

A PANORAMIC VIEW OF THE LEVELS WE USE FOR THE CHILDREN'S MEETINGS

In May 2011, the book *Raising Up the Next Generation for the Church Life* was released. In the excerpts provided for us in this book we saw the need to compile teaching material for the children:

"The most important matter is to build up the humanity and the character of the children... We should tell the children Bible stories. Use Bible stories to show them the proper standard of human life... In this way we can build them up as proper materials for the Lord's use. To receive the Lord and enjoy Him requires us to have a proper humanity as good material. Within the six years of elementary age, there are about three hundred Lord's Days to build up the children in their human character. It is very helpful for us to do this... We need only three levels—elementary, intermediate, and advanced. Each level can be used for two years... The material for elementary level should be entirely from a child's perspective... Gradually, as we proceed to the intermediate level, we can give the children a little more Bible knowledge... Then when the children proceed to an advanced level, they will almost be ready to follow the messages in the big meetings" (pp. 206, 240-242).

In this light, we have been seeking the Lord concerning how to be faithful in producing some stories. Our goal is to produce 300 stories for the six years of elementary years, 100 stories for each level (beginner, intermediate and advanced), so that each level could cover the entire Bible in a 2-year period. We have also seeing a view and a way to care for the children and it progresses not just for the elementary years, but from the beginning where the children are in Nursery level all the way to the end where they are in Sixth grade. This comes after many years of fellowship and research and study of the ministry by some brothers that have gone before us. We are not babysitting, we are ministering Christ, giving them food at the proper time (Matt. 24:45). We are giving them what is fitting. To implement this we use levels. The key is to recognize our audience, that is, in what level/age the children are to see how much they can receive and how to present it.

Nursery Level (1-2 years old)—God in His Creation

We want to develop topics and themes that would probably not be a week by week lesson but rather topic by topic. Our burden is to talk about God in His creation. We want to present God as the Creator and that God created everything in His care for us. God created the Universe, the Earth, the plants, the animals and people (grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, cousins and siblings). In this age group, we want to impress the children that there is a God and He created everything around us because He cares for us. In the Nursery level we need to supply parents with how we care for our little ones; not only for Lord's Day morning but what care and activities to do at home.

For example when we talk about plants, we can go outside and see and touch plants as we tell the children "God created the plants for you". We go inside and we make pop corn and we keep repeating that God created the corn for us. We want to have much singing and taking our children to see/touch/explore the things we are presenting as much as we are able to.

Pre-Kinder (3-4 years old)—Preciousness of Humanity

The burden in this level is the matter of the Preciousness of Humanity. Before our children go out to Kindergarten, we want them to have full assurance that God is the Creator, that we are different from the animals and that we are God's top creation. Why are we more precious than

an animal? We have a lot to say about this. We have a head, arms, legs, feelings and countenance. We can speak, we can sing, we can share, we have good manners. We may bring a dog to the room. The burden is not to talk about the dog as a science class but to show that we as human beings are so much precious than the dog by seeing how we are different from it. We can share, a dog can't share. A dog can't wait in line. This wouldn't be a curriculum, again, maybe providing topics with suggested activities. Children this age need to do a lot of hands-on activities. We can also suggest home activities that parents can engage with their children exploring together how precious man is.

Six Years of Elementary Age

Beginner Level: Kindergarten and First Graders (5-6 years old)—Aspiring/Inspiring

This is a two year cycle through the Bible. The burden is to present the character, the humanity of the key persons in the Bible. We will present Adam, Enoch, Enosh, Moses, Samuel, Apostles, Jesus, Paul, among others. Our goal is that the children would aspire to be like them. The children of this age are easily attracted to who people are. They want to be a princess, a fireman or a doctor. They don't see or really care or understand what it takes to be that person, they are just inspired to be and they want to be like them. We want to present the story of the crucial persons in the Bible with the emphasis on their humanity so that our children would aspire to be like them. We inspire them to aspire to grow as proper persons. We want them to be inspired that they are a man that can be proper in their conduct. "You can be diligent. You can be kind. You can be obedient." In the Bible we can find the best and top level of morality. We are not giving the children a lot of Bible story, but just what we need to present what kind of person we want to aspire to be in order to be useful for God.

Example: We inspire them to aspire to be one that always obey their parents.

Intermediate Level: Second and Third Graders (7-8 years old)—Encouraging

This is a two year cycle through the Bible. This time, we are presenting in a sequential way the key stories, facts or events of the Bible for the children to be encouraged regarding who their God is, the things He does and what He wants us to do. We will present the Creation, the fall, the flood, Babel, time in Egypt, Crossing the Red Sea, Kingdom, Recovery, Establishing churches, etc. We want to impress them with the facts in the Bible. By seeing HOW the persons in the Bible acted, what they did, how they did it they are amazed and encouraged. Our goal is not to give them more Bible knowledge. We don't want to give them too much doctrine but to encourage them with the facts of the Bible. The children of this age always want to know what, why and how things happened. They are open and wanting to know stories. The Bible has the best stories. If we are good storytellers, our children will be encouraged as they hear stories of Who God is, His ways, and His doings with man. As we go through the Bible with them in this way, we want to encourage the children that we need to follow and obey everything God has commanded us. We will encourage them to DO what God in the Bible is requesting of us. And even when it seems hard for them to do, or simply they don't want to, we will encourage them to keep trying. We will also present to them what it takes to follow what God says and the need to do what He says, showing the children that God often accompanies His commandments with a reward or with a discipline.

Example: We encourage them to always obey their parents. We will see with them what it takes to obey and even though they might not always obey their parents, they should still be encouraged to try again (or harder).

Advanced Level: Fourth and Fifth Graders (9-10 years old)—Convicting

This is another two year cycle through the Bible. However, this time around our burden is to convict them, not in the realm of repentance unto salvation but mostly in the realm of consequences. We want to present the results of the fall, the outcomes of slavery, idolatry, division, among other topics. By the time our children are this age, our children have the human capacity to see that if they make the wrong choices there will be consequences and results. Some of these consequences are long lasting and can affect the rest of our lives. We will present the stories of the Bible that show long term consequences and results. Our goal with these stories is to convict the children in their character using the main outcomes of the Bible. We want to touch their conscience. However, we don't want to give them premature knowledge, but we want to give them general knowledge of the truth. We want them to see that they have not been like the persons in the Bible they wanted to be. We want them to see that they have not been behaving or doing the things they saw the persons of the Bible doing. We lead them to see that if they have failed and they have made mistakes this always have consequences. We help them to see that even though they want to do well, they might fail. This level is critical in how they receive the gospel.

Example: We convict them to see why they fail to obey their parents. We will guide them to see that their obeying or disobeying will have a long life effect in their lives. Later on they will realize that no matter how hard they try to obey, they will always fail because they need Christ.

Sixth Grade (11-12 years old)—The Truth and Experience of God's Salvation

This is a one year cycle where we present the gospel spread out over sixth months. Each week we present step by step adding layer after layer. We begin by presenting God's creation and man's fall. Then we see the result of man's fall with the problem of sin and the problem of death (the "Blackground".) Then we present God's Salvation by seeing His provision of His death and resurrection. Towards the second semester, we then present to them how to be saved and how to contact the Lord. All these lessons are presented with tangible examples to their level. We then do home visitations were the gospel is presented to each child with their parents in their homes. After their salvation and baptism, the rest of the semester we cover how to go on and we present to them the meetings of the church and how to function. Our hope is that at the end of the year they can be equipped to be in the church meetings.