

Yes, This Counts at Home



PRAYER CARDS:

Reminding us to pray for our brothers and sisters



The troubling story of Joseph and his brothers leads to good discussion about getting along with siblings.

Genesis 35:23-26; 37:1-36

another teaching idea from www.missionbibleclass.org

The best lessons are not what goes on in my Bible class. The best lessons are what the children take with them when they leave.

Years ago I was teaching children about the [Fruit of the Spirit](#). One young child was in total agreement with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and faithfulness. These were great concepts and he loved learning about them and exploring how they apply in church and in school and with his friends. But I'll never forget his reaction when I mentioned that the Fruit of the Spirit should also be displayed to our brothers and sisters in our family.

This young man, moments before, had been enthusiastic when talking about these concepts in various other settings. Now, he looked at me in shock and horror and said, "What! This counts at HOME too?"

This child realised a truth that is for all of us. It is God's intention that we apply what we learn to ALL parts of our lives.

[Prayer Cards](#) are one way to help children understand this important truth.

I was able to use these recently when teaching about [Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery](#). As we explored the tense relationship between Joseph and his brothers I asked the children in my class to consider relationships with their own siblings. Even if we do not always get along we should want the best for them. One way to do this is to pray for them.

I supplied paper, scissors and pens. As we talked about our siblings we wrote their names on cards. In class we prayed for each one. Then, the children took the cards home so they could remember to pray for their siblings.

Yes, prayer counts at home, too.

[Full instructions for prayer cards](#)

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Experiencing God's Holiness



What does “[holiness](#)” mean to a child who is five years old? God’s holiness is an extremely important theme running throughout the entire Bible and I believe even very young children can experience how special God is.

I’ve recently had an opportunity to teach in a large room so I decided to dedicate one area of the room as a special place where, each week, we sit for a few minutes and talk about how special God really is. I’ve loved how this has brought a new depth to what we are learning and I would encourage you to give this a try sometimes.

A Holy Space

I didn’t buy anything to set this space up and, with a little imagination, you will be able to find “special” items of your own. I drug in a coffee table from another room. I covered it with some shiny wrapping paper and placed chairs around it. Draping some old sheets and fabric over a room divider formed a small “wall” to make the space cozy. Someone had left some “gold” Christmas tree garland in our supply room so I thought that would add to the feeling of grandeur. A paper crown on a purple pillow emphasized the Kingship of God since we were studying the [Divided Kingdom](#) and the [End of the Kingdom](#).

Even though these were not expensive items I can tell you that the children were in awe of the space. On a side note it occurred to me that [the Temple that Solomon built](#) was dripping with gold and precious cloths in a way that left everyone awestruck. But, in reality, gold and expensive items are actually worthless in comparison to God’s true worth. Perhaps we adults aren’t all that sophisticated after all.

A Holy Attitude

When we sit at the table in this space it is a “set apart” time from the rest of the class period. At other times we might play games and sing action songs and act out the story. There are many ways to glorify God. But, when we go and sit in our holy space we speak more quietly and we all reflect in awe and reverence about God.

A Holy Conversation

This is a 5 minute devotional time that is not limited to the lesson we are studying for the day. Everything we talk about in this space relates to how special God is. He is approachable but He is different than us. In a child’s eyes this space is very special and it is a great launching place to talk about how God is even more special than our idea of precious things.

Each week I try to cover a different aspect of God’s holiness and how this has been shown in Scripture. This is not the time to tell another Bible story or try to explain complex topics. I want the children’s minds to be fully on God so I talk about concepts they can easily grasp. I try my best to use illustrations to depict these things. For instance, the illustrations below are from www.freebibleimages.org

- [The Tabernacle](#)
- [The Temple](#)
- The Word of God- We open our Bibles and read a verse about God (or they follow along as I read).



New Depths

This experience has brought a new depth to the lessons I’ve been teaching. The children have really picked up on the fact that sin is not just “bad behaviour” it is a real offence against who God is. I’ve been amazed at how often the children have referenced God’s holiness as we study other lessons.

- When we talked about idols being erected and even brought into the temple the children were disgusted. They understood why [King Josiah destroyed idols and places of false worship](#). “Don’t those people know how much more special God is than statues?”
- When we learned about the prophet [Jeremiah visiting the potter’s house](#) and hearing God warn about turning away from him the children understood why God was angry. The kings were not treating him in the way he deserved.
- We learned about how [Jeremiah dictated God’s Message onto a scroll](#). As King Jehoiakim listened to the words he cut off pieces of the scroll and threw them into a fire piece by piece. When I mentioned that King Jehoiakim was making a huge mistake one of the children corrected me, “No! the king knew God’s words were special. He did not make a mistake, he did it on purpose!”
- Before being led off into Exile the Temple of God was destroyed. The students in my class were so sad to hear this. They understood how serious this was to God.

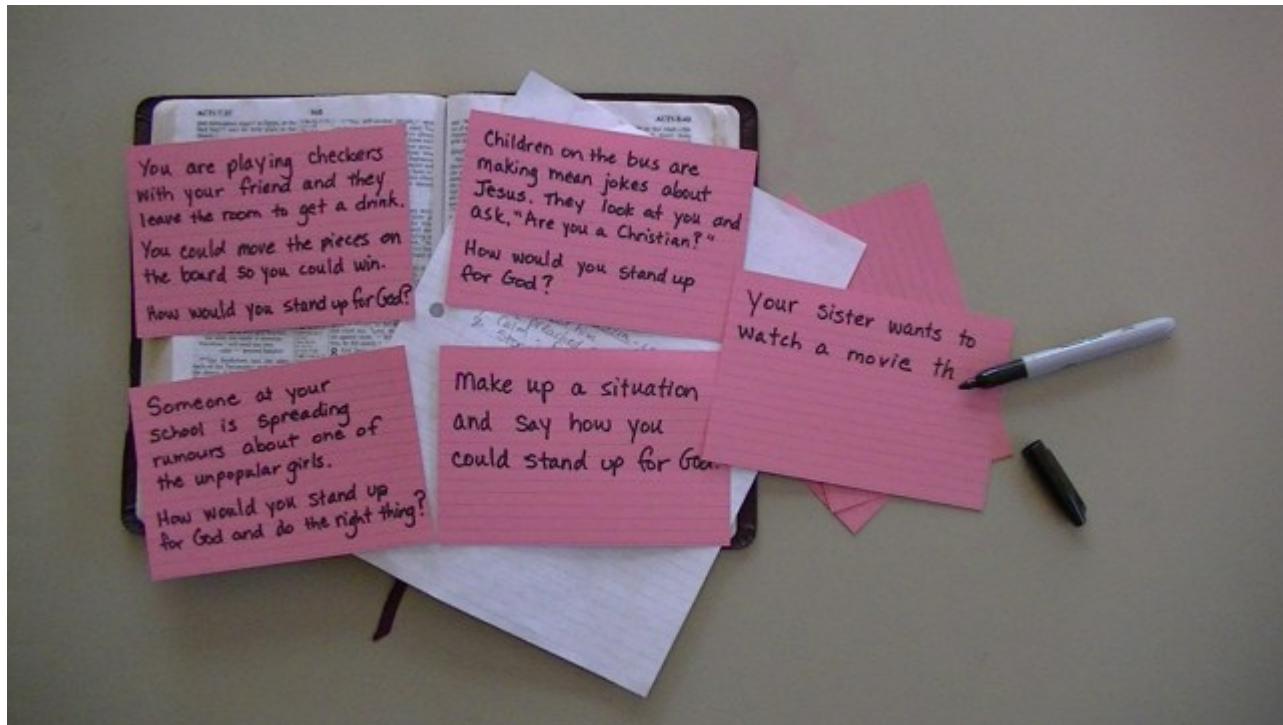
How About Making Your Own Temporary Tabernacle?

I was blessed with a room large enough to create a separate space but you could create a special space almost anywhere. Put your "special" items in a basket and lay out the items when it comes time to have your devotional. After all, this is exactly what was done with [The Tabernacle](#). It was set up and taken down wherever the Israelites camped.

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Preparing Children for the Cost of Discipleship

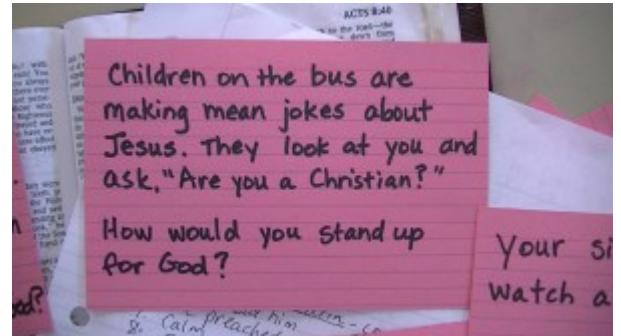


Some people treat the bible like a book of fairy tales where each story always ends with the villain being punished and the good person being declared a hero. But the bible is not a fairy tale. There will eventually be a great day of eternal reckoning but, meanwhile, choosing to follow God comes at a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



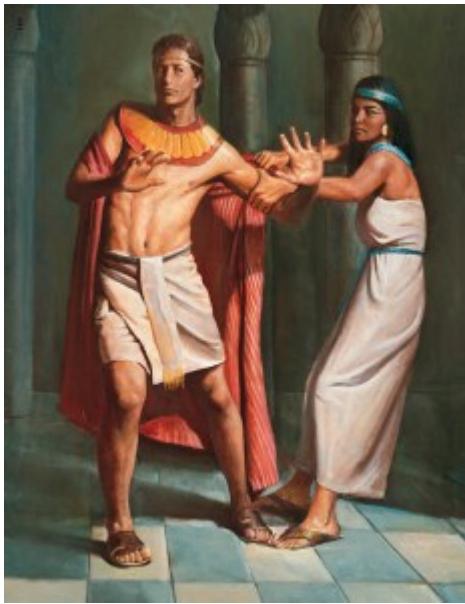
Non-threatening, age appropriate conversations in the safe environment of a children's bible class is a great way to help form the faith of a child. This formation of faith begins in childhood as the Apostle Paul instructed the young man, Timothy:

"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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Doing Right Because It is Right



In Egypt, Joseph became a slave to a man named Potipher. Potipher's wife lied about Joseph so he went to prison.

While in prison Joseph interpreted the dreams of two prisoners (the former cupbearer and baker of King Pharaoh). The cupbearer was set free from prison and returned to the Pharaoh's service.

When the Pharaoh had a dream that no one could interpret, the cupbearer suggested he call for Joseph. Joseph interpreted the dreams and Pharaoh was so impressed that he put Joseph in charge of all of Egypt.

Read more about Joseph and learn how to teach the story to children here: [Joseph in Egypt](#) and in [Genesis 39:1-41:57](#).

Joseph was a man of integrity. He chose to live for God even though he was far from his family and living in Egypt, a land far from his home.

Children need to learn about integrity. Integrity is doing the right thing because you know it is the right thing to do. This means choosing to act or choosing not to act in a certain way even if there is no reward or recognition. Integrity is choosing to do the right thing even if no one is watching.

To help children apply integrity to their everyday life try the following idea.

Situation Cards

Write situations on cards. Each child should draw a card and act out the situation on the card. The other children can guess what the child is acting out and explain how this relates to integrity. Here are some examples of what you might write on the cards:

- Integrity is seeing rubbish/trash on the floor and picking it up and putting it in the bin without being asked.
- Integrity is saying good things about someone when others are gossiping about them.
- Integrity is choosing not to watch a movie that you are not allowed to watch even when you are at a friend's house and your parents would never know.
- Integrity is telling the teacher that you were playing by her desk and broke her vase while she was out of the room.
- Integrity is telling the truth even if it means you will get in trouble.
- Integrity is finding money on the floor at the library and reporting it to the librarian rather than putting it into your pocket.
- Integrity is replacing someone else's property that you broke.
- Integrity is studying for the test and writing your own answers instead of copying someone else's work.



Teaching Alongside the Creator



In the rush to find scissors and glue we should not neglect the natural supplies God has provided as teaching resources.

We do not teach alone. We join the Master Teacher, the Creator, who is already using his creation to draw people to Himself:

*The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.
They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world. (Psalm 19:1-4, NIV)*

and...

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (Romans 1:20, NIV)

A student I supervise, Cristy, recently encouraged a group of teachers to bring God's teaching resources into our classrooms. Cristy sent a group of teachers outside the building to find and bring back items that teach about God. (She only allowed them 3 minutes!).

Here are the types items these teachers found:

- A leaf to illustrate the waving of the palm leaves when Jesus entered Jerusalem in his [Triumphal Entry](#).
- A rock to teach about the stone being rolled away from Jesus' Tomb in the [Burial and Resurrection Story](#).
- Various types of Soil to illustrate the [Parable of the Sower and the Seeds](#).

We thought this might be more of a challenge when we taught the same workshop in Metro Manila (Philippines). The church building we were in was surrounded by a parking lot devoid of plants and next to a busy street. Still, when Cristy sent the teachers out they quickly adapted and came back with a wonderful collection of both natural and other teaching items including items such as:

- Five stones to teach about [David and Goliath](#).
- Dust to show how God formed Adam from the dust of the earth when [God Created People](#).
- A salt shaker from the kitchen to illustrate that we are to be [Salt and Light](#).
- Coins from someone's purse to help children remember when [Judas betrayed Jesus](#).

Pointing out God's creation when we teach brings a profound richness into what we are sharing. In the years to come children may forget a picture used for illustration or a worksheet. But, for the rest of their lives they will continue to see leaves and stones and soil. Connecting these things with spiritual lessons now will mean that the lessons will be reinforced over and over.

I can just imagine the future when one of my students, as an elderly person, picking up a stone and telling his or her grandchild about how the stone was rolled away from the tomb.

I want to teach with the Creator!

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