

# t<sub>he</sub> Chalkboard

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## Making It Stick

When my son, Andrew, was a toddler he was fascinated by stickers. He enjoyed the tactile sensation of having a colorful sticker put on the back of his hand, his arm, or his shirt. Andrew could not speak plainly so he made a guttural noise which sounded like, "Err, Err!" Our family quickly learned that this sound was his unique way of asking for a sticker. One day, when we were out of stickers, my mother improvised. She tore small pieces of clear adhesive tape, and then stuck them up and down Andrew's arms. He was just as thrilled as if they were beautifully colored ones. For the most part, I think his enjoyment came from the personal interaction with his grandmother. As I recently reflected on this precious memory, I thought to myself, "Are the lessons I teach my children really sticking with them or do they quickly forget what they have heard?"

Children enjoy a good story. They are thrilled with the action-packed adventure of a true Bible hero. I love to recreate a Bible story by allowing children to build the tower of Babel, knock down the walls of Jericho, or sit inside the belly of a whale. However, through the years I have learned that children are concrete thinkers. They do not understand theological language nor grasp its importance. Often, children do not even comprehend the objective of the lesson. I never want to send little ones home with the thought that they might also be swallowed by a large fish. Instead, I want them to learn of Jonah's repentance while he was being digested and how God miraculously delivered him. I have come to realize that activity is nothing more than a means of keeping children busy if the experience is not coupled with understanding.

There are many ways to reinforce the purpose of a Bible lesson so that the meaning is clear. One way is to follow up the lesson with a question and answer session. Once the children have sat underneath a table to create the experience of a jail cell, I must then allow them to respond as to how Peter must have felt when he was in prison. This process is sometimes referred to as "debriefing." After experiencing the lesson, ample time must be given to discuss the meaning of the story and activity. For example, one night after teaching a lesson, I asked the students an open-ended

question. I asked, "How can I apply this lesson to my life?" Their responses delighted me. They had grasped the point of the lesson and were able to personalize it. Sometimes, a child may have difficulty putting his thoughts into his own words. Conducting a wrap-up session will help in verbalizing what was internalized. Another means for making a Bible point stick is to create a craft project. As children paint, draw, glue, or mold, they will reflect on the important facts of the lesson. Since very young children cannot write, drawing a picture about the lesson will help them to cement their thoughts. After each student draws a picture, the teacher should ask the child an open-ended question like, "Tell me about your picture?" The teacher should write the student's response at the bottom of the page. When the student carries the picture home, he will be able to communicate with his parents what he has learned. Older students may enjoy keeping a journal. Provide each child with a composition book to decorate. At the end of each class, allow the students to write the verse and a short summary of the Bible story. This will allow them to collect all their reflections in one place as a keepsake. We should use a variety of creative ways to help the Scripture stick in the hearts and minds of the children throughout the week. You might print the verse or Bible point on white adhesive labels to create stickers. Decorate a poster or tee shirt and include the memory verse. Better yet, write the verse on a candy bar or toy which will be sent home with each child. One teacher printed the books of the Bible on a plastic pumpkin that would light up. The illuminated pumpkin became a constant reminder to memorize the Bible books.

Briefly, God's Word is "quick and powerful" (Heb. 4:12) and "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). When the Truth is hidden in the hearts of children, it will lead them away from sin (Ps. 119:11). As teachers, we should ensure that our teaching is more than mere activity or fun time. Our teaching must be complemented with creative interaction which reinforces the Scripture and its importance in their everyday lives. We have this awesome responsibility of teaching God's Word to the next generation (Deut. 4:9).

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