**DISCUSSION AS A TEACHING METHOD**

**GOALS OF TEACHING CHILDREN IN CHURCH**

* Information/Education
* Influence Over Choices/Model
* Decision to Follow God
* Shape Character Childs Character
* Spiritual Formation of Child

**METHODS OF TEACHING PRIMARY CHILDREN IN CHURCH**

Lecture Quizzing Drama

Visual Lessons Games Arts/Crafts

**The historical school model** is the structure of most church small groups for children.

**ASSUMPTION**:

There is a general assumption that teaching should result in learning and that learning is the consequence of teaching. The problem with this assumption is that the student tends to be blamed for failure to learn. The thought is rarely entertain that teachers might not be teaching what they think they are teaching. Pg 31 NLMofA

**Even though creative methods are used**, it’s still formal education, no matter how you dress it up. Its number one purpose is still to **deliver information about God** and Jesus to these kids in hopes that this information will work its way into their souls and emotions and lead them to God’s abundant life. Pg 18 NLMofA

**We teach in the ways we were taught or in our learning style.**

Formal education style is not the best methodology for growing kids into faith, which is, at its heart, a **relationship with God**. Pg 18

PASSIVE RECEPTACLES VS ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN THE LEARNING PROCESS.

Suggestion for Churches:

**FORMAL EDUCATION MODEL THAT INCLUDES SOME FORMATION PRACTICES.**

**Informal education is a lifelong process in which attitudes, values, skills, and knowledge are acquired from daily experience and educational resources in the child’s environment.**

**JUST BECAUSE YOU TEACH, DOES NOT MEAN THEY ARE LEARNING.**

Developing Christians—people who love God and desire to live in the way of Jesus—is **NOT PRIMARILY A COGNITIVE ENDEAVOR**. The act of becoming Christian is the actual **practicing** of being Christian, over and over. One does not become Christian by sitting in a room in a church hearing a Bible story. …. One becomes Christian by being immersed in God’s story everywhere it is told, living with God’s people, and repeating the symbolic acts of the church, as well as repeating acts of loving neighbor and denying oneself, over and over. Pg 19 NLMofA

**Stories in Bible are more than information:**

Stories of Scripture are windows into the nature of God and humanity and our relationships to one another.

Though we may engage our students passively in reading and listening to teachers, their understanding and absorption of God’s Word and His principles will really take off **through actual or simulated experiences**. Pg 107-109 NLMofA

The **key** to activities that help children enter and inhabit the Bible stories is the **conversation the teacher has with the kids around the story**. After some direction to kids then teacher starts to solicit conversation from kids around the story. Pg 36 NLMofA

**DISCUSSION/CONVERSATION AS A TEACHING METHOD**

**WHY**

Can learning take place without students interacting with the content? Yes. A good lecturer can present content, and the students assimilate the material. They learn. But how much more do students learn when they take an active part in the class when they add comments, ask questions, and answer the questions of their peers? When students share aloud, they become surer of what they believe and more confident about their abilities to live what they believe. They also hear the wisdom and experience of more than one person, traditionally the teacher.

Children need to **verbalize** their discoveries and what is happening to them on their faith journeys. They need to feel safe enough to ask questions or give their opinions.

You’ll **lose lots of valuable learning** if you do not discuss what’s happened, what people are feeling, and how scripture connects with everything.

**BENEFITS OF DISCUSSION**

* Helps children **clarify and review** what they learned.
* Allows children to hear opinions that are **more mature and perhaps more Christ like** than their own.
* Discussion **stimulates creativity** of thoughts.
* Aids students in **applying** what they have learned to **everyday situations**.
* When children verbalize that they believe, their ability to share **what they believe** with others **is strengthened**.

**PARTICIPANTS**

* The **teacher** must assume the role of guide and participant rather than the role of an instructor. Steer, rather than shove to keep the discussion relevant to the topic.
* No 2 people in a discussion are exactly alike. Each has biological & psychological needs, drives, patterns for living, past experiences, and creative abilities**. Each should be encouraged to contribute in their unique way.**
* Some students will hesitate to speak because they are **shy or feel their contributions are less valuable** than those of their classmates. **Draw them into** the discussion by directing questions to them.
* Nearly every class has at least one member whose contributions do not seem as valuable as those of the rest of the class. Students should learn from **your example how important it is to show respect** for each person’s comments.
* No one should be allowed to **monopolize** the conversation.
* Even if all students are participating, a discussion cannot be totally successful unless you maintain an atmosphere of **freedom and inquiry**. Each person must know that he or she is not required to make a “Sunday School response.” They should be able to **share their true** **feelings and opinions during the discussion, even if those opinions differ from traditional positions**.

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

The question or comment a teacher uses to start a discussion is very important because it sets the direction for what lies ahead.

WHY….. EXPLAIN….. WHAT DO YOU THINK…..

* Let’s discuss different ways we could put the lesson we learned in today’s Bible study to work this week.
* How would you explain this passage to a non-Christian?

**DISCUSSION FORMATS in CHURCH SMALL GROUPS**

TOTAL CLASS DISCUSSION

* Can be time consuming to hear from everyone if class is large.
* Benefit from hearing from all classmates.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

* Break up into small groups of 2 to 5. Come back together to combined small groups or 1 large group.

BRAINSTORM GROUP

* Students are presented with a problem and asked to come up with some solutions.

ACTIVITY + DISCUSSION

* Create an activity the children with take part in then discuss in small groups or 1 large groups. The 2 methods together allow students to first think in new pattern. The creative melding of the two methods will make the learning process more successful.

**DEBRIEFING**

* You’ll lose lots of valuable learning if you do not discuss what’s happened, what people are feeling, and how scripture connects with everything.
* Debriefing or evaluating an experience by discussing it in pairs or small groups helps focus the experience and draw out its meaning.
* Helps sort and order the information students gather during the experience.
* Helps learners relate the just-experienced activity to their lives.
* Debrief immediately after an experience.
* 3 steps -reflection, interpretation, and application

JESUS USED MANY TYPES OF TEACHING/COMMUNICATION METHODS

**JESUS USED DISCUSSION/CONVERSATION**

Rather than tell everyone the answer right away, **Jesus used the Socratic Method**. He led His audience to conclusions by asking a lot of questions. Matthew 16:26 or 22:20-21

**Socratic Method** involves a shared dialogue between teacher and students. The teacher leads a posing thought or provoking questions. Students actively engage by asking questions of their own. The discussion goes back and forth.

This approach is based on the belief that participants seek and gain deeper understanding of concepts in the text through thoughtful dialogue rather than memorizing information that has been provided for them.