

The Puzzling Attraction of Puzzles



Disorder and exposed edges cause us to be tense and unsettled. We fervently scan for those straight edges to establish a boundary and begin to sort things out. We aren't satisfied until everything is in its proper place and the picture is complete.

It is no wonder we say we "work" puzzles. The process doesn't seem like "play" at all.

It is work. Yet, even when there is no outside competition involved, we find pleasure in that work. It is a quest for the solution. A desire to find the answer to the problem. Figuring out how the pieces fit together. Consciously or not, all of us are looking for answers. God, in his wisdom has created us curious and hungry to 'know'. It sometimes feels like very hard work and yet we still seek.

As teachers we can walk alongside children and guide them in the important Christian-life-skill of looking for answers and seeking truth. Throughout their lives truth will always be found in God.

You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. Psalm 63:1, NIV

[A good lesson plan](#) for Bible Class should include challenging and pleasurable [learning activities](#) that motivate children to think.

Challenges don't have to be complicated. One simple activity is an adaptation of jig-saw puzzles. [Click here for written instructions and links to good online teaching pictures you can use.](#)

Or watch this 2 minute training video below.

May God bless you as you help children seek answers.

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Good Conversations

One of my favourite parts of teaching is conversation. There are times in a normal classroom setting for children to quietly listen while I share a story, read from the Bible or give instruction. But, as far as I am concerned, I have not done my job as a teacher if I have not interspersed that lecture style with plenty of opportunities for good conversation between the students and myself. I don't want to always be the one talking. I also want to listen. I don't accomplish this every time but it is my goal to engage with each child that I teach.

This is one of the reasons I love simple activities like the ones below.

In these activities the teacher and students draw simple pictures and participate together in discovering the important words and ideas in a Bible story.

[Click here for more detailed instructions](#) or watch the video below:

The Bible stories used in the examples in the instructional video above are [Jacob, Esau and the Birthright](#) and [Deborah, the Judge](#) and [Samuel Becomes a Helper in the Tabernacle](#).



This Counts at Home, Too?



Years ago I taught a Bible story to a group of children and we began to discuss the concept of kindness. I wanted the children to understand what kindness really was and how they could practice kindness.

One young boy excitedly gave example after example of ways to show kindness. "We could take food to someone who was hungry." "Carrying groceries for an elderly person at the grocery store would be kindness." "We could say kind words."

After he listed a few examples of kindness I asked, "And how could you show kindness to your sister?

There was a long pause and then, with a horrified expression on his face, he asked, "*You mean, this counts at home, too?*"

If ever there was an example of "the truth hit home" then this was one!

We must share the Bible with children. There is nothing that we could say that would have more eternal impact than the words God speaks. But we cannot be satisfied with only conveying a set of facts or teaching memory verses. God's word is meant to be lived! Children need to learn and understand ways to live out the things they have learnt in every part of their lives.

One helpful way to help children explore ways to live out their faith is to use a simple method I call [Things Matter](#). Simple items (things) from around your house can be used to draw out conversation about everyday applications of God's Word.

[Click here for instructions and a 2 1/2 minute "how to" video.](#) In the video I use two Bible stories as examples: [Sodom and Gomorrah](#) and the [Building of the Tabernacle](#).

Obey God's message! Don't fool yourselves by just listening to it. If you hear the message and don't obey it, you are like people who stare at themselves in a mirror and forget what they look like as soon as they leave. But you must never stop looking at the perfect law that sets you free. God will bless you in everything you do, if you listen and obey, and don't just hear and forget. James 1:22-25, CEV

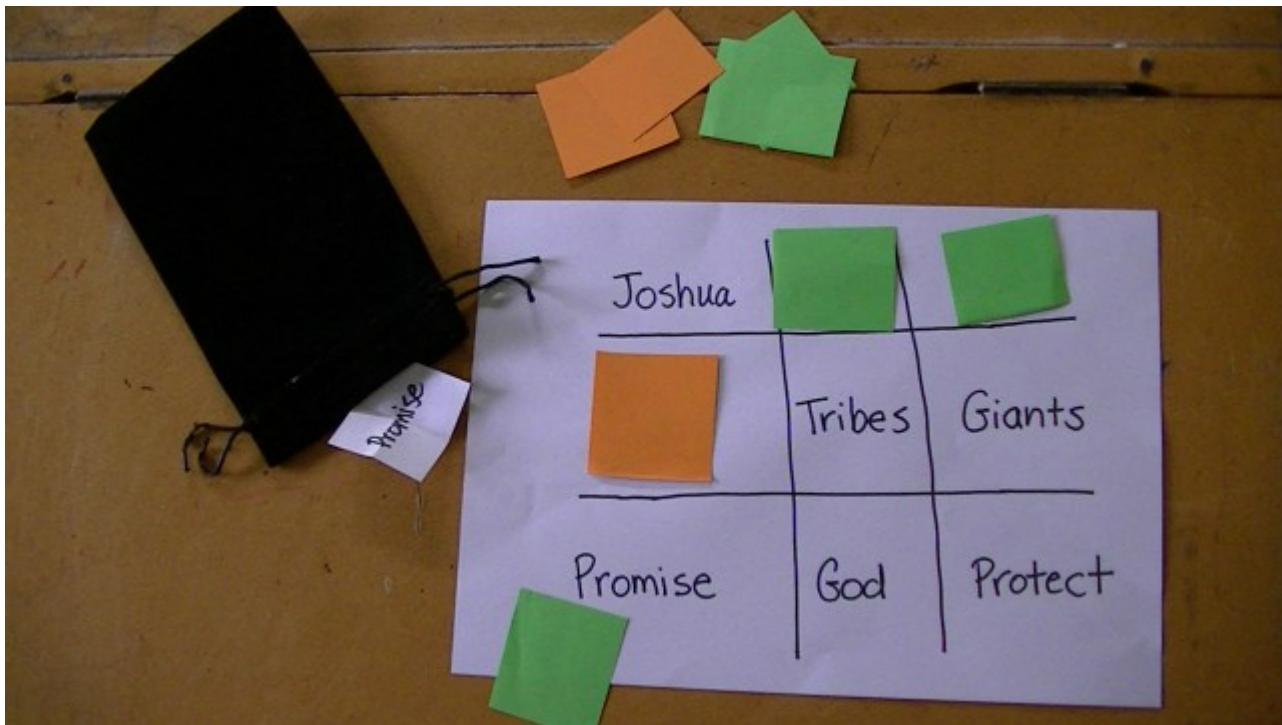
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Same Game - Different Name

I thought I'd finish off 2014 by posting a simple game to use as a review in Bible Class.

Well, at least I assumed it would be simple!



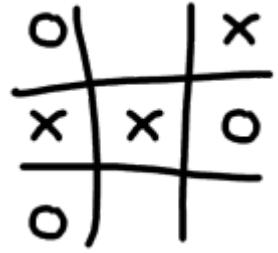
A woman named Debbie (Arizona, USA) emailed me awhile back with the suggestion of adapting an "X and O" game into a review activity for Bible Class. Children list words and ideas and then play a game similar to "tic-tac-toe" or "noughts and crosses". The example in the picture above is from the Bible lesson [Conquering the Land and Fighting Giants](#).

I thought such a simple idea would be easy to explain until I began filming a "how-to" video and writing out instructions. Hopefully, the final result makes sense. [Click here to learn how to use the game in your Bible Class.](#)

Same Game-Different Name

It turns out that many of us play the game but we know it by different names. That's why I stuck with the simple title of "[X and O Review Game](#)". Here are some of the other names listed by [Wikipedia](#):

- Tick-tack-toe, Tic-tac-toe, Tick-tat-toe, or Tit-tat-toe (USA, Canada)
- Noughts and crosses or Naughts and crosses (United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa)
- Exy-Ozys, Xsie-Osies (verbal name only) (Northern Ireland)
- Xs and Os (Egypt, Republic of Ireland, Canada, Zimbabwe, Romania)
- O-X (Mauritius)



Older Than You Think

I was amazed to find out that In fact, 1st Century Romans played a version of this game that was very similar to what we play today! So this game has been played since the time of Christ.

Same Same but Different

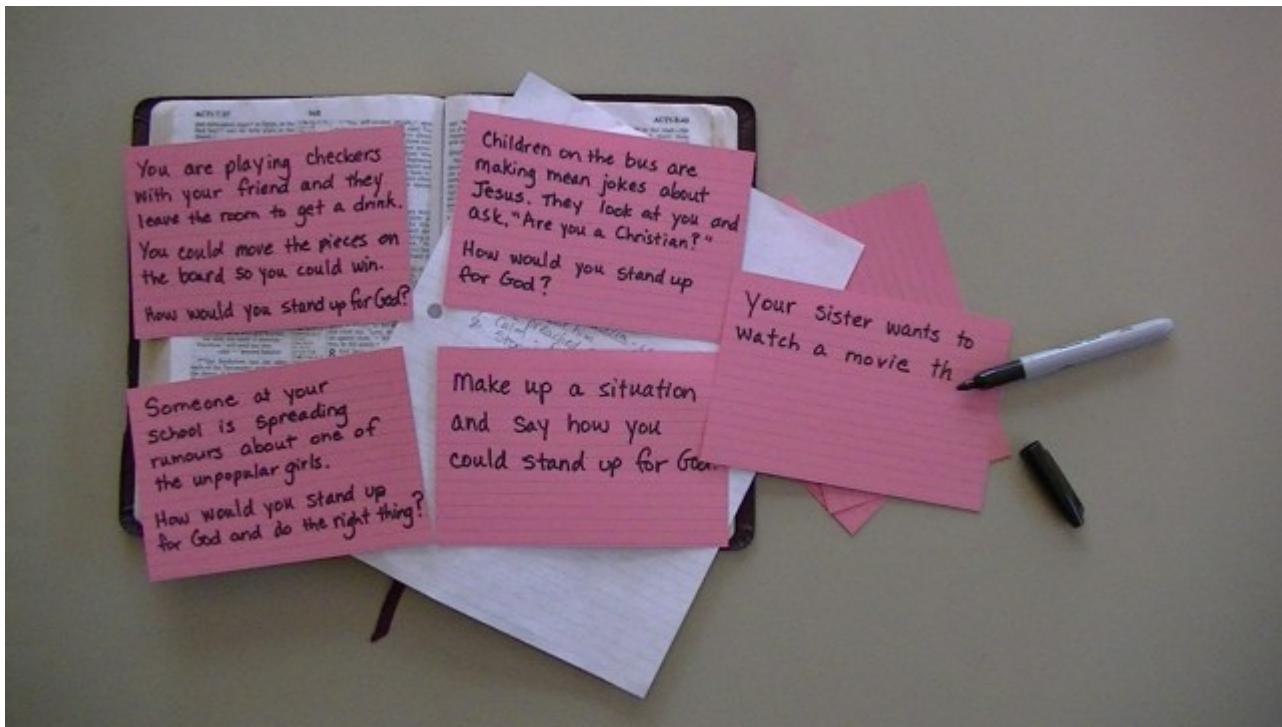
As my Thai friends say, “same-same but different”. God’s Word does not change but it is shared in different languages and by various methods that fit the culture and understanding of the hearer. You know the needs of the children you are teaching. I’m hoping you are reading the ideas on www.missionbibleclass.org and then adapting them to your own teaching situation and language.

If a simple and inconsequential game of “X and O” can still be played and enjoyed by adults and children century after century then how much more lasting is the Word of God for all people for all time?

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Preparing Children for the Cost of Discipleship

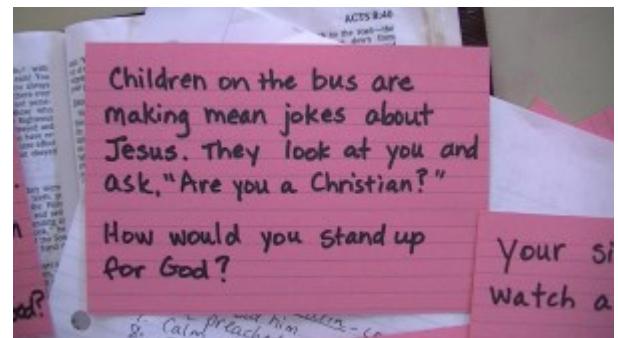


Some people treat the bible like a book of fairy tales where each story always ends with the villain being punished and the good person being declared a hero. But the bible is not a fairy tale. There will eventually be a great day of eternal reckoning but, meanwhile, choosing to follow God comes at a cost and good people suffer along the way.

As much as I would like to protect children from this harsh reality of life I know it is my responsibility as a teacher to begin preparing them for the weapons Satan will relentlessly use against them.

[Situation Cards](#) are a simple way teachers can help prepare children in a way they can easily relate to. It extends a bible lesson beyond facts and memorization to application to everyday life.

Before class the teacher writes situations on cards. In class, after learning what God has to say in his word, students take turns choosing cards and reading the situations. The teacher guides conversation as the students describe what they might choose to do in the various scenarios. The teacher encourages the children to discuss and pray about their concerns. [Refer to this short training video for instructions and an example using the story of the Stoning of Stephen.](#)



Non-threatening, age appropriate conversations in the safe environment of a children's bible class is a great way to help form the faith of a child. This formation of faith begins in childhood as the Apostle Paul instructed the young man, Timothy:

"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:12-17, NIV

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