application shows the children what God wants them to do as a consequence of what you have taught them. It is the practical outworking of truth; and it seeks to bring that truth from the understanding of the children into their lives and actions. The truth is the root from which the application comes; the application is the fruit which springs from the truth.

You should never teach truths without giving clear application of those truths to the lives of the children.

There are two mistakes to avoid in the presentation of a Bible

lesson:

- ✓ Teaching a truth and not applying it.
  You always need to ask yourself the questions "What does this truth mean to the children? What should be the result of this truth in their lives? What do I want the children to do as a result of this truth?"
  The answers to those questions will give you the applications. Or if you add the word "therefore" after the truth and then complete the sentence logically—you should be able to find and state the application(s).
- ✓ Applying a truth which has not been taught.
  You also need to be careful to teach the central truth before you make the application. You should not tell or teach children what to do without giving a good reason why they should do it.
  If you have a statement which looks like an application ask the question why? The answer will be the central truth.

Every lesson should therefore have both truth and application.

➢ **Application Is Biblical**

Application is always an essential part of the teaching found in the Scriptures. The Old Testament prophets were very specific in their message at all times, and they certainly applied it clearly to the lives of the Jewish people. The Lord Jesus Christ always applied the truths He taught. For example, He applied the truth very pointedly to the rich young ruler in Mark 10 and the Samaritan woman in John 4. We can see the same principle in Paul's teaching ministry. For example he carefully explained doctrine and truth in the first section of his epistles to the Romans, the Galatians and the Ephesians. But he was just as thorough in the application of those doctrines and truths to his readers in the latter part of each of these three epistles.

Two Bible verses which show the fact of, and relationship between, truth and application are 2 Timothy 3 v15 and 16.

- ✓ The Bible is given to us by God
  "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*."

- ✓ The first purpose of the Bible is to teach truth or doctrine. "*And is profitable for doctrine*."
- ✓ The second purpose of the Bible is to apply the truths taught
  "*for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*."
- ✓ The third purpose of the Bible is to lead believers on to maturity and good works.
  "*that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*."

➢ **Application Is a Bridge**

The application bridges the gap between the knowledge of the truth on the one hand, and the response of the child in his life and practice on the other hand. Application is building a bridge, and you need to do this as effectively as possible.

What, for example, is the application(s) to the children of the following central truths? Use the word "therefore" after each truth and complete the sentence to find the application.

- ✓ The Bible is the Word of God. (2 Chronicles 34)
- ✓ The Holy Spirit lives in every believer. (Acts 2: 1-21)
- ✓ The Lord Jesus Christ is coming back again. (Acts 1: 1-12)
- ✓ The Lord Jesus Christ is all-powerful. (Luke 8:22-36)
- ✓ God promises to save boys and girls who trust Jesus Christ. (Acts 16.31)
- ✓ God promises to be with His children at all times (Joshua 1:1-9)

Now reverse the procedure. What are the central truths on which the following applications are based? You can use the question "Why?" in each case to help you find the central truth.

- ✓ Read your Bible every day (an application for all children).
- ✓ Don't take drugs or you will harm your body (an application for all children but especially for saved children),
- ✓ Be careful where you go and what you do (an application for saved children).

- ✓ The Lord Jesus is able to save you no matter how bad you are (an application for unsaved children),
- ✓ Trust Jesus Christ and you will be saved (an application for unsaved children).
- ✓ You do not need to be afraid of the dark (an application for saved children)

Did you see that these are applications of the six truths stated previously? Put each truth and application together. Notice again that you should be able to use the word "therefore" as the connecting word which makes the link between the truth and the application.

Remember if your applications to the children are always the same then there is something wrong. It is the central truth which determines what the application is and, because central truths vary, applications should also vary.

Central Truth		Application
The Bible is the Word of God	T	Read your Bible every day (for both groups).
The Holy Spirit lives in every believer	H E	Don't take drugs or you will harm your body (for saved).
The Lord Jesus Christ is coming back again	R	Be careful where you goand what you do (for saved).
The Lord Jesus Christ is all-powerful	E F	The Lord Jesus is able to saveyou no matter how bad you are (for unsaved).
God promises to save boys and girls who trust Christ	O R	Trust Jesus Christ and you will be saved (for unsaved).
God promises to be with His children at all times		You need not be afraid of the dark (for saved)

Can you see how the word "therefore" links, in each case, the central truth and the application? Of course the truths which I have applied to one group of children above can also be applied in some way to the other group.

All of the six central truths listed above are either facts or

doctrines which God wants the children to understand and believe or promises for the children to receive. It is much easier to find the application for these facts and promises using the word "therefore" than it is for the other three categories of central truth (commands, warnings, & examples) which at first glance look like applications themselves. However you can overcome this by prefixing the command, warning or example with the words "God wants you to ..." . This will then make it easier to use the word "therefore" and find an application. This application will really be a more specfic statement about the practical result which there should be in a child's life as a result of this truth.

(Incidentally it would be good to look again at the passage and see if this type of central truth (a command, warning or example) is really an application of a fact or promise which is in the passage. If so you could teach the fact or promise and use this as your application)

Central Truth	Application
The Lord Jesus wants you to keep on praying and not give up (command to obey) Luke 11:1-11	(Therefore) you should keep on asking God to save your family and friends (for saved)
God does not want you to say "NO" to the Lord Jesus (warning to heed) Matthew 19:16-26	(Therefore) come to the Lord Jesus and say to Him "I trust you" (for unsaved)
God wants you to show your love for the Lord Jesus as Mary did (example to follow) John 12:1-11	(Therefore) you should give the Lord Jesus your time and money - all that you have (for saved)

➢ **Application Should Be Discriminate**

You should always remember that there are usually two kinds, or groups, of children in your group:

- ✓ Children who have trusted Jesus Christ, who are born again and are spiritually alive. They need to be fed.
- ✓ Children who have not trusted Jesus Christ, who are not born again and are spiritually dead. They need to be evangelized.

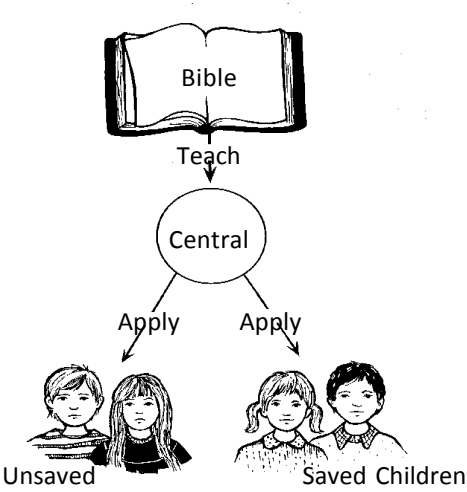
Consequently, while you will teach the central truth of the lesson to all the children, you will need to apply it in two ways or directions to meet the needs of each group of children, (as you can see in the diagram on the next page). This means that there will be one truth but two applications.

For example, if your central truth is "The Lord Jesus Christ is coming back again—perhaps today", you would apply that truth to the saved children to encourage them to live in a way which pleases Him. But you would apply it to the unsaved children to warn them of the danger of unbelief, and to urge them to trust Christ.

You always need to make it clear to whom you are applying the truth.

- ✓ *When applying the truth to the saved children you could use phrases such as:*
  "If the Lord Jesus is your Saviour ……"
  "If you have trusted Christ to forgive you and He is in charge of your life …."
  "If you are saved ……"
- ✓ *When applying the truth to the unsaved children you could use phrases such as:*
  "If you are not a Christian ….."
  "If you have never trusted the Lord Jesus Christ …."

You may not always know the spiritual condition of the children you are teaching. But, if you are careful in making it clear to whom you are applying the truth, they will know what you mean and to whom you are speaking.



These two applications of a central truth will almost always be different for both these groups of children.

2. Find the Application(s)

To find and decide upon the application of the truth you should ask yourself these questions:

- What response does God want from each of the two groups of children as a result of their understanding of this truth?
- How should this truth affect the lives of each of the children I teach?
- What difference has this truth made to me?

The answers to these questions will help you to find the application or applications.

As we have already seen several times it is a special help to use the word "therefore". Write it down after the central truth statement and then determine how you would conclude the sentence. The sentence which follows the "therefore" could be your application.

There are three possibilities to keep in mind as you look for the application(s):

- The central truth may have applications to both the saved and unsaved children (as we saw in the diagram on page

66). This is true, I believe, of well over ninety per cent of central truths. Therefore you would need to find the two applications of this truth—one for the saved children to help them grow, and one for the unsaved children to evangelize them.

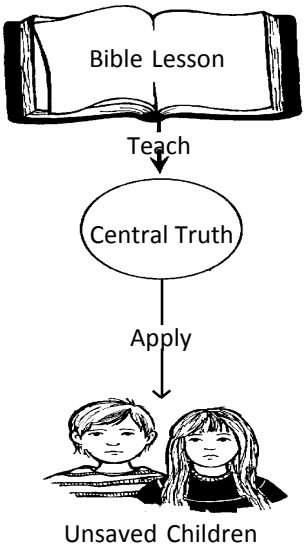
- The central truth may only have an application to the unsaved children (as you can see in the diagram below). When this is so, do not try to force an application to the saved children. Clear evangelistic teaching and application will be a blessing and a help to the Christian children, and will give them a deeper appreciation of what God has done for them.

John Brown, the well known Scottish preacher and writer in the early part of the nineteenth century wrote:

"After a man is converted, growth in knowledge (which leads to growth in grace) consists chiefly in knowing better the very truths by which conversion was produced."

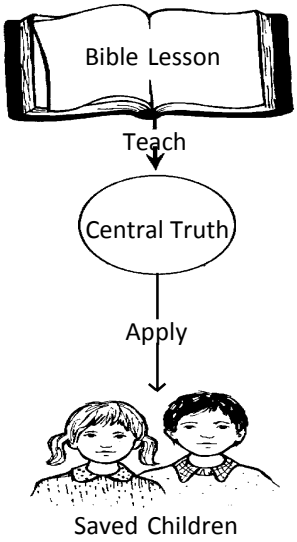
"The Christian life consists simply in the continuance and increase of a man's submission to the principles and influences the surrender of his heart to which made him a Christian"

"If ministers wish to make men holy let them preach the cross."



But it is good, in this case, wherever possible, also to include teaching and application for the saved children in some other part of your teaching programm

- The central truth may only have an application to the saved children (as you can see in the diagram below). In this case do not try to force a Gospel application. However, you can, of course, point out to the unsaved that they are missing these privileges, and that they can only be found in Christ. Also God often uses the teaching of Christian standards to show the unsaved children that they fall short. The unsaved children will, in addition, learn, through such applications, what is involved in the Christian life. So if they become Christians they will do so "with their eyes open".



At the same time you should also include something specifically directed to the unsaved children in some other part of your teaching programme.

3. Write Down the Application(s)

You have already written down the central truth in a simple,

brief, concise sentence at the top of your teaching plan.

For example, "God is faithful and always keeps His promises".

You have considered carefully how to apply this truth to the saved children and how to apply it to the unsaved children and you have found your two answers.

Now write these two answers down underneath the sentence which summarizes the central truth.

- You need to make sure that these application sentences are also simple, and concise, and that each has only one application. You do not want long or too many applications.
- I would emphasize once again that you may find it helpful to put the word "therefore" after the sentence which is the central truth and before each application. You will be confirmed in your choice of your application if the word "therefore" provides a good link between the two sentences.
- It is good and helpful to include the word "you" in each application. As I have already emphasized it is better not to put the word "you" into the central truth unless it can be addressed directly to all the children.

You should now have written down three key statements or sentences—a central truth and two applications:

For example:

- **Central truth**—*"God is faithful and always keeps His promises". (a fact)*
  - ✓ **Application to the saved children**—*"(Therefore) He will never leave you no matter what happens".*
  - ✓ **Application to the unsaved children**—*"(Therefore) You will be separated from God forever because He said so".*
- **Central truth**—*"God is powerful and can do anything". (a fact)*
  - ✓ **Application to the saved children**—*"(Therefore) He can help you with your bad temper".*
  - ✓**Application to the unsaved children**—*"(Therefore) He can save you no matter how bad you are".*

- **Central truth—***"Jesus Christ is coming back again". (a fact)*
  - ✓**Application to the saved children—***"(Therefore) Do not do anything you would not like Him to see".*
  - ✓ **Application to the unsaved children—***"(Therefore) You will be left behind and lost if you have not trusted Christ".*
- **Central truth—***"God wants all boys and girls to be obedient" (a command)*
  - ✓**Application to the saved children—***"(Therefore) you should obey your parents".*
  - ✓ **Application to the unsaved children—***"(Therefore) You should obey the Lord Jesus by trusting Him".*
- **Central truth—***"God does not want you to tell lies". (a warning)*
  - ✓**Application to the saved children—***"(Therefore) you should never tell lies at home or at school".*
  - ✓ **Application to the unsaved children—***"(Therefore) You ask God to forgive you for all the lies you have told and save you".*
- **Central truth—***"God promises that sin will always have results in your life". (a promise)*
  - ✓**Application to the saved children—***"(Therefore) if you keep on sinning you wil lose your joy and peace".*
  - ✓ **Application to the unsaved children—***"(Therefore) your sin will separate you from God forever".*
- **Central truth—***"God wants you to be like King David". (an example)*
  - ✓**Application to the saved children—***"(Therefore) you should rely on Him to help you defeat your enemies as David did".*
  - ✓ **Application to the unsaved children—***"(Therefore) You should trust Him and start to live for Him when you are still young as David did".*

Your two application sentences should be written down at the top of your lesson plan underneath the central truth sentence, and they should be referred to throughout the lesson. As you teach and apply them you may not actually use the words that you have written, but writing them down is a good discipline which will help you to have, and keep, the applications clear in your own mind.

4. Make the Application(s)

You should not apply the central truth until you have taught it and until the children have some understanding of it. So you will not usually include any applications when you first introduce the central truth into your lesson. Later in the lesson, as you have further explained and taught the central truth, you should take the opportunity to apply that truth to the two groups of children. Because the two applications are different you should keep them apart and apply them to each group at different times, making sure that the children know to whom you are applying the truth—the Christian children or the non-Christian children.

Your lesson will probably finish with an application of the truth and a challenge. This concluding application is what remains most clearly in the children's minds. Therefore, if most of the children are unsaved, it is better if the closing application is addressed to them. On the other hand if most of the children are saved, the final application will probably be addressed to them.

There are three points you need to remember when formulating and making your applications.

➢ **Make your applications relevant**

Apply the truth to the every day lives of the children. Talk about situations in which children are likely to find themselves. Apply the truth to their life at school, at home, and at play. Refer to the fears of children, the sins of children, and the joys of children. If you teach "God is always in charge" as your central truth, it will be much more meaningful to the Christian child if you should show how this helps when he fails an examination—rather than talking about God's sovereignty in international affairs!

The more you know about children, the more relevant you will be able to make your teaching. Watch them as they play! Listen to their chatter! Read their books! Jog your own memory!

➢ **Make your applications specific and clear**

When you apply the truth to the life of a child, talk about things that really happen and include a fair amount of detail. For example, you could say during your application, "Perhaps you have had a hard time just because you are a Christian." But

it is better to be more specific. "When those who walk home with you from school discovered you were a Christian, did they call you names or empty your school bag over the footpath?"

When you are speaking about sin in your application, refer to specific sins which children commit. You could say, "You have tried so hard but you cannot stop doing wrong." But it is better to say, "At the beginning of this year did you make a New Year resolution? You said, 'I am not going to tell any more lies.' Now it is June the 10th. What are you doing? Still telling lies? You can't stop."

➢ **Make your applications personal**

As you apply the truth do not keep saying "we" or "we all" or "you all" or "everyone". Use the personal "you" to bring it home to each of the children. You want each one to realize that this is God's message for him/her.

5. Illustrate the Application(s)

You should use illustrations and examples in your applications to help the children to understand them better.

There are different ways to illustrate an application:

- The narrative of the lesson you are teaching will be, or should be, an illustration of at least one of the applications you are making.
  For example if you are teaching a lesson based on the story of Noah, and your central truth is "*God protects and keeps safe those who obey Him*", this story will itself be an illustration of your application to the saved children "*Therefore He will protect you when you face difficulties and danger."*

- You may use a story from another part of the Bible which shows the truth being applied in someone's life there. If you do this it is better to use an incident with which the children are already familiar. For example:

  Bible lesson *– Daniel in the lions' den (Daniel 6)*
  Central truth *– God cares for His children and protects them*
  Application to saved children *–You can trust God to protect you when you are in danger.*

Illustration of application *– Do you remember the story we heard about Peter being put into prison because he preached so much? It seemed as if he would be executed! Peter was not even slightly afraid, even although there was a time when he would have been. About ten years earlier Peter had been in a boat, and the wind blew and the waves rose. The Lord Jesus was fast asleep. Peter was so worried that he asked the Lord Jesus why He was sleeping? "We are lost", he had cried. But now it was different. He knew the Lord Jesus would care for him and so he was asleep in prison. He was not afraid; he was not worried. He knew that God was with him protecting him and that is how it can be with you when things are difficult and you are in danger."*

- You may apply the truth by using an illustration from life today.
  For example:
  Bible Lesson *– The day of Pentecost (Acts 2).*
  Central truth *– The Holy Spirit lives in every believer.*
  Application to saved children *– You can live for God and tell others about Him.*
  Illustration of application *– Tim was not a Christian. Mike was in his class at school, and slowly Tim began to notice that Mike was not what he used to be. Tim never heard him use bad language now, not even when his team was losing a game.*

  One day Tim saw Mike offer John some of his chocolate. Everyone knew that Mike had not liked John before. Tim was so curious he had to ask, "Mike, what has happened to you?"

  Mike said, "I am a Christian now; God changed me."

  "But how did you stop yourself using bad language?" Tim was really interested now.

  "The Holy Spirit lives in me and helps me live for God. I could never do that without Him."

  The Holy Spirit helped Mike to live for God and to talk and to witness to Tim. Tim learned why Christians are different, and he began to think about becoming a Christian too.

- You may use an illustration of something which may happen in the future. For example:
  Bible Lesson *– The Golden Calf (Exodus 32).*
  Central truth *– God wants to have first place in your life*

Application to unsaved children *– Nothing should stop you from trusting Jesus Christ as your Saviour.*
Illustration of application *– Are you really good at gymnastics, football, cricket, tennis? Perhaps you will get chosen for the school team and do very well. You will want to practise as much as possible. You will want to watch the game on TV. It is good to enjoy sport but you have to be very careful that it doesn't take first place in your life. Remember that God must be first. If sport takes over and stops you from trusting Christ, then sport has become your god. Nothing can ever be more important to you than the Lord Jesus Christ. You must ask Him to be your Saviour and the Lord in your life.*

- You may use an illustration from the life of a great Christian.
  For example:
  Bible Lesson *– Philip ministers in Samaria and in the desert (Acts 8).*
  Central truth *–God wants His children to tell others about Him.*
  Application to saved children *– You should make it your goal to witness to others now when you are young.*
  Illustration of application *– Do you remember the story we heard about Mary Slessor's adventures in Calabar? She told many people there about Jesus Christ. But when did she begin to tell others? She began when she became a Christian and was still young, back in Scotland. She told the people in her own family and in her own town, long before she went to Africa. God doesn't want you to wait until you are older. He wants you to start telling others about the Lord Jesus now when you are still young.*

- You may illustrate an application with an incident from your own experience. For example:
  Bible Lesson *– The lost sheep and the lost coin. (Luke 15:1-10)*
  Central truth - *The Lord Jesus came to find and save those who are lost and bring them to heaven.*
  Application to saved children *– Trust Him and He will bring you to heaven.*
  Illustration of application *– Some years ago I went on holiday. I was going to a place I had never visited before and I didn't know how to get there. I only knew that I should go by train to a certain station. But what next? I didn't know where to go. You could say*

I was lost. However I telephoned my hotel and told them my problem and the owner said "Don't worry - I will come a pick you up and bring you to the hotel. And so he did teh problem was resolved. The Lord Jesus knows the way to heaven. He came to our world so He could save you and take you there. If you trust Him and ask Him to bring you to heaven He will.

6. Include Challenge in Your Application(s)

Application should always include challenge. So your two applications should challenge the two groups of children to respond and to **DO** something:

- You need to challenge the saved children to respond to what God has taught them in the lesson and to what they have been exhorted to do in the application.
- You need to challenge the unsaved children to respond to your evangelistic application of the central truth. This challenge is more often called the invitation. The unsaved children are invited or challenged to trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

It is obvious that in both cases there should be a note of urgency and earnestness in the application, encouraging the children to obey God on the basis of the truth that you have been teaching and applying.

You could use phrases such as:

- Are you willing to ……..?
- Will you say yes to God today ……..?
- Do not disobey God any longer ……
- The promise is for you today, will you believe it?

However be sure that you do not put any pressure upon the children to respond—by long emotional appeals, or by asking the children to make a physical response (such as standing up or coming to the front). The response of the child needs to take place first of all in his heart and then be worked out in his life—

and this response is only possible as the Holy Spirit works within the child, as, and after, you have taught and challenged him.

7. Watch The Manner of Your Presentation and Application

It is important to note the words we could use to describe the presentation by the apostles of their Gospel messages in the Acts of the Apostles, and especially to describe the applications, challenges and invitations which they invariably made or gave at the close of those messages. The way we teach the gospel message, the way we apply that message and the way we challenge the children is almost as important as the content of the message (and everything in these paragraphs also applies to our teaching and challenging of children who have trusted Christ).

There are four key words which characterized the content of the apostles' Gospel messages and the applications of those messages. These words should also describe our method of presentation:

- **Seriousness**
  There was always a solemn consciousness that this was a message from God (Acts 14 v15-17; Acts 17 v30, 31). Their aim was never entertainment. There is a place for humour and laughter but they should never be dominant. We don't want to convey to the children that the Gospel is something that should not be taken seriously.
- **Persuasiveness**
  As Paul preached he reasoned with, and sought to persuade, his hearers (Acts 17 v17; Acts 18 v4; Acts 19 v9; Acts 24 v25). We should encourage our children to think by presenting them with a well reasoned case. We want to persuade them, without any pressure, that this is the logical step for them to take.
- **Warmth and concern**
  We can see this concern and burden in all the messages preached by the apostles (Acts 20 v31; Acts 6 v29). Therefore we cannot speak to the children in a detached matter-of-fact way. We want them to respond, and this

will be obvious as we teach them and as we invite them to come to Jesus Christ.

- **Urgency**
  Our prayer and goal is that the children will respond **now** and this urgency is always clearly evident in New Testament evangelism (Hebrews 3 v7-8; 2 Corinthians 5 v25; 6 v2). We want the children to see that it is God's Will for them to respond now and to obey Him today, and not to wait until some vague moment in the future.

These four words should characterize all parts of our Bible lesson presentation—the narrative, the teaching of the central truth and also the applications.

This note of challenge, invitation and urgency is especially appropriate at the end of the lesson, and you could follow your application with a brief prayer in which you will ask God to enable the children to respond to His Word.

At the same time it is essential to remember again that you should never put pressure upon the children—whether unsaved or saved—to respond to the central truth and its application. I cannot emphasize this enough. Challenge them to respond, and then leave the results in the hands of the Holy Spirit. I personally would never ask the children to respond physically by lifting their hand, or by coming to the front. My prayer and goal is that they will respond in their hearts to what the Holy Spirit is saying to them. Of course, at the same time, I would also make myself available to any children who wanted to come after the meeting to me personally for personal counselling (as explained in detail in my book "*U-can Lead Children to Christ*").

Chapter 10:
How to Prepare a Bible Lesson

The next step is to learn how to prepare a Bible lesson—and how to get it ready for presentation.

We will use Acts 16 v9-34 as the Bible passage on which to base the story and the lesson we plan to teach and we will consider each step in the preparation of that particular lesson.

Step One—Pray about the Lesson

Ask the Lord to teach you, yourself, from this passage, because this will help you to teach the children from it. The Holy Spirit is the Author and Interpreter of the Scriptures. Both you and the children are dependent upon His divine illumination. The Lord Jesus said, "*Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth …..*" (John 16 v13). All preparation must begin, continue and end with dependence upon God and in prayer.

Step Two—Read the Scripture Passage

You should begin your preparation by reading the Scriptures rather than either your lesson book, or what others have written about the passage or about your lesson. Your calling as a teacher is to teach the Word of God, and especially to teach what God has said **to you** through His Word.

You should read through the passage and narrative (in this case, Acts 16 v9-34) time and time again—at least eight or ten times. The first time you read it should be six or seven days before you will teach the lesson. Then you can be turning the contents of the passage over and over in your mind as you travel to work, or do housework. Then read it again once, twice or three times the next day, and then the following day and so on. A brief look at the passage each night before retiring will also help.

Be sure to read also the context of the passage (that which is

recorded before it and after it). Also, if there are parallel passages in other books of the Bible, be sure to read them also.

As you read this passage try to get the feel of the narrative and the story:

- *Who are the characters?*
- *What do they do?*
- *Visualize the setting and imagine the possible conversations that might have taken place.*
- *"Soak yourself" in the atmosphere and background of the passage and story.*
- *You could now think through the story and how you would tell it.*
- *You might even want to practise telling the story to yourself!*

Step Three—List the Progression of Events

The next step is to write down, in sequence, all the events of the story one underneath the other as described on pages 13 and 14. You will follow this progression of events as you tell your story and teach your lesson. The progression of events for this story/lesson could be as follows:

A. ***Paul and team leave for Macedonia.***
B. ***Arrival in Philippi.***
C. ***Preaching at the riverside.***
D. ***Lydia's conversion.***
E. ***Lydia's baptism and hospitality.***
F. ***Girl shouts at Paul and Silas.***
G. ***Paul commands the Spirit.***
H. ***Girl healed.***
I. ***Paul and Silas accused.***
J. ***Paul and Silas are beaten and put in prison.***
K. ***Paul and Silas sing and pray.***
L. ***The earthquake.***
M. ***The jailor's attempt to kill himself.***
N. ***The jailor's question.***
O. ***Paul's answer—"Trust Christ".***
P. ***Jailor is saved.***

Step Four—List All the Truths in the Passage

After you feel that you have a good understanding of, and feel for, the narrative and the main people in the story and you have written down the progression of events in the narrative you should now look for the central truth which you will teach. Your next step therefore is to go through the passage and write down every truth you can find in it. This passage in Acts 16 is a well known passage which is especially rich in truth. That is one reason why I have chosen it.

I can find the following truths in these verses:

- *Verse 6 – God shows His servants what He wants them to do.*
- *Verse 10 – God wants us to obey Him when He speaks to us.*
- *Verse 13 – God wants us to witness for Jesus Christ.*
- *Verse 14 – God opens the hearts of those who believe.*
- *Verse 15 – God wants Christians to be friendly and helpful.*
- *Verse 16 – God wants His children to pray.*
- *Verse 17 – Jesus Christ has power over all kinds of evil.*
- *Verse 22 – The Christian who witnesses might suffer.*
- *Verse 25 – Christians can have joy in the most difficult of circumstances.*
- *Verse 26 – God is all-powerful and can do anything.*
- *Verse 31 – Salvation is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.*
- *Verse 33 and 34 – Jesus Christ changes people.*
- *Verse 34 – Salvation results in a changed life.*

So there are in this passage at least thirteen truths. It is obvious that you cannot teach, or even mention, all of them. So it is necessary to select one of these truths and make that the central truth of the passage.

Step Five—Select the Central Truth of the Passage

We have seen that there are five questions (see pages 37 to 38) which you need to ask yourself to help you identify your central truth:

- **Is there a truth which appears several times in the passage and is the dominant truth of the passage?**
  Different people may have different answers to this question. I feel personally that the dominant truth in this passage is "Jesus Christ changes people". This truth can be evidenced:

  - ✓ *By the conversion of Lydia, her baptism and her hospitality to the itinerant missionaries (verse 14, 15).*
  - ✓ *By the deliverance of the girl possessed by an evil spirit (verse18).*
  - ✓ *By the conversion of the jailor, his baptism and his subsequent acts of kindness (verse 32-34).*

- **Why has God put this passage in the Bible?**
  One reason, at least, for the passage we are studying and teaching is to show that Jesus Christ changes people.
- **Which of these truths is the one which God the Holy Spirit uses to speak to your own heart and life?**
  When He especially lays one truth from the passage upon your heart you are better able and fitted to teach it to the children. Has He shown you from this passage that Jesus Christ changes people?
- **Which of these truths is the truth most needed by your children?**
  Would the one I have mentioned be a help to your children? Are a number of your children unsaved and need to hear that Jesus Christ is willing and able to save them and change them? If not, find another one. If it would help them, your choice would then be confirmed. Also the Christian children need to be reminded that it is important for unsaved people to see the change in their lives.
- **What truths have you previously taught?**
  Have you taught the one suggested above recently?

Now write this central truth down in one brief simple, concise and clear sentence e.g. **"Jesus Christ changes people".** This will be written at the top of your teaching plan, and it could also be written on a word strip for the flannelboard or on a

flashcard which the children will see as you teach your lesson. Also, as I suggested earlier, you could show this flashcard to the children every time you bring the central truth into the lesson.

Step Six—Write Down the Two Applications of the Central Truth

We have already seen that there are two groups of children:

- Those who have trusted Jesus Christ, who are saved, and who need to be fed.
- Those who have not trusted Jesus Christ, who are not saved, and who need to be evangelized.

So you need to ask yourself if the central truth you have chosen can be applied to both these groups? (I have found that well over ninety per cent of central truths can be applied to both groups.)

As I have mentioned several times, it is a help when looking for an application that you use the word "therefore" after the central truth and before each of the two applications. This helps you to see the link between the central truth and the application.

I would suggest the following applications of this central truth "**Jesus Christ changes people**":

- *(Therefore)* ***He will change you if you trust Him*** *(application to the unsaved children).*
- *(Therefore)* ***You can be a witness to others by your changed life*** *(application to the saved children).*

Step Seven—Write Down Any Other Truths Which You Could Mention to Help Teach and Apply the Central Truth

If these truths are in the passage—fine! But they don't need to be. You can introduce these truths briefly to back up, explain and clarify your teaching and applications. You are not teaching these truths. You are only mentioning them to help you in your teaching and application of the central truth. It is very possible (and helpful) that in a regular weekly ministry to children the

truths which you mention are truths which you have taught in previous Bible lessons.

You could for example mention the following truths in this lesson because they would help you with the teaching and application of this truth—"Jesus Christ changes people":

- ***You need to be changed*** *(You are a sinner like the three people in this lesson). This truth* ***is*** *in the passage.*
- ***Jesus Christ died for your sin*** *(That is why He can change you). This truth is not in the passage.*
- ***Jesus Christ is alive today*** *(He is here and ready to change you). This truth is not in the passage.*
- ***You will be changed if you trust Christ****. (This truth is in the passage, and is especially emphasized in verse 31.)*

Step Eight—Read What Others have Written

It would be good, at this time, to read your lesson manual and see how others have dealt with this lesson. There might be some new thoughts, insights or ideas which would help you, and you might need to retrace your steps and make some changes in what you have already decided.

However, if at all possible, it is better to stick with your own conclusions. These are what God has laid upon your heart, and it will be easier to teach them to the children because they are your own conclusions.

But the lesson book, and any Bible commentaries or Bible knowledge books you have available, can also give you snippets of background information which will enable you to make your lesson more interesting. And these books can also help you to have a deeper understanding of the lesson. This is important, for the teacher should always know more than those he is teaching—and even more than he plans to teach.

Step Nine—Choose a Bible Verse

You should now select a Bible verse which is closely related to the central truth you are teaching. You can refer to this verse from time to time, and you can encourage the children to learn it.

I would suggest for this lesson Acts 16 v31:

"*So they said*, "***Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household".***

Step Ten—Prepare Your Visual Aids

You are now ready to prepare your visuals at this early stage, so that you will know what is available.

- If you use a flannelgraph lesson, cut out or prepare the figures, try putting them on the flannelboard, and arrange them in the order they will be used.
- If you use flashcards make sure they are ready. They may need to be coloured in, or stuck onto cardboard. Or words may need to be printed.
- If you intend to visualize a verse or a song, which goes along with your central truth, make sure that it is ready for use.

Step Eleven—Prepare and Write Out Your Outline

You should now be ready to write out the teaching plan which you will refer to (discreetly) as you teach your lesson.

At the top of your plan write your central truth and the two applications.

Then you will write out the four parts of your lesson as outlined in chapter II.

- **The Beginning**
  Decide how you will begin the lesson. Write down your opening sentences so that you will know exactly what to say.
- **Progression of Events**
  From the notes you have already made, you can compile an orderly, well organized list of the main events in the lesson.
- **The Climax**
  Look for the high point in your lesson. I would suggest that the jailor's question in verse 30 is the high point or climax. You should write down briefly the exact words

you plan to use. This will help to fix it clearly in your mind.

- **Conclusion**
  Write out at the end of the outline how you will bring the lesson to a close and how you will challenge the children in your application(s). It is good to know and practise the exact words you will use.

Consequently, your preliminary story plan will look something like this:

> ***CENTRAL TRUTH—Jesus Christ changes people.***
> ***APPLICATION TO THE UNSAVED—(Therefore) He will change you if you trust Him.***
> ***APPLICATION TO THE SAVED—(Therefore) You can be a witness to others by your changed life.***
> ***BEGINNING—Ben's problem—I wish I could be different.***
> ***PROGRESSION OF EVENTS—***
> **A.** ***Paul and team leave for Macedonia.***
> **B.** ***Arrival in Philippi.***
> **C.** ***Preaching at the riverside.***
> **D.** ***Lydia's conversion.***
> **E.** ***Lydia's baptism and hospitality.***
> **F.** ***Girl shouts at Paul and Silas.***
> **G.** ***Paul commands the Spirit.***
> **H.** ***Girl healed.***
> **I.** ***Paul and Silas accused.***
> **J.** ***Paul and Silas are beaten and put in prison.***
> **K.** ***Paul and Silas sing and pray.***
> **L.** ***The earthquake.***
> **M.** ***The jailor's attempt to kill himself.***
> ***CLIMAX—the jailor's question***
> **A.** ***Paul's answer—"Trust Christ".***
> **B.** ***Jailor is saved.***
> ***CONCLUSION—The jailor's baptism and hospitality and the salvation of his family.***

It would be good for you to add to such an outline more detail on your opening and concluding sentences plus the words you would use for your climax as suggested above.

Step Twelve—Include Central Truth, Applications and Other Truths on Your Plan

Now go back through this story plan and write down the letters **CT** wherever you will introduce and teach the central truth. Also include the letters **CTU** where you will teach and apply the central truth to unsaved children, and **CTS** where you will teach and apply the central truth to the saved children. You will find that this lesson gives quite a number of opportunities to teach and apply this central truth.

Also if there are any additional truths you feel you should mention write them in abbreviated form at the appropriate place. The final lesson plan could then look like the plan on the next page. In this lesson plan I have shown every place where it would be **possible** to teach the central truth, and where it would be **possible** to apply it to the saved and unsaved children. I wanted to give you as much help as possible. But you may not want to use all of these.

Note that there are four "other truths" mentioned (in the right hand column). Two of them are in the passage (marked✓). The other two are not in the passage (marked¶). All four help to teach and apply the central truth.

It could be a help to add the following to this plan:

- Your introductory sentences.
- The words used in your climax.
- The sentences used in your concluding challenge and invitation.

Step Thirteen—Practise Your Lesson

Now all you need to do is PRACTISE, PRACTISE, PRACTISE. Go over the lesson several times using your visual aids and referring, where necessary, to the outline which you have written on a small piece of paper or cardboard and have placed inside your Bible and which could look like the plan on the next page.

CENTRAL TRUTH - (C.T.)
– Jesus Christ changes people. ***(a fact or doctrine to believe)***

APPLICATION TO THE UNSAVED—(CTU)
He will change you if you trust Him.
APPLICATION TO THE SAVED – (CTS)
You can be a witness to others by your changed life.

		Other Truths Mentioned
I.BEGINNING—*Ben's problem—*		
	I want to be different.	
II.PROGRESSION OF EVENTS—		
CT	*A. Paul and team leave for Macedonia.*	
.	*B. Arrival in Philippi.*	
CT	*C. Preaching at the riverside.*	**Death and Resurrection**
CT	*D.Lydia's conversion.*	**of Christ ¶**
CTU	*E. Lydia's baptism and hospitality.*	
	F. Girl shouts at Paul and Silas.	
	G. Paul commands the spirit.	**Sin and its**
CTU	*H. Girl healed.*	**results ✓**
	I. Paul and Silas accused.	
	J. Paul and Silas are beaten and put in prison.	
CTS	*K. Paul and Silas sing and pray.*	
	L. The earthquake.	
	M.The jailor's attempt to kill himself.	
CTU	*N. The jailor's question*	
III.CLIMAX		**Death and**
	A. Paul's answer—"Trust Christ".	**Resurrection**
CTU	*B. Jailor is saved.*	**of Christ ¶**
		Salvation
		by faith✓
IV.CONCLUSION—		
CTU	*The jailor's baptism and hospitality and his family saved.*	
CTU	*Ben is changed.*	

More lesson outlines

The lesson I have outlined on the previous page has a fact or doctrine as its central truth. On this page and the three which follow I give four more lesson plans; each of them has one of the other four categories of truth as its central truth.

Bible Lesson: The Lord Jesus Calls His First Disciples
(John 1:35-42; Luke 5:1-11)

CENTRAL TRUTH *- (CT):*
The Lord Jesus wants you to follow Him ***(Command to obey)***
APPLICATION TO THE UNSAVED *- CTU*
You begin to follow Him, when you trust Him as Lord and Saviour.
APPLICATION TO THE SAVED *- CTS*
You should obey Him day by day

I. BEGINNING *- "Look!" Everyone looked in the direction John pointed.*
II. PROGRESSION OF EVENTS *-*

	A. John the Baptist explains who Jesus is
CTU	*B. Andrew and John follow Him*
	C. Andrew brings Simon to Him
CTU	*D. The Lord says, "You will be Peter"*
	E. The Lord uses Peter's boat
	F. He commands the disciples to let down the nets
CTS &U	*G. They obey (John 15:14)*

III. CLIMAX *-*
"The nets are full!" Jesus is God, all powerful
IV. CONCLUSION

	A. Peter says, "Depart from me"
CTS	*B. The Lord says, "I will make you fishers of men"*
	C. The Lord Jesus is still calling people to follow Him.
CTU	*If you have never started to follow Him and you know He's speaking to you, obey Him and become His follower.*
CTS	*Those of you who are followers, keep following by obeying!*

Bible Lesson: The Sin of Achan (Joshua 7)

CENTRAL TRUTH *- (CT):*
God does not want you to steal or tell lies ***(Warning to heed)***

APPLICATION TO THE UNSAVED *- CTU*
Your lies and stealing will be punished by God if you do not trust the Lord Jesus

APPLICATION TO THE SAVED *- CTS*
If steal and tell lies you will be a bad example to others

I. BEGINNING *- What a sight it was when the walls of Jericho fell down*

II. PROGRESSION OF EVENTS *-*

CT	*A. God's command - don't take anything of value*
	B. Joshua send 3000 men to conquer little Ai
	C. His army is defeated
	D. Joshua asks God why this happened
CTU	*E. Someone has stolen valuables from the city*
	F. God tells Joshua to find the guilty person
	G Joshua finds Achan (Numbers 32:23)

III. CLIMAX *-*
Achan is stoned to death

IV. CONCLUSION

	A. Joshua now conquers Ai
CTU	*B. If you are not saved and you know you have disobeyed God you will be punished by God - unless you trust the Lord Jesus as Saviour*
CTS	*C. If you have trusted Jesus Christ you need to be a good example to others by obeying God's commands by not stealing or telling lies.*

Bible Lesson: Peter in Prison
(Acts 12:1-17)

CENTRAL TRUTH *- (CT):*
God promises to answer the prayers of His children ***(Promise to claim)***

APPLICATION TO THE UNSAVED *- CTU*
The prayer God wants to hear is "Please save me & He will answer this prayer

APPLICATION TO THE SAVED *- CTS*
If you have a problem tell God about it and trust Him for the answer

I. BEGINNING *- What would you do if one of your friends was sick or had a big problem?*

II. PROGRESSION OF EVENTS *-*

A. Herod the king kills James
B. He puts Peter in Prison
C. He plans to kill him next day
CT D. The Christians meet to pray for Peters release
CTS E. The angel came a released him Prayer answered
F. Peter went to the house where they were praying
CTS G Peter knocks on door and Rhoda hears and tells others it is Peter

III. CLIMAX *-*

They did not believe (Perhaps they were not sure about God's promise)

IV. CONCLUSION

A. Peter told what happened and how God had answered their prayers
CTS B. If you are a Christian you can help otehrs by praying for them and by trusting God who has promised to answer your prayers
CTU C. If you are not a Christian you can trust the Lord Jesus right now and ask Him to save you. He has promised in the Bible to answer that prayer (Matthew 7:7)

Bible Lesson: The Kindness of the Shunammite Woman
(II Kings 4:8-17))

CENTRAL TRUTH *- (CT):*
God wants His children to be kind and loving to others - as the Shunammite woman was. ***(Example to follow)***

APPLICATION TO THE UNSAVED *- CTU*
The Lord Jesus will give you the strength to be kind and loving to others if you trust Him as your Saviour

APPLICATION TO THE SAVED *- CTS*
You should be kind and helpful to all, and so show how much you appreciate God's kindness to you.

I. BEGINNING *- What kind of things does your mother do when she knows she's having visitors?*

II. PROGRESSION OF EVENTS *-*

A. Elisha goes to Shumen
CT B. Lady invites him for a meal
CT C. Lady to husband, 'Let's make a small room' (Eph.
D. Elisha stays there 4.32)
E. Returns often
CTS F. Elisha wants to repay her kindness
CTS G. Lady refuses
H. He promises that she will have a child (The power of God)

III. CLIMAX *-*

A little baby boy - just as Elisha had said!

IV. CONCLUSION

CTU A. Do you realise how kind and loving the Lord Jesus has been for each of you - when He took the punishment of your sin on the cross. That was real kindness and love. Trust Him as your Saviour today!
CTS B. Can you think of someone you could be kind to when you go home today or even tomorrow in school? Ask God to help you obey His command.
CTS C. When you don't feel like helping someone, remember just how kind God has been to you.

Chapter 11:
How to Adapt a Bible Lesson

In the preceding chapters we have studied in great detail how to teach a Bible lesson. I believe personally, and I trust you will agree, that what has been outlined in these chapters is an effective method of Bible lesson presentation. We need to consider now if we should ever adapt our Bible lessons, when necessary, to the children we are teaching—and to their specific needs. Or should we always teach our Bible lessons in exactly the way outlined in this book—to every child and group of children?

The Apostles Adapted Their Teaching

It is necessary to understand an important biblical principle which is clearly illustrated in the Acts of the Apostles. We have stated earlier that this Bible book, the Acts of the Apostles, is the best primer on evangelism which we possess. It is a book which we, as children's evangelists, need continually to study. We want to evangelize as the apostles did—preaching the message they preached and using the methods they used.

When the apostles were evangelizing they always followed and obeyed two key principles:

- *Their messages always centred on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the need of their listeners to repent and believe. These truths were constant and they were always, to some extent, present in their messages.*
- *They took their audience into careful consideration and adapted their approach to them, their needs and their background.*

Therefore it would be contrary to the principles of evangelism followed by the apostles to insist that there is only one way to teach a Bible lesson, and only one way to present the Gospel. While the core of our Gospel messages should remain the same (as theirs did), the way we present the Gospel will depend upon a number of factors including the needs and background of the children. There may also be times when we want to concentrate solely on the evangelism or Christian growth of the children.

For example, when Paul was evangelizing the heathen Gentiles in Athens (Acts 17) he commenced his Gospel presentation by teaching about the existence of God and His power in creation. Why? Because they knew no spiritual truths whatsoever, and it was only towards the end of his presentation that Paul spoke about Jesus Christ and, in this case, specifically about His resurrection and His position as Judge.

But when Peter was evangelizing a Jewish audience in Jerusalem in Acts chapter 2 he started with teaching about Jesus Christ. He did not include truths about the existence of God, the fact that God is Creator, or the holiness of God. Why? Because his audience were already well acquainted with these truths. In addition he referred over and over again to the Word of God. Why? Because his listeners had this Word, read it and knew it.

This principle of adaptation can also be seen in the apostles' ministry to, and teaching of, believers. It is obvious that, when they were speaking to believers in the Acts of the Apostles and, especially, when they were writing to groups of believers, or individual believers in the epistles, they adapted what they said and wrote to the needs, questions and background of their hearers and readers. No messages preached to believers and no books written to believers were exactly identical.

For example, Paul's two letters to the Corinthians dealt primarily with problems which he knew existed in the church there. He knew, or had been informed of, their problems and felt it was his responsibility to deal with them.

But when Paul wrote to the Romans he gave, in the first eleven chapters, a detailed and logical outline of the most important Bible doctrines, and followed that with five chapters of personal application. This was because he had never been in Rome, and therefore had never had the opportunity to teach and apply these Bible doctrines.

You May Need to Adapt Your Bible Lesson

You need, therefore, to learn the principle of adaptation; you need to be flexible and you need to adapt what, and how, you are teaching to the children to whom you are ministering—if it is necessary to do so.

➢ **The basic content of your message must not change.** We have already seen that in the ministry of the apostles. You must always have two goals:

> ➢ *To teach and apply the truths of the Gospel message to unsaved children so that they can, and will, trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.*
> ➢ *To help Christian children to grow through teaching them the great truths of Scripture and applying them to their lives.*

But there is no one absolutely fixed way of doing so. A certain amount of variety and adaptation is always possible and at times necessary.

➢ **The basic methods and principles of teaching should not change**. We have already recognised and established the principle that the best way to teach a Bible lesson is to have and concentrate on teaching one central truth. There is no reason why you should depart from that principle - whether you are teaching children on a regular basis or reaching them on a 'one off' basis; whether you are teaching both saved and unsaved children or whether you are concentrating on one of these two groups. While sticking to this principle you need to be ready to adapt and vary your presentation in accordance with your situation.

Reasons to Adapt Your Bible Lesson

There are several factors to keep in mind when you are preparing your Bible lesson and deciding how you can best meet the needs of the children to whom you will minister. Because of these factors, if they exist, you may feel that you need to adapt your method of Bible lesson presentation.

- **You should adapt to the time available**
  The more time you have, the more you can teach and the more effective your Bible lesson will be. So you need to decide, or find out, how much time you will have. It is usual to allocate twenty minutes for the teaching of a Bible lesson.
  - ✓ If you have more time you can include more narrative and more truth in your lesson.
  - ✓ If you have less time you will need to reduce both the narrative and the truth proportionately.
- **You should adapt to the background of the children**
  You always need to keep in mind the background of those to whom you are teaching your Bible lesson. When teaching a Bible lesson to a group of Moslem children, for example, the method used, and at least some of the content of your Bible lesson, will be different from what you would use when teaching a lesson in the local evangelical church:
  - ✓ These children know less about the Bible; so your teaching would have to be even more simple and basic than usual. You could take nothing for granted.
  - ✓ These children have already received teaching which is contrary to what the Bible teaches. You need to be aware of what they have been taught and, while not openly criticizing this teaching, you should give teaching which is positive and which deals with what they have learned.
- **You should use Gospel-focused or special evangelistic lessons at certain times**
  A Gospel-focused or special evangelistic lesson is a Bible lesson which concentrates solely on evangelism—and there are at least two situations in which you may want to use this type of lesson:
  - ✓ When you are reasonably sure all the children you are teaching are unsaved. This situation could arise at the beginning of a new ministry to children such as the commencement of a Good News Club. Or it could occur when conducting an openair meeting or 5-day Club. In both cases the majority of the children

(possibly all of them) would be unsaved. This would, therefore, be the type of lesson you would teach, and encourage, your summer missionaries to use when evangelizing children in the open-air.

- ✓ When you have only one opportunity to teach a Bible lesson to a group of children. These are children you have never seen before, and whom you may never see again. You feel, also, that most, if not all, of those children are unsaved; but you are especially aware that this is your only opportunity to present the Gospel to them.

  This situation could occur in any of the following circumstances:

  - You are invited to speak to the children at special service in a church.
  - You are the speaker at a children's rally.
  - You are going to speak to children at an open-air meeting. Even if you are conducting a 5-Day Club and speaking to the children each day for five days, you will find that the children are continually changing and it is almost a one-off situation.

In either of these two situations your method of Bible lesson presentation would be somewhat different from that which I have outlined in this book (which teaches **one** central truth and gives **two** applications to the saved and unsaved children). You would instead choose a Gospel-focused lesson and teach it to the children. It also teaches one central truth (or special emphasis,) like all the lessons previously outlined, but that truth is only applied to unsaved children in your lesson. It is important to remember that these children generally have less understanding of Bible truth and the Gospel. That is why it is so good to teach one central truth and teach it well - provided that you use and include other selected truths which complement and help you teach that truth.

Most of the rest of this chapter deals with this type of lesson and at the end of the chapter a number of teaching outlines of Gospel-focused lessons are given:

- **You should use Growth-focused lessons at certain times**
  You may be the teacher of a small group of children all of whom have, to the best of your knowledge, trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Or you may be a parent whose children have trusted the Lord Jesus and you want to teach them Bible lessons.
  So, in such a situation, your method of Bible lesson presentation would also be somewhat different from the method outlined in this book which teaches **one** central truth and **two** applications. In your Growth-focused lessons you would still teach a central truth but you would only apply it to the saved children. This would allow you more time to help them to grow through your teaching. Of course you would still from time to time and frequently—in other parts of your programme or in your Bible lesson—remind them of the wonderful Gospel message.

Gospel-focused (or Special Evangelistic) Lessons

A Gospel-focused (or special evangelistic) lesson is, in many ways, similar to the lessons already taught in this book. It would, for example, still teach a central truth but there are several significant differences:

- The central truth should be clearly evangelistic, and provide a good basis for the evangelism of the children present.
  For example which two of these three central truths would you see as providing a good basis for evangelism?
  - ✓ Only Jesus Christ can save and change boys and girls.
  - ✓ God guides His children.
  - ✓ Jesus Christ loves boys and girls and wants them to come to Him.
- You should **only** apply the central truth to the unsaved children.
  This is the main difference between this type of lesson and the more frequently used type of lesson which applies the central truth to both saved and unsaved children.

(Incidentally, even if there are any saved children there it would be good for them to hear the Gospel and the Gospel applications again).

- Because you are leaving out the application to the saved children you will have more time in your presentation to give a little more teaching on the other truths which you mention to back up, strengthen and explain the central truth. This will then give you a well rounded Gospel message.

It should be obvious that not every Bible lesson would be suitable for use in this way. But there are a number of such lessons which you could teach in these special situations and you will see some of these in the pages which follow.

There are certain truths which you should especially try to include in every Gospel-focused lesson:

> *Somewhere in each evangelistic lesson you should include the following:*
>
> - *Some teaching about sin and its consequences.*
> - *Some teaching about what Jesus Christ has done.*
> - *Some teaching about what the children need to do to be saved.*

Let us look briefly at three Gospel-focused lessons, and see how we should first of all teach a central truth, and how we should apply it (only) to the unsaved children. Then we will also see the other truths which can be included, and with which we can deal in a little more detail than usual.

- If you, in such a situation, teach the lesson of Noah and the ark (Genesis 6-8):
  - ✓ The central truth could be "*God is holy and just and must punish sin*".
  - ✓ This truth would, in this case, only be applied to the unsaved children to show them that if they obey God's command to trust Jesus Christ they would be saved.
    "*(But) God will not punish you if you trust Jesus Christ*".

- ✓ In this lesson you could also include the following truths which are found and illustrated in the passage; and give a little teaching concerning them.
  - The holiness and justice of God.
  - The sinfulness of man.
  - The fact that there is only one way of salvation including the fact that Jesus Christ loves them and died for their sins (which is not in the passage).

These truths would back up the central truth and the application.

- ➢ If you teach the lesson about Zacchaeus (Luke 19 v1-10):
  - ✓ The central truth could be "*The Lord Jesus Christ invites sinful boys and girls to come to Him*".
  - ✓ This truth would, in this case, only be applied to the unsaved children to help them to understand what Jesus Christ has done for them, and that He wants to save them.
    "*(Therefore) Come to Him today and He will receive you and save you*".
  - ✓ In this lesson you would also teach briefly the following truths which are found in the passage:
    - The sinfulness of man.
    - The love of Jesus Christ.
    - The change salvation brings.
- ➢ If you teach the lesson on the Prodigal Son (Luke 15).
  - ✓ The central truth could be "*Jesus Christ loves sinners and wants them to turn from sin and come to Him for forgiveness*".
  - ✓ This truth would, in this case, only be applied to unsaved children.
    "*(Therefore) Turn from your sin, come to Him and ask Him for forgiveness*".
  - ✓ In this lesson you could also teach briefly the following truths which are found in the passage:
    - The sinfulness and need of the sinner.
    - The need for repentance.
    - The results of salvation.

However, it is important to remember that you should not try to put too many truths into your Gospel-focused lesson. There are also other places in your teaching programme where relevant truths can be included - and these truths can be used to further teach and apply the central truth.

I would emphasize again that not every Bible lesson would qualify as a Gospel-focused lesson of this type, and that is why you would need to select your lesson carefully.

Other examples of lessons (apart from Noah, Zacchaeus and the Prodigal Son) which could be used evangelistically and in the way outlined above include the following:

- The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8 v25-40).
- Moses and the Brazen Serpent (Number 21 v1-9; John 3 v14-18).
- The Passover (Exodus 11,12).
- Naaman (2 Kings 5 v1-27).
- The Christmas story (Matthew 1 v18-25; Luke 2 v1-21).
- Adam and Eve and their fall (Genesis 2 v8-17; Genesis 3 v1-24).
- The conversion of Saul (Acts 7 v58; 8 v1; 9 v1-22; 26 v9-18).
- The Death of Jesus Christ (Luke 22 v39-71; 23 v1-49).
- The Resurrection of Jesus Christ (Luke 23 v50-56; Luke 24 v1-49).

The methods of preparation and presentation of these Bible lessons would, of course, remain the same as those outlined earlier in the book.

On pages 104 to 107 at the end of this chapter teaching outlines of the first three Gospel-focused lessons mentioned directly above are included to help you understand what I mean—and these are outlines which you can use when you are speaking **only** to unsaved children and want to evangelize them. I have given these outlines in more detail than the lesson plan you would generally refer to when teaching (as suggested, for example, on pages 86-90)—so that they can be of maximum help to you. I have also shown each place where it would be **possible** to include a teaching of the central truth, and its application to the unsaved children. You may not want to use all of them.

I have included the other truths you should mention to help in the teaching and application of the central truth in the bracketed sentences rather than in a separate column (as on pages 86). This method of Bible lesson presentation, which concentrates on the unsaved children, makes it possible, as we have seen, to include these truths in a little more detail.

> You will probably find it quite difficult, at the beginning, to teach these Gospel focused lessons perfectly. Both practice and perserverance are needed. You should, first of all, be sure to choose lessons which have a central evangelistic truth which you find easy and simple to teach and apply to the unsaved children. Your goal in these lessons and those which follow is to teach the one central evangelistic truth as thoroughly as possible and only include other truths which will help you teach and apply that central truth. However it will take you time to prefect this method.
>
> In the meantime you may find yourself spending more time on these other truths than you should. If you do, don't worry or be upset. At least you are teaching truth. We all need to walk before we can run! The important point is to TEACH TRUTH in these lessons and apply it to the unsaved children. Given time, perserverance and experience you will learn.

Growth-focused Lessons

A Growth-focused lesson is also, in many ways, similar to the lessons already taught in this book. It would, for example, still teach a central truth but there are several significant differences:

- The central truth should be one which is especially helpful for, and needed by, saved children.
  For example:
  - ✓ The Holy Spirit lives in every believer.
  - ✓ God promises never to leave His children.
  - ✓ God wants us to become more and more like Jesus Christ.
- You should only apply the central truth to the saved children. This is the main difference between this type of

lesson and the more frequently used type of lesson which applies the central truth to both saved and unsaved children.

- Because you are leaving out the application to the unsaved children you will have more time to develop the teaching and application of the central truth to the saved children.

The method of preparation and presentation of these Bible lessons would, of course, remain the same as those outlined earlier in the book.

Not every Bible lesson would be suitable for use in this way. But there are a number of lessons which would especially lend themselves to these special situations. For example:

- A bride for Isaac (Genesis 24 v1-67) with the central truth "*God guides His children*".
  The application to the saved children could be "*(Therefore) Ask God to guide you and He will*".
  By leaving out the application to the unsaved children, in this case, you can give more time to showing the Christian children how they need guidance and how God guides today—especially through His Word.
- Jonah runs from God (Jonah 1-3) with the central truth "*God commands His children to tell others about Him.*"
  The application to the saved children could be: "*(Therefore) Ask God to show you who He wants you to speak to about Him—and then* ***obey Him****.*"
  By leaving out the application to the unsaved children, in this case, you will have more time to show the Christian children the importance of witnessing to others—as God directs them.
- The Good Samaritan (Luke 10 v25-37) with the central truth "*God wants His children to love, help and care for those in need.*"
  The application to the saved children could be: "*(Therefore) Think of someone who really needs help and give it to them*".
  By leaving out the application to the unsaved children, in this case, you can go into more detail about the

practical results of how to help others.

Other such lessons would include:

- A Bride for Isaac (Genesis 24:1-69).
- The Lord Jesus Calms the Storm (Mark 4 v35-41).
- Daniel Keeps Himself Pure (Daniel 1 v1-21).

You can see outlines of these last three Growth-focused lessons mentioned above on pages 108 to 112. To help you as much as possible I have in each lesson plan shown every **possible** place where the central truth could be taught and applied; and details of how you can do this are included in the bracketed sentences. You may not want to use all of these. But this method does allow more time for such detail because it concentrates on the saved children. I have also outlined each lesson plan in more detail than is usual—again to be of help to you.

There are, however, two facts which need to be remembered with regard to this type of adapted lesson:

- Their use will, I believe, be comparatively rare. It is not often that you will find yourself in a situation where you are only teaching saved children. Gospel-focused lessons will be much more used than Growth-focused lessons because you will more often find yourself teaching a group of children who are all unsaved. But the usual, regular type of Bible lesson with one central truth and applications to both saved and unsaved children (as taught throughout this book) will be much more common and much more widely used than either of these two types of adapted lessons.
- You must also remember that if you are teaching a group of saved children (in your Sunday school or at home) on a regular basis you need to keep reminding them, in your teaching, of the Gospel message:
  - ✓ Firstly, because this will be a help and stimulation to their spiritual growth.
  - ✓ Secondly, because this will remind them of the message which they are responsible to share with others.

Gospel-focused Lesson No. 1

The Ethiopian Eunuch
(Acts 8 v25-40)

Central truth—Only Jesus Christ can save a sinner and help him to know God.

Personal application to unsaved: *If you put your trust in Jesus Christ you will be saved and you will start to know God.*

I. Beginning

Have you ever been really disappointed? Is there something you hoped would happen—and it didn't. Give an illustration from your own life—or from someone else's life.

II. Progression of Events

A. An important African went to Jerusalem to worship God.

B. He was returning home in his chariot—
CT disappointed because he still did not know God. He did not yet know that there is only one way to know God.

C. As he rode he read—still searching for God.

D. The book he was reading was the Bible—in the first part of it (the Old Testament). He was disappointed again because he could not understand what he was reading.

E. God saw him, He saw he was seeking Him and He wanted him to know Him.

CTU *(Do you want to know God? God wants people to find the one and only way to Him and He wants people, including you, to know Him)*

F. God spoke to Philip and told him to go to a road south of Jerusalem.

G. Philip obeyed.

H. God told Philip to go to the African's chariot.

I. Philip obeyed and heard what the African was reading.

J. He was reading a passage in the Old Testament which spoke about a Lamb dying for sinners.
(*Do you know who that Lamb is? He was the Lord Jesus Christ—God's Lamb. It is He Who died for*
CT *sinners and can save them. It is He and He alone Who can help sinners to know God. He said, "I am the way, …… no one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14 v6).)

K. Philip asked him if he understood.
L. He said no—but he asked Philip to help him understand.
M. Philip got into the chariot and started to explain.
N. Philip explained that this Lamb was the Lord Jesus the Lamb of God.
O. He explained that He was the Son of God and that He had come to die for people's sins—including the African's sins.

CT P. And Philip explained that because He died He could and would save those who trusted in Him, and that through Him people could know God.

CTU (*He came to die for your sins also. He is the only way to God. Have you trusted Jesus Christ to save you? If not, you can do so today. You will then be saved and you will start to know God*).

III. Climax

The African believed in his heart what he had heard and trusted Jesus Christ as his Saviour. He was no longer disappointed.
He wanted others to know what he had done so he asked Philip to baptize him publicly.

IV. Conclusion

CTU *(Do you realise that Jesus Christ is the only way to God? Remember His words, "I am the way, …….. no one comes to the Father except through Me". Have you trusted Him? Are your sins forgiven? Have you started to know and worship God? Trust Jesus Christ today, and you will, like this African, start a new life).*

Gospel-focused Lesson No. 2

Moses and the Brazen Serpent

(Numbers 21 v1-9; John 3 v14-18)

Central truth - Jesus Christ took God's punishment for sin on the Cross.

Personal application to unsaved: *Put your trust in Jesus Christ and you will not be punished for your sin.*

I. Beginning

"Snakes, snakes! Poisonous snakes!" The people scattered in every direction. The whole camp was in an uproar. Many were bitten. I wouldn't like to be in a camp like that. Would you? What was happening?

II. Progression of Events

A. God was good to the Israelites. He brought them out of Egypt and across the Red Sea; He supplied them with water and manna; He protected them from their enemies.

B. Their response—they complained against God

CT (*Disobeying God, or ignoring Him is sin. They were sinning - but we all have sinned*).

C. God sent fiery serpents.

D. Many were bitten and many died.

CTU (*God always punishes sin. You and I have also sinned and the result is more serious than death.* We will be *separated from God forever if we are not saved*).

E. The people were convicted of their sin.

CTU (*It is good when we know we have sinned against God. That is the first step towards salvation*).

F. They asked Moses to pray for them.

G. Moses prayed for them.

H. God told him to make a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole. They were going to live because of this serpent.

I. Many years later the Lord Jesus Christ said that just as Moses lifted up the serpent He must be lifted up.

CTU (*You and I can live forever because the Lord Jesus was lifted up on a Cross and took God's punishment for our sin*).

J. Moses told the people they must look at the brass serpent to be saved from death. To look means to believe, to expect and to trust.

K. It was a simple command. How could it work? But it did—because it was God's command.

III. Climax

Everyone who looked was cured. Those who didn't look died.

CTU *(If you are not saved you can look to the Lord Jesus and trust Him. If you do you will be saved forever. It is simple but true. After the Lord Jesus spoke about the brass serpent, about Himself and His death on the Cross He said, "Whoever believes in Him* (that is Jesus Christ) *should not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3 v15).

IV. Conclusion

(Tell the story of Charles Spurgeon the famous preacher and pastor in England in the mid to late 1800's. As a child he wanted to be saved from his sin, but couldn't find the answer.

One Sunday morning he left for church. But it was snowing and he wasn't able to get to that church. So he just went into a little church nearby. There were only a few people there and the pastor couldn't come because of the snow. The man who spoke was not really a preacher. He just kept coming back to one verse "Look to Me, and be saved" *(Isaiah 45 v22). And then he looked right down at young Charles and said, "Young man you look miserable. Why don't you look to the Lord Jesus, and He will save you?"*

Charles said later, "At that moment I really looked at Him. I could almost have looked my eyes away. I trusted Him for the first time and was saved."

CTU *Will you look today to the Lord Jesus? Will you trust the Lord Jesus and be saved? Look to Him and trust Him. The Bible says that if you do that you will not perish but have eternal life (John 3 v15).*

Gospel-focused Lesson No. 3

The Passover
(Exodus 11,12)

Central truth - Jesus Christ is God's Lamb—Who died to save sinners.

Personal application to unsaved: *Trust Jesus Christ and you will be saved.*

I. Beginning

I*t was almost midnight. Everything was so quiet. Would it happen or would it not? The Israelites knew it would and they were ready. But there were others in Egypt who laughed. "It will never happen", they said. But they were wrong. It did happen. What happened? Our story today will tell us.*

II. Progression of Events

A. God had sent nine plagues on the Egyptians—but they would not let the children of Israel go (*Describe some of the plagues*).

B. God announced a tenth and final plague—the death of all the first born. This was the result of their sin (*Sin always results in judgment and God will also*
CT *judge you and me for our sins if we are not saved*).

C. God told the Israelites how they could be saved from this plague.

D. Each family was to choose a perfect male lamb—the first born son would be saved because of this lamb.

CT (*Salvation for us comes through Jesus Christ – He is our perfect lamb*).

E. They were to keep the lamb in their home for four days.

F. They were to kill the lamb. It had to die so that the first born could be saved.

CT (*Our lamb, the Lord Jesus, had to die for our sins. He died and took our punishment so we would be free).*

G. Then the blood of the lamb needed to be put on the door posts of the house.

CTU *(Each of us needs to do something. If you are not saved you need to trust Christ. If you don't trust Him you will not be saved).*

H. The Passover night came.

I. Every home which had no lamb, and no blood on the door posts, was visited by the angel of death.

J. Only those with blood on the door posts were saved.

CTU *(God must punish sin but you will be saved from God's punishment if you trust Jesus Christ. There is no other way).*

K. God had told them to eat the lamb, put on their shoes and be ready to go.

L. Pharaoh summoned Moses.

III. Climax

"Go, leave my people, you and the Israelites", commanded Pharaoh.

IV. Conclusion

Moses and the Israelites left. They were all still alive because the blood of the lamb was on their door posts.

CTU *Have you obeyed God and trusted Jesus Christ as your Saviour? If you have, the blood of the Lord Jesus has taken away all your sin, and you are safe from God's judgment and punishment from sin. If you haven't, God wants you to trust the Lord Jesus today and be saved. If you mean it with all your heart, tell Him, "Lord Jesus, I am a sinner, and I'm sorry for all the things I've done against You. Thank You for dying for me. Please save me now."*

And He will save you if you ask Him. God has promised that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1 v7). *But this is only true for those who trust Him).*

Growth-focused lesson No. 1

A Bride for Isaac

(Genesis 24 v1-69)

Central truth—God guides His children.

Personal application to saved: *Ask God to guide you and He will.*

I. Beginning

Have you ever had to make a hard decision? About how to spend some money you were given; or which of the other boys and girls at school should be your special friend? (What other decisions have you had to make which were hard? Discuss).

There was a man who lived many years ago, and he had to make an important decision and he needed help.

II. Progression of Events

A. Abraham and Sarah had had no children—and were old.

B. God gave them a son—Isaac. They loved him very much.

C. God promised that Abraham and Isaac would have many descendants.

D. But Isaac was not yet married.

E. Abraham had a special servant whose name is not given.

F. Abraham asked him to go back to his home country to find a bride for Isaac.

G. Abraham knew it would be difficult for his servant
CT to make such a decision—and he told him that God would guide him.

H. The servant promised he would do this—and he left.

I. As he came close to his destination and stopped at a well the servant asked God to show him whom
CT he should ask. Explain what he asked God to do. He knew that God would guide him.
CTS *(When you are faced with a difficult decision you should also ask God to show you what to do).*

J. Rebekah came to the well and when requested gave him a drink of water and offered to give his camels water—exactly in the way he had asked God to guide.

K. So he knew this was the person he should invite to be Isaac's wife.
(*God will also guide you if you ask Him. The main way He does this today is through His Word, the Bible—explain).*

CTS L. The servant gave Rebekah some gifts from his master.

M. Rebekah went home and told her family what had happened.

N. The servant was invited to their home.

CT O. He explained how God had guided him and discovered that Rebekah was a far out relative of his master.

CTS *(Isn't it wonderful how God controls and also guides through circumstances? He can use circumstances (or things which happen) to guide you).*

P. He asked Rebekah's parents (and her also) if she would return with him to marry Isaac and everyone said "Yes." And so all the pieces of the picture fitted together.

CTS *(God knows everything and makes no mistakes. He knows what is best for you and He wants to guide you and help you. Trust Him).*

Q. The servant thanked God for His guidance.

III. Climax

The servant returned with Isaac's bride—who soon met her husband. What excitement there must have been!

IV. Conclusion

CTS *(If you are a Christian God wants to guide you in all the decisions you need to make—especially the hard ones. The Lord Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit "will guide you into all truth" (John 16 v13). Be sure you ask God to do so—and keep reading His Word).*

Growth-focused Lesson No. 2

The Lord Jesus Calms The Storm

(Mark 4 v35-41)

Central truth—The Lord Jesus is with those who love Him and serve Him in every difficult situation.

Personal application to saved: *You do not need to be afraid of anything.*

I. Introduction

Have you ever been afraid? What things make children of your age afraid? *(Discuss this with the children).*

II. Progression of Events

A. The disciples who loved and served the Lord Jesus were told by Him to go to the other side of the lake.

B. They left the crowd and entered the boat.

C. The Lord Jesus was tired—because He was a real man as well as being God.

D. He lay down in the boat and fell asleep.

E. A great storm came up.

CT F. The disciples were afraid. They seemed to have forgotten thatJesus Christ was with them in the boat.

G. Huge waves caused the boat to start sinking.
(This was a really difficult situation. Have you ever been in one? Were you afraid? What did you do?)

H. They saw that the Lord Jesus was asleep in the boat.

I. They wakened Him and said, "Don't You care if we drown?"

CT *(They were sure they were drowning—even though the Lord Jesus was there).*

J. The Lord Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and the sea—and said "Peace, be still!"

CTS (*They did not need to be afraid. He was there all the time. And if you love and serve the Lord Jesus you do not need to be afraid—because He is with you. Explain the promise of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 28 v20. What do you need to do when you are afraid*?)

III. Climax

The wind and sea became completely calm and the Lord Jesus said to them, "Why are you so frightened? Can you not trust Me?"

CTS (*The Lord Jesus has the power to deal with all your difficult situations—no matter what they are. You just need to trust Him. He says in the Bible to you and me* "My peace I give to you" *(John 14 v27).)*

IV. Conclusion

CTS *(In the middle of every difficult situation the Lord Jesus can take away all your fear and give you peace (Explain John 14 v27). The best example of peace is a painting of a violent storm (lightning, trees bent, heavy rain) with a little bird perched on a waving branch—singing.)*

Growth-focused Lesson No. 3

Daniel Keeps Himself Pure
(Daniel 1 v1-21)

Central truth—God wants His children to keep their bodies pure.

Personal application to saved: *You need to say 'no' to things which will harm you.*

I. Introduction
Can you think of anything which would harm your body? Have your friends in school ever put pressure on you to do things which you knew were not right and which would harm you? (*Have a little discussion*).

II. Progression of Events

A. Soldiers came from Babylon to Jerusalem and the city was taken.
B. Jehoiakim the king was captured.
C. Articles were taken from the temple of God.
D. The Babylonian king gave orders of what to bring back to Babylon from Jerusalem:
- ✓ Young men from royal families.
- ✓ Healthy, strong and intelligent men.

E. These were to be given the best of the king's food and wine.
F. These were to be trained for three years and then presented to the king.
G. Four of these young men were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.
H. Their names were changed to Babylonian names (*give them*).

CT I. Daniel purposed in his heart he would not eat the king's meat and drink his wine because he wanted to keep his body pure—and this food and wine had been offered to idols.
(*The Bible says that* "Your body is the temple or dwelling place of the Holy Spirit" *(1 Corinthians*
CTS *6 v19). (So you need, like Daniel, to keep it pure. There are today other things which can harm you—and you should say "no" to them. What are these things?*).

J. He asked for permission to eat other food. He made a polite request. He was firm but also polite and kind.
CTS *(And we should also be firm, but polite and kind when we say "no"*).

K. His request was denied because of fear of the king's reaction.

L. Daniel suggested a ten-day test taking only vegetables and water—and he again made this suggestion with politeness and respect.

CTS (*We should always react politely and respectfully to those who want us to do things we don't feel we should do*).

M. His request was granted.

N. The test was passed. The four young men were healthier than the others.

O. They continued to receive vegetables and water.

P. God blessed these four men—and gave them knowledge, skill in learning and wisdom.

CTS (*God always blesses those who are willing to obey Him and are willing to say "no" to those things which would harm them*).

III. Climax

When they were brought before the king they were ten times smarter and healthier than the others, and were given positions of importance in the country.

IV. Conclusion

God always honours those who honour Him.

CTS *(Saying "no" may not make you popular with other people — but it will please God and He will bless you).*

Chapter 12:
How to Present Your Bible Lesson

This last chapter will outline some practical suggestions to help you with the actual mechanics of your Bible lesson presentation.

How often what promises to be a really good meal is spoiled by the way in which it is served. The coffee is cold, the toast is burnt, and the egg too hard-boiled—when just a little more care and thought would have produced excellent results. How often do we see a lovely picture in a poor unworthy frame.

So it is with many Bible lessons. They contain excellent material, but are presented in such a dull, lifeless and unimaginative way that the effect is almost nil. So how can you and I present our Bible lessons attractively and effectively? There are ten main rules to follow and obey.

1. Be Well Prepared

Someone has said that your preparation is ninety per cent of your presentation. A teacher, who has prepared his lesson well, will generally be effective in his teaching and, at the same time, will be relaxed and have more joy in his presentation.

Good preparation includes the following:

- Time spent in prayer.
- Time spent in a detailed study of the passage on which the lesson is based.
- Time spent in producing a written plan of the lesson to be taught. This plan would have, as we have seen, four headings—beginning, progression of events, climax and conclusion. It would also include a clear statement of the central truth, the two applications and an indication where each of these three would be included in the plan.
- Time spent in practising your lesson. You should not try

to memorize your lesson. Memorization causes a loss of spontaneity which should be one of the main features of your ministry. But you should study your lesson thoroughly and practise it beforehand. Then you can teach it from your heart. The lesson plan which you have written out, and which you have before you, in your Bible, will help keep you "on the right lines".

- Time spent in getting ready any visual aids to be used, and making sure they are in the order in which they will be used. These visuals will help the children to "see" your story and lesson. However, remember you are the best visual of all!

2. Use Your Bible

There are several rules to remember:

- Hold your Bible in your hand, if possible, as you teach, or refer to it frequently.
- If, because of the visuals you are using you cannot do so, leave your Bible open on a nearby table, and pick it up and use it whenever possible.
- Read a verse or part of a verse when appropriate—but do not read long passages.

Your use of the Bible is an important object lesson for the children. Each week they see "my teacher teaching from the Bible".

3. Live Your Lesson

If you are well prepared and have meditated thoroughly on the lesson it will become part of you. As you teach, "get into" the lesson. Do not teach in a matter-of-fact, detached, way. You need to make your story and lesson live.

- Feel for the main characters and try to "get into each of them" and bring them to life e.g. you should feel and show the great joy of the father as he welcomes home his prodigal son.
- Change the expression on your face as you teach.
- Do not freeze! Some speakers use only their tongues and

the rest of the body is frozen. Don't be afraid to move or be active when you are speaking.

- ✓ There are times when you can use your body to get across your point. This may include the movement of your hands, your feet, your eyes, your eyebrows, your mouth, or the movement of your head. You should do this in a natural way and the children will enjoy the lesson more.
  Miss Frances Bennett, a master story teller who served many years with Child Evangelism Fellowship in USA, used movements to great effect. A little boy, watching her show how David wound up his sling, ducked as she made the motion to let the stone go!
- ✓ But be sure not to keep prodding at the children with your forefinger, or chopping the air with your hand. Gestures with the hand can be a special help - but they should not be wild, aimless or exaggerated.
- ✓ Do not exaggerate body movements or carry those movements too far. They may become ridiculous. The children might then laugh at you and your message will be cheapened.

➢ Use your voice effectively.

- ✓ Your voice should be pleasant and not harsh.
- ✓ Your voice should be clear and easy to hear (but not too loud).
- ✓ Your voice should be natural and not a "special preaching voice".
- ✓ Your voice should be relaxed and not high-pitched or shrill.
- ✓ You should speak so that the children in the back row can hear you (but not the children in the next town).
- ✓ Your voice should vary according to what is happening in the lesson.
  - Vary the speed—faster for excitement and slower or sadness.
  - Vary the volume—louder for action, softer for suspense.

➢ Direct conversation and dialogue between characters can be very effective and create much interest.

- Be careful in your use of imagination. Let the children know when you are imagining how things might have happened and that the Bible does not actually say that this was so. Keep close to the text of the Scripture passage.
- Pauses can help especially when you want to make a change of sense or thought. They can also be very effective at moments of suspense.
- Be enthusiastic and keep the lesson moving. Children like action.
- Stop when you reach the end. As you reach the end of the narrative you should have already taught what you set out to teach. This is not the time to start teaching.

Someone has wisely said:
"*Stand up to be seen; speak up to be heard; shut up to be appreciated*."

4. Watch Your Language

It is not so much what you say as what the children understand which is important:

- Make sure that the words you use are understood in the same way by you and the children. Be careful about theological words and evangelical clichés. Do not assume that the children understand words such as "saved", "eternal life", "sin" and "faith".
- Don't use long rambling sentences. Keep your sentences short and with a simple construction.
- Remember that children take you literally. Explain words that could cause problems. What do the children understand by e.g."Gideon's pitchers" or "a caravan of camels", or "an ark of bulrushes?
- Do not keep repeating words or phrases e.g."you know" or "boys and girls".
- Use descriptive words in your narrative e.g. "Clank, clank, the chains were closed around Peter's wrists. He could never escape."

5. Be Personal

It is important that you have a good rapport with the children, and that you are not speaking to them in some kind of detached manner.

- Look at the children as you speak to them. Try to have eye contact with **all** the children. Try not to use your notes too often.
- Do not continually stare at a point on the back wall or at one child.
- Avoid looking at and talking to the visual aids.
- You should generally use the word "we" to include yourself with the children, for example, "We all need a Saviour" or "We have all broken God's laws".
- But use the word "you" also—especially in direct applications.
- Try to remember the children's names and use them when you speak to specific children during the meeting.

6. Avoid Too Much Humour

It is not your task to entertain children; so do not become an entertainer. You are involved in the serious ministry of bringing the Word of God to children. From time to time funny things will happen. You may make a mistake or there may be a humorous incident in the lesson. The children will laugh, and that is as it should be, for fun and merriment are part of a child's life. Join in their laughter but never allow merriment to take control.

If you have a sense of humour do not stifle it completely, but keep it under control. If you do not have a sense of humour you will find a ministry to children very difficult.

7. Be Careful About Your Personal Appearance and Actions

There are several points to remember with regard to your appearance and how the children see you as you teach:

- Look at yourself carefully in the mirror before you go to

the children to ensure that nothing is "out of place".
- You should be dressed in a way which will honour Christ.
- You should stand up as you teach. Stand well upon both feet and do not slouch.
- Don't stand stiffly to attention as if on a parade ground.
- Avoid repetitive mannerisms like fiddling with your glasses, swaying your body from side to side, repeatedly brushing back your hair, or toying with something in your pocket.
- Remember to smile from time to time.

8. Be Yourself

From time to time as you see others speak to children, you may think "I wish I were like him." You can learn from others but you should not try to copy them. Avoid imitation, affectation (the putting on of airs) and insincerity. Be normal and not artificial. God has given you **your** personality. Allow the Holy Spirit to control you and to speak through you using **your** personality.

9. Enjoy the Lesson

The teaching of a Bible lesson to children is a privilege, and should be enjoyable:

- Use your lesson outline; but don't feel that you have failed if you don't always stick to it.
- While you continually need to examine your lesson presentations and while you want to improve them, don't feel guilty when you leave something out, or make a mistake. This often happens and God still works.
- Don't be disheartened or discouraged if your early attempts at teaching a Bible Lesson using the central truth method are not as successful as you would wish. Keep working at it and you will find that with diligent preparation and more experience your lessons will improve and be more effective.
- Try to relax and not feel that you are in some kind of a straitjacket.

- Do your best, and leave the results in God's hands. You cannot do any more than that.

10. Depend Upon God

Even when you have prepared well and taught well, remember that only God can give spiritual enlightenment. Only He can convict and regenerate. Your Bible lesson should be bathed with prayer. You need to trust and expect the Holy Spirit to minister to the children through your teaching of God's Word and, when He does, give **Him** the glory.

"I hope you never get over the thrill that someone will actually listen and learn from you"

Howard Hendricks

Building for Eternity

A builder builded a temple,
He wrought it with grace and skill,
Pillars and groins and arches,
All fashioned to work his will.
Men said as they saw its beauty,
"It shall never know decay,
Great is thy skill, Oh builder
Thy fame shall endure for aye."

A teacher builded a temple
With loving and infinite care,
Planning each arch with patience,
Laying each stone with prayer.
None praised her unceasing efforts,
None knew of the wondrous plan,
For the temple the teacher builded
Was unseen by the eyes of man.

Gone is the builder's temple,
Crumbled into the dust,
Low lies each stately pillar,
Food for consuming rust.
But the temple the teacher builded
Will last while the ages roll,
For that beautiful unseen temple
Is a child's immortal soul. *(Author Unknown)*

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