

Tips for Children's Messages

Twelve simple reminders about messages to children.

1. Keep it short (the attention span of a four year old is about 5 minutes).
2. Use concrete ideas. Things which can be experienced by the senses. Children cannot comprehend abstract ideas.
3. Use vocabulary appropriate to the age of the children. If you catch yourself using big or abstract words, take a moment to explain them in simple concrete ways.
4. Object lessons often require abstract thinking to make the leap from the object to the "point". If you use an object, use one which is in the story as a visual aid, but don't expect children to understand how "faith" is like an "apple."
5. Children enjoy stories and visual aids which are appropriate to the story. Especially ones which they can touch. It is often best for you to hold it while they take turns touching it. Keeping something hidden for a while also builds suspense.
6. Do not set children up to give the wrong answer. No one wants to look foolish. Ask wondering or life questions instead. For example: I wonder what Jesus must have felt like. I wonder what the children said to Jesus. How do you feel when? What would you do if?
7. Do not ask questions you do not want an answer to. For example, "Do you want to go back and sit down now?" Make this a statement rather than a question.
8. Sit with children, but make sure all of them can see you. Standing sets you apart. If you have a large group of children invite 2 or 3 teens to come and sit with them each week as a ministry of the church.
9. Use good vocal inflection. One of the best for children is actually a quiet voice. It has a calming influence.
10. Offer ways for children to participate. Suggest motions while you are telling a story, or special phrases for them to say. Give them directions and examples for both volume and range of motion.
11. If you are going to hand something out to each child, do it toward the end of the message unless you are going to take them through a step by step process with the object. Children also enjoy handing out things to the rest of the congregation.
12. Complement children often for their attention and participation.