

Shaping the Hearts

of Kids with Special Needs

Fall 2014



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Shout to the Lord

Faithful readers will remember stories of Gilly, a girl with autism whom I was privileged to serve in ministry. Since Gilly is nearly finished with fifth grade, she soon will be a true HeartShaper graduate, having had her heart shaped by this curriculum since she was a toddler. While Gilly has been shaped in many ways by what

This symptom of Gillian's diagnosis has manifested itself in many ways. For many years, her interest was whales and ocean animals. I remember her fascination becoming almost frantic the Sunday I taught about Jonah! Later she became interested in horses. What began as a therapeutic tool turned into a genuine expertise, and Gillian continues to enjoy riding horses.

But we did not anticipate one area of focus that has remained at the top of Gillian's interests—Gilly loves to read her Bible. Watching a teacher use this ancient book each and every week instilled a curiosity in Gilly that could not be quenched. I cannot remember a visit to this family that has not included Gilly bringing to me her Bible or a Bible storybook with some question about it. The first time I read passages to her in Greek and Hebrew (explaining that the Bible was originally written in these languages), Gillian became enamored and declared that she too would one day read the Bible in those languages.

Recently Gillian's mom took Gilly and her sisters to a preteen

If you only knew, thought Gilly's mom. If you only knew that we were told she'd never even know we were here!

-Vangie, Georgia

she learned in Sunday school, one of the most profound benefits was somewhat unexpected.

I should point out that children with autism routinely have restricted areas of interest. This means they focus on one specific interest or hobby to the exclusion of any other. It isn't uncommon for these children to persevere (persevere or obsess) on a single interest.

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event for girls. Part of the worship assembly included reading Scripture that was projected onto a large screen. Gilly's mother listened with joy as Gilly enthusiastically began to read along with the group. Her voice grew stronger with each word.

Admittedly, Gilly's voice was louder than is considered socially appropriate, but her mother, caught up in the joy of the moment, didn't deter Gilly's passion. Soon the enthusiasm began to attract the attention of those sitting near Gilly and her family. Stares became more frequent. One adult, sitting directly in front of them, turned to glare at Gilly with a sneer of disgust. Thankfully, Gilly was unaware of anything but her mother's tears and smiles of encouragement.

If you only knew, thought Gilly's mom. If you only knew that we were told she'd never even know we were here! We were terrified that she would never know us—much less her God. Now she knows her God and loves Him so passionately that she can't help but shout it! What is so wrong with that?

Truly this was a victory and not a moment of shame. Could it be such a moment for each of us? Paradoxically, Gilly's missing social awareness allowed her to experience a moment with God that many others missed. I'm sure in her mind she wondered, *Why just say the Scripture when I can shout it?*

Why indeed?

Gilly's purity of heart, passion for God, and enthusiasm for God's Word continually minister to me. Her faith is so real and so large that many people don't recognize it—as happens when someone stands too close to a work of art to take in the whole canvas. Gilly's faith truly is a portrait of extraordinary beauty that is best taken in with the whole eye and heart.

“Shout for joy to God, all the earth!” (Psalm 66:1). Amen!

✍ by Vangie Rodenbeck

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Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Summer 2014 *Toddlers & 2s Teacher*.

Toddlers & 2s

Don't Leave Me!

Materials

materials needed to make a picture schedule (see suggested article)

A predictable issue in every toddlers and 2s classroom is separation anxiety. At around 9 months of age, babies develop object permanence, and they begin to notice when their mothers and fathers are not present. In a child's growing mind, a preferred object (Mom or Dad) is not present and anxiety sets in.

One answer to this anxiety can be found in classroom routine. A suggested schedule is included in the introductory pages of your *Immerse Toddlers & 2s Teacher*. Consider developing a picture schedule for your classroom that visually tells children what will happen next. A free guide to creating picture schedules, "Transitions: From Terror to Tranquility," is available at www.21stcc.com. (Go to "Downloads," then "HeartShaper Special Needs," then "Transitions Fall 2013.")

Creating stability and predictability in classroom routines may not alleviate separation anxiety completely, but it will be of great help in shortening its duration.

Lesson highlight for:

all lessons

What the Nose Knows

For children with developmental delays, Sensory Processing Disorder (or Sensory Integration Dysfunction) can make some scents less pleasant than others. While the immediate effects of noise or light sensitivity may be evident in a child, the hidden sensitivity to smells can be just as alarming.

The olfactory sense alerts us to some smells in our environment that are dangerous (e.g., rotting food). Other smells are calming, reminding us of memories that are pleasant. The following list describes scents as they are generally categorized—calming or alerting. Consider these carefully before introducing smells into your lesson. You may want to test them out beforehand with the child who has developmental delays.

Calming Scents

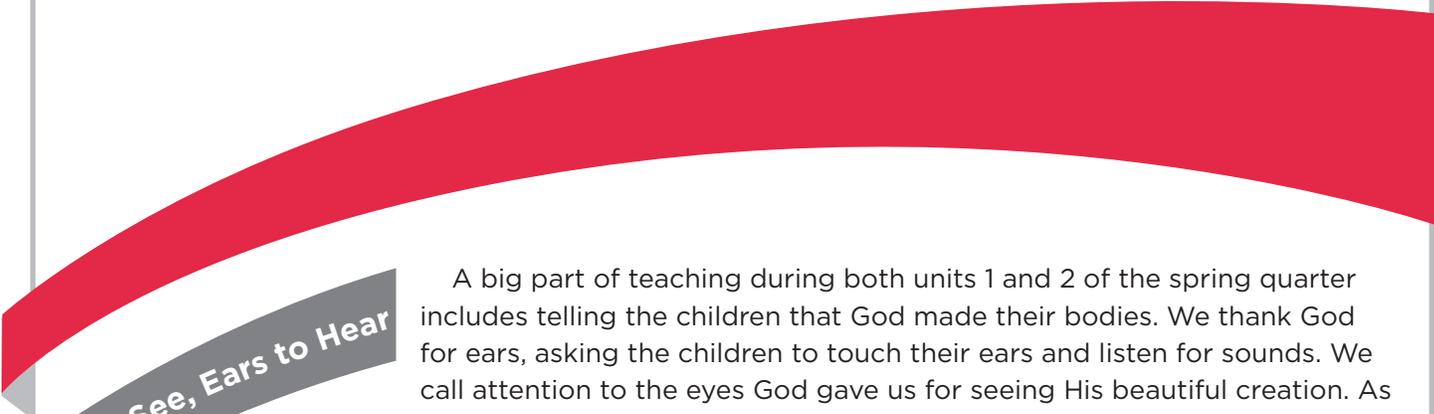
- cinnamon, vanilla, and almond
- apple, banana, and butter
- chamomile, lavender, and lily
- soap and pine

Alerting Scents

- burnt candles and rubber
- coffee and chocolate
- mint and peppermint
- vinegar, onion, and chives
- lemon, orange, and other citrus scents

Activity adaptation for:

all lessons



Eyes to See, Ears to Hear

A big part of teaching during both units 1 and 2 of the spring quarter includes telling the children that God made their bodies. We thank God for ears, asking the children to touch their ears and listen for sounds. We call attention to the eyes God gave us for seeing His beautiful creation. As medical treatments advance, children are fitted with assistive devices at younger and younger ages. So how do we handle sensory teaching situations when a child has assistive devices such as glasses or hearing aids? And what about the child who may be deaf or blind?

In the words of one mother, “The worst thing you can do is ignore it and pretend the hearing aid isn’t there! That just makes them ashamed and think that their device is something no one talks about.” Follow these simple guidelines during the formative years as a child is becoming accustomed to his or her assistive device.

- Tell the parent how your lessons may draw attention to ears (in the case of hearing impairment) and eyes (in the case of visual impairment). Ask how their child is adapting to his device and what special help the child may need with his hearing aids or glasses.
- If a child’s comfort level allows, simply point out that “Hannah hears in a different way. Do you see her special ears? This is what Hannah uses to hear. We thank God for Hannah’s ears!” The process can be adapted for glasses in children with visual impairments.

Never forget that your approach to a child’s disability may set the tone not only for the other children in your classroom but also for how the child feels about his own differentness.

Activity adaptation for:

lessons in units 1 and 2

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Fall 2014 *Preschool Teacher*.

Preschool

Animal Sounds & Sights

Materials

Resources CD track 10, CD player, pictures to accompany animals heard in activity

In the *Quick Step* activity “Animal Sounds,” children are asked to name animals based on the sounds the animals make on the *Resources* CD. Give children with auditory processing delays an extra cue by providing visual clues for the animals they are hearing. For example, showing a picture of a barn would clue children to the idea that they are hearing farm animals.

Search the Internet and print images that represent these animal environments: jungle, farm, forest, ocean, backyard, or field. Showing these visual cues at the appropriate times may be just the help a child needs to play the game with peers. Use this great game throughout the unit for added fun!

Activity adaptation for:

“Animal Sounds,” lesson 1 Getting Started

Finding Favorites

Materials

Resource sheet 4 food photo cards 8a–8h, other pictures of food items from grocery ads or the Internet, card stock, glue stick, *Resources* CD, CD player (optional: clear adhesive covering, scissors)

Before Class

Mount on card stock pictures of food items. Laminate (or cover with clear adhesive covering) both the *Resources* food photo cards and the mounted pictures.

Children with verbal delays may have difficulty sharing in a conversation about their favorite foods. Consider a new twist on this activity. Scatter on the floor the photo cards and prepared pictures of food. SAY: **As I play a song, you can walk around the room and look at the pictures of food. When the song stops, find a picture of your favorite kinds of food to stand on. Be sure to make room for friends who choose the same favorite food that you do!** Play a song and stop at intervals to talk about everyone’s favorite foods.

Activity adaptation for:

“Favorite Foods,” lesson 8 Getting Started

Abstract Opposites

Materials

concrete examples of objects that are opposites (see suggested ideas)

Knowing that one thing is opposite from something else is an abstract concept that may prove difficult for a child with special needs. Even though the “Joshua’s Opposites” *Make-n-Share* activity and the “Awesome Opposites” *Resources* photo cards offer great visual aids, consider providing examples that children can touch. Let them explore the nature of these opposites in real life. Suggested opposites:

- hard and soft—a rock and a cotton ball
- large and small—two of the same items, only in large and small versions (e.g., large and small paper hearts cut from construction paper)
- empty and full—an empty cup and a cup full of craft materials such as feathers or craft sticks
- quiet and loud—tapping on a wood block or metal pan lid quietly and then loudly

Activity adaptation for:

“Joshua’s Opposites” and “Awesome Opposites,” lesson 10 Getting Started

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Fall 2014
Pre-K & K Teacher:

Pre-K & K

Special Like Me

The focus of lesson 4 is how and why God made each of us special. Don't miss this excellent opportunity to talk about how a child with special needs is special—just as his typically developing peers are.

Teachers may wonder whether it is appropriate to mention disabilities in the presence of people who struggle with disability. By pre-K and kindergarten ages, children already have realized their differences. If you have a student with special needs in your classroom, it may already be obvious to everyone that the child needs extra help and protection. Use this as an opportunity to teach that each of us has been made differently special and in the image of God.

An excellent approach to take in pointing out each child's individuality and specialness is a strengths-and-weaknesses approach. Consider sharing with the children about things you are good at doing and things you are not so good at (and don't enjoy very much). Extend the opportunity for the children to contribute to the conversation, adding things that they aren't good at, don't enjoy doing, or are still learning to do. Easy transitions can be made to discuss things that some members of your class are still learning to do or have trouble doing due to their different abilities. And you will be helping the students as they learn to appreciate one another's special differences—both their weaknesses and their strengths.

Lesson highlight for:

lesson 4 activities

Impulsive Israel?

Materials

carpet squares

Many children who have developmental delays, Sensory Processing Disorder, or ADHD experience difficulty with impulse control. You can use Israel's own story of leaving Egypt to discuss how difficult it is to do exactly what is instructed, especially when it involves something that may seem to be unpleasant.

Prepare the "Camel Caravan" activity as instructed, but add carpet squares to the floor. Lead children in pretending to be part of a group that is traveling a long distance. Instruct the children to find a carpet square to stand on whenever you call out "Water." The carpet squares provide a visual cue that can assist a child who struggles with organizing her response to a pause in activity due to impulse control. The activity adaptation can be used anytime travel is part of a lesson story or activity.

Activity adaptation for:

"Camel Caravan," lesson 6 Getting Started

Jericho Noise

Materials

varied according to your classroom needs (see adaptive suggestions)

Noise sensitivity is a characteristic common to children with autism spectrum disorders, Sensory Processing Disorder, or other developmental delays. Much of lesson 12 focuses on the noises associated with God's people overtaking Jericho. For children who experience anxiety due to noise sensitivity, try these strategies to make this lesson more enjoyable:

- If you know that a child is sensitive to noise, call the child's parents prior to the lesson and ask them how you can best adapt the lesson for their child. They may be able to prepare your student with a simple conversation about how much louder Sunday school may be on this day.
- Consider purchasing (or borrowing) noise-canceling headphones. These can be purchased most inexpensively at sporting goods stores where they sell headphones used for hunting or target practice.
- Earmuffs that attach behind the head are preferable for some children. Ask the child's parents what strategies have been useful in the past.
- Create a visual cue you can show any time there is going to be a loud noise in the lesson. A simple handmade sign that reads "Boom!" can be attached to a craft stick handle and held up to notify the child ahead of time that an unpleasant noise can be expected.
- Consider setting up a quiet corner in the room; provide a book about the Jericho conquest to look at or read. Children who are sensitive to noise can go to the corner and distance themselves from the noises of the lesson.

Activity adaptation for:

lesson 12 activities

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Fall 2014
Early Elementary Teacher.

Early Elementary

Picturing Friendship

Materials

poster of teacher with friends, self-stick notes, marker

Before Class

Create a poster that features photos of you (the teacher) with one or more of your friends. Prepare self-stick notes that include words describing good friends: cares, gives, helps, loves, forgives, nice, shares, fun.

"God Is Powerful!" Book

Materials

photocopies of *Early Elementary Activities* p. 17, whiteboard, dry-erase marker, index cards, glue sticks, stapler

Note: Permission is granted to photocopy this activity page for adaptive teaching purposes only.

Word-search puzzles can be frustrating for children with dyslexia or other language-based learning disabilities. For a child with autism or other social deficits, the idea of friendship can be abstract. It can also bring on feelings of frustration if the child has not had success in finding friends. The use of photographs and labels can help to provide a visual representation of the qualities of a good friend.

Have the children find partners, and give each pair one of the prepared self-stick notes. Show the prepared poster. SAY: **I'm going to tell you about my friends. Listen for the words I use to describe my friends. If I use the word that is printed on your paper, come up as a pair and put the note on the poster.** Use the words printed on the self-stick notes as you talk about your friends. Compliment the kids as they listen and work together as friends to place the self-stick notes on the poster. Thank them for helping each other and you. SAY: **It's important to be a good friend to others, even when it is hard work! God can help us learn how to be good friends.**

Activity adaptation for:

"Friend Search," lesson 3 Focus In

The "God Is Powerful!" activity page might be difficult for students who struggle with reading or short-term memory. As an alternative, allow these children to create a book that will help them put events from the story in the order and review the Bible story.

Cut from the activity page the pictures of Elijah, the altar, and the burning altar. On the board, draw simple pictures of a large jar (or bucket) and a stick-figure person kneeling with arms raised. Distribute the prepared pictures. Give each child five index cards. Have the children glue the printed pictures onto separate cards. Using the examples you have drawn on the board, have them draw a large jar and a person kneeling on the other two cards in their sets. When all the cards are prepared, have the children sort their cards into story order: Elijah, altar, bucket, burning altar, people kneeling. Staple the cards together as a book. The children can use their books to retell the story to others in the class.

Activity adaptation for:

"Bible Review Activity," lesson 7 Explore His Word

Early Elementary

Practicing Forgiveness

Materials

chart paper, images that show people sinning in some way (arguing, stealing, disobeying, making fun of someone, etc.), scissors, glue, reusable adhesive, pencils, self-stick notes

Before Class

Search the Internet for images of people who are sinning or disobeying God in some way. Print and cut out the images. Then attach them to a sheet of chart paper. Display the paper on the wall.

Forgiveness is an abstract concept that is difficult for concrete learners to comprehend. An activity adaptation can provide some visual support that will help in understanding this important concept. In addition, the reassurance that everyone sins and disobeys God can help kids who struggle with behavior or anxiety.

Show the pictures you have gathered, and ask kids to identify what is happening in each picture. Talk about how the people are disobeying something God has told us to do (arguing rather than speaking in love, stealing rather than being honest, etc.). Distribute pencils and self-stick notes. SAY: **Disobeying God is sin. Think of a time when you have disobeyed one of God's rules. Remember that everyone sins, so we don't need to feel upset as we remember. Once you have thought of a time when you have sinned, write your name on a self-stick note and put it on our chart paper.**

Allow time for children to think of times they have disobeyed God and add their names to the poster. Be sure to set an example and add your name to the chart too. SAY: **When we pray to God and ask for forgiveness, God always forgives. Let's pray and ask God to forgive us for the times we have disobeyed His Word.** Encourage children to close their eyes as they are praying. While their eyes are closed, remove all the self-stick notes from the chart paper. When the children open their eyes, SAY: **Look! All our sins are gone! I took them down while you were praying in order to show you how God forgives us and gives us a fresh start.**

Activity adaptation for:

"Is That Forgiveness?" and "Faces of Forgiveness," lesson 13 Focus In

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Fall 2014
Middle Elementary Teacher.

Middle Elementary

I Promise

Materials

pictures of animals or people doing silly things, jokes printed on index cards

Before Class

Search the Internet for pictures of animals or people doing silly things. Print jokes on individual index cards.

The “I Promise” activity is a fun way to show how hard it can be to keep a promise. However, kids who have trouble with impulse control or struggle with social interactions may not do well with making faces or telling jokes. This can make them a target for bullying. When you provide pictures or jokes they can use, kids can participate without having to create their own humor.

SAY: Today we are going to learn about promises. Let’s try to keep a promise. Please say this promise with me: “I promise that I won’t laugh.” Allow the kids to respond, and then explain that you are going to try to get them to break their promise. Show silly pictures or read jokes aloud. When a student laughs, ask him to help you make the others laugh. Allow the student to choose from the prepared pictures and joke cards. Emphasize that promises can be hard to keep. Point out that God never breaks one of His promises to us.

Activity adaptation for:

“I Promise,” lesson 4 Focus In

Abraham Trusts God

Materials

Bible, supplies to make paper-tube dolls (empty toilet paper tubes, scraps of material, chenille wires, cotton balls, glue, markers)

Before Class

Using the suggested supplies, create paper-tube dolls to represent Abraham, Isaac, and a lamb.

Kids with high levels of anxiety or those who perseverate on gory stories about killing may fixate on the frightening aspects of this Bible story. They may have a tough time internalizing the meaning of this wonderful illustration of God’s sacrificial love demonstrated through Abraham and Isaac.

It is important to reassure all your students that God would not require them to hurt anyone, and that the story is included in the Bible to help us grow in our faith and understanding of God. **SAY: We are going to read a story about how Abraham trusted God. God asked Abraham to do a really hard thing, but God knew all along that it wouldn’t happen. God would not do anything to harm Abraham or his family.** Read the Bible story from Genesis 22:1-19, and use the paper-tube dolls to show what happened. Talk about Abraham’s faith in God and God’s faithfulness to Abraham and his family. Point out that the story illustrates how we can always, always trust God.

Activity adaptation for:

“Bible Exploration,” lesson 5 Explore His Word

Middle Elementary

Family Ways

Materials

2 sheets of chart paper, marker, self-stick notes, pencils, reusable adhesive

Before Class

Write the following headings on separate sheets of chart paper: “Ways families help each other” and “Hard things about family life.” Display the charts.

Kids who have anxiety, depression, or behavioral difficulties often know that their disability interferes with family life. Instead of focusing on “Ways I cause problems for my family,” have students identify “Things that can be hard about family life.” This allows the kids to see that all families have difficulties—and that is OK.

Distribute pencils and self-stick notes (two per person). SAY: **Write on one note something that families do to help each other. When you are finished, write on another note something that can be hard about family life.** Have kids place their notes on the appropriate charts. Help the students sort and rearrange the papers into general categories (e.g., parents, siblings, time or money issues, etc.). SAY: **We can see from our charts that there are great things about families, but also some hard things. God tells us a lot about families in His Word.**

Activity adaptation for:

“Family Ways,” lesson 6 Focus In

HowYaGonnaServe?

Materials

construction paper, scissors, common household-task items (trash can and liner bag, broom, hammer, scrub brush, etc.)

Before Class

Cut construction paper hearts and half hearts. You will need one set for each student.

The phrase “with all your heart” is abstract, so kids with cognitive disabilities may need added explanation. Jumping jacks and clapping can be hard for kids who have physical limitations or who have difficulty knowing their own strength or position in relation to other kids. An alternative way for you to teach the “with all your heart” concept is for you to demonstrate the actions and let the kids respond.

SAY: **When we say we are serving with a *whole heart*, we serve kindly and cheerfully, and we know that pleases God. To serve *halfheartedly* means I am still serving, but not serving in a way that is as pleasing to God.** Give each student a whole heart and a half heart. Act out various home tasks, varying the degree of enthusiasm you have in performing the tasks. Let the kids judge your efforts by holding up the appropriate symbols.

Ask kids to share about times when they served their families with whole hearts. Ask volunteers to tell about other situations in which they served halfheartedly. SAY: **Serving with all our hearts is not always easy, but we should always try to do our best.**

Activity adaptation for:

“HowYaGonnaServe?” lesson 10 Make It Real

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Fall 2014
PreTeen Teacher.

PreTeen

Team Courage

Materials

Activities lesson 5

Kids living on the autism spectrum often have difficulties in social situations. Knowing the appropriate response or reaction doesn't come naturally to most kids on the spectrum. Relating with peers doesn't come easy, so choosing an appropriate response in questionable situations could prove to be tricky.

This activity would be best if carried out in a large-group format from the beginning of the activity, as opposed to waiting until pairs or small groups of students act out possible endings to the situations. Lead kids in discussing each situation as a large group, explaining social reactions and consequences as needed to kids who struggle with understanding the problems by themselves.

Activity adaptation for:

"Don't Be Buzzed!" lesson 5 Make It Real

Should You Risk It?

Materials

PreTeen Teacher

When it comes to "good" or "bad" situations in which ranking on a scale is asked for, there is rarely an "in between" for students affected by autism. While these kids often can relate to or identify one extreme or another, seldom do they differentiate actions that would fall between a clear-cut right versus wrong answer. Exceptions to rules also can be difficult for them to comprehend.

Having kids work as partners might make this activity more successful for kids who struggle with decision making and values concepts. Read each situation listed in the teacher guide, one at a time. The partners can discuss the situation and bounce ideas off one another before responding with an answer. Allow time for the partners to explain their choice to the class. This will help you understand the thought processing that took place while arriving at a conclusion.

Activity adaptation for:

"Good Risk, Bad Risk," lesson 7 Focus In

Taking Risks

Materials

paper, pencils, Bibles, Bible names and Scripture references provided in *PreTeen Teacher*

Kids with processing disorders (auditory, visual, sensory, and language) often struggle with quick thinking. Structuring an activity in which kids race against one another can create additional anxiety, and shouting can become overwhelming for the student with auditory sensitivity.

Instead of having one team trying to beat another team to an answer, have team members work together to write down their responses. Distribute paper, pencils, and Bibles. Call out the name of a Bible person and let teams work together to write down a risk that person took. If teams cannot think of a risk, you can give them a Scripture reference to look up (or read the Scripture aloud). Award points accordingly: 10 points for arriving at the answer on their own and 5 points if they had to review a Scripture passage. You can retain the team element, but by removing the shouting, you will ease the tension level of the activity. Kids will have more thoughtful responses, since they will not be rushing to beat members of the other team.

Activity adaptation for:

“Bible Risk Takers,” lesson 7 Focus In

Speak, Hear, Write

Materials

PreTeen Resources sheet 4
Bible Memory poster (or printed copies of the verse),
digital voice recorder

Calling on kids to read in front of others can create anxiety for the child with a learning delay or processing disorder (auditory, visual, sensory, and language). Asking kids to write down a Bible verse as they hear it played back on a digital recorder would be difficult for kids who struggle with transcribing information from one location to another.

Assign words from the Bible Memory to each student. Allow kids to practice saying their words before making a recording of the verse. Point to each student when it is time to record his or her part of the verse. Play the recorded Scripture for kids to hear. Then ask kids to print their own copies of the verse, referring to the Bible Memory poster (or to printed copies of the verse you have provided).

Activity adaptation for:

“Bible Memory,” lesson 9 Explore His Word

Tips and Encouragements

for families and
volunteers

immerse
In His Word

A Note from the Editor



Welcome to *Shaping the Hearts of Kids with Special Needs*. Did you know that based on one survey conducted by the US Department of Health and Human Services, if you have five families with children in your congregation, at least one child may have some kind of special need?

We hope this resource will help you minister to the child with special needs. We have had experts in the field of special education evaluate our Immerse Curriculum featuring HeartShaper and suggest accommodations you can make so that the activities you plan to use with the “normal” kids in your class can also be used with kids who have special needs.

May God bless you as you teach His beloved children.

Sincerely,

Immerse Editorial Staff

Craft activities that require the use of fine-motor skills (cutting, pasting, coloring, etc.) can produce enough anxiety to cause a child to exhibit behaviors you may not see at any other time. Use the following adaptations to lessen anxieties and increase successful participation.

- Provide larger crayons to make grasping them easier for weaker hands.
- Make an activity more multisensory by having a child place her coloring page over sandpaper to provide more input during the activity.
- Clip small sponges to clothespins for use during finger-painting activities.
- Show a child how to dab spots of color onto a coloring page, using a Bingo marker.
- Glue yarn around the edge of an object to be cut out to provide an edge the child can feel.
- Whenever possible, print on heavier paper to make cutting easier.
- Remember that pointed-tip student scissors are easier to cut with than blunt-tip child scissors.
- Allow a child to stand to complete an activity if it seems as though he is needing to position his body differently.
- Allow children to color or paint on a slanted surface or easel.
- Attach a handle to stamps to make them easier to manipulate.

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