

Shaping the Hearts

of Kids with Special Needs

Spring 2013

A New Generation

NEW LIFE
THROUGH HIS WORD

featuring



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The Barefoot Confession

Despite her attention deficiency and sensory issues, I could always depend on Gillian's piercing blue eyes to be glued to my face whenever I taught. Those eyes always caught me off guard. I'll confess that at one time I considered her stare to be blank and vacant. But it didn't take too

on my words more quickly than other children.

Not surprisingly, Gillian soon began to discuss her desire to be baptized. Always cautious, her mother and I dialogued with Gillian, wanting to be sure she understood the significance of her decision. I should have realized that Gillian's response indicated her readiness to give her life over to someone who would be with her always.

The morning I Gillian was baptized, I received a text from Gillian's mother letting me know that I might want to arrive at the church building early to reassure Gillian. I was glad to know that Gillian was expressing normal tendencies toward nervous anxiety, as it confirmed for me that Gillian really did understand the magnitude of her decision. When I arrived, I walked her into the auditorium to rehearse each step of the process again—her belief in Jesus, her confession, and her baptism.

As I stood behind Gillian and felt her heart pounding through her little back, I was reminded

"Oh, Miss Vangie, it's my shoes. They are pretty, but they are so tight! They hurt my feet, and I can't think."

--Vangie Rodenbeck, Georgia

long before I realized that, although her gaze was atypical, it was not vacant or without cognition. I learned that when Gillian gave you her interest, her eyes reflected that she was taking you at face value. Perhaps because of her social difficulties, she didn't expect anything from me either. The result was that Gillian often was able to process and reflect

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continued from p. 1

of the rhetorical question Paul asked in Romans 8: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” I wanted to add to Paul’s reply: “Shall an imbalance in sensory input, or decreased social skills, or pervasive and repetitive behaviors, or neurological deficit separate us?”

Conversely, I believe people like Gillian are here to show us the kingdom in its purest, most undiluted form. When presented with the most difficult of Jesus’ teachings, these children have the ability to internalize and simply accept His Word. Why? Like Gillian’s piercing stare, these kids can (and do) take Jesus’ words at face value. And what a beautiful Jesus they internalize—full of compassion, love, mercy, and grace! To them, Jesus is a Savior for the marginalized and forgotten.

While Gillian normally prefers not to wear socks and shoes, she was intent on looking her best on the morning of her baptism, so she wore her best. As I was walking with her, I noticed she was having problems walking. When I asked her if she was all right, Gillian said, “Oh, Miss Vangie, it’s my shoes. They are pretty, but they are so tight! They hurt my feet, and I can’t think.” My heart melted for this dear child who wanted so badly to have a “normal” moment just like other kids her age, but who was unable to function because of something that most people can compartmentalize.

I remembered a previous Sunday when Gillian was confronted about her demand to go to church services without shoes on. On that day, Gillian told her mother, “If Jesus is in my heart, He can’t see my shoes.” I reminded this sweet disciple: “If Jesus is in your heart, He can’t see your shoes, Gilly. Take them off . . . you stand on holy ground.”

Gillian quickly replied, “Just like Moses and the bush that burned.”

With tears I said, “Yes. Your shoes don’t matter—your heart does.”

That day, Gillian gave her confession barefooted. And I confess that I found the moment so holy that I removed my shoes as well. That piece of ground was holy because of a wondrously created child of God who confessed Him with volume and confidence, without reservation, overcoming great odds beyond her control.

Holy ground indeed.

✍ by Vangie Rodenbeck

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Spring 2013 *Toddlers & 2s Teacher*.

Toddlers & 2s

Music to My Brain!

Materials

Toddlers & 2s Teacher,
Classroom Pack CD, CD
player

More than just repetitive songs set to old nursery rhyme tunes, the songs found in *Toddlers & 2s Teacher* are an opportunity to build new neural pathways for children with developmental delays. Scientists and educators have supported a connection between music and brain development for quite some time. The correlation between singing and our brains shows just how creative our Creator is!

Not only can listening to music calm us and train the auditory centers of our brains to match sound to meaning (preparing us for spoken language), it also creates new neural pathways. The more pathways created, the better the chance that the brain can rewire itself for tasks such as communication, reading, and motor movement.

Use the song activities in *Toddlers & 2s Teacher* to help the children in your class build these new pathways. The child who experiences auditory discrimination difficulties often cannot distinguish one noise from another in an environment with multiple sources of sound. Hearing simple songs can be an important step to attuning this child's brain to sound and assisting the child for the rest of his or her lifetime. Some studies even indicate that listening to music can build neural pathways in children with developmental dyslexia and support their reading skills years after they leave your classroom.

Show Me the Church

Materials

Classroom Pack Sheet
3 church building
figure, photo of your
congregation's facility

Unit 1 focuses on the theme, "I Am Happy at Church." In addition to the church building figure included on Sheet 3, consider making available a photograph of your congregation's building or the facility used. Toddlers and 2 year olds are developing the ability to generalize objects. They can retrieve a doll from a pile of dolls when instructed, thus demonstrating that one doll is in the same category as another doll. However, the concept of church is more abstract because it is not a place they usually encounter on a daily basis.

Most children, even those who have developmental delays, are very aware of their environment. They recognize places they experience. Driving by a favorite park, restaurant, or Grandma's house will likely get a response. Children are also likely to respond to a photo of the actual church building they visit regularly. Supply the photo alongside the church building figure at every opportunity to help children generalize the concept of church.

Activity adaptation for:

Unit 1 Bible Time and other activities that use the church building figure

Toddlers & 2s

Floor Time

Materials

colored string, silicon
aquarium tubing

Each unit of *Toddlers & 2 Teacher* includes “Activities for Babies 12 Months and Younger.” One activity listed on each of these unit pages is called “Floor Time.” These simple activities can be some of the most meaningful ideas you can use when building a relationship with and enhancing the development of a child who has special needs.

Dr. Stanley Greenspan, a child psychiatrist, coined the term “Floor Time” as an intervention-based therapy method to be used with children who have developmental delays, including autism. By following the lead of the child and observing the child’s interests, a caregiver can enter the world of the child without the verbal invitation other children might provide. Research has shown child after child who surpasses the struggles of his or her disability as a result of this simple technique being used. Don’t discount the profound impact you can make by simply playing with a child while sitting on the floor!

“One More Time”

Materials

songs, finger plays,
and repeated activities
suggested in *Toddlers & 2s
Teacher*

I vividly remember turning to my faithful teaching assistant one Sunday morning and saying, “If I do this routine one more time I think I am going to scream.” I think it is best to acknowledge that for the adult, strict adherence to routine can be dreadfully boring. However, I am firmly convinced that until the children are tired of it, it hasn’t done its job yet. Remember that the songs, finger plays, and even the simple act of patting the Bible are brand new experiences for the toddlers and 2s in your classroom. Watching you perform these acts four or five times isn’t enough to satiate their interest in the amazing things you are doing! Singing the same four or five songs throughout the unit lessons may seem unimpressive to you, but it is most likely the best way to capture the attention of your learners.

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Spring 2013 *Preschool Teacher*.

Preschool

Sitting Space

Materials

carpet squares (one per child with special needs or a classroom set of carpet squares)

One classroom management challenge for preschool children is teaching the children how to sit in a group. For many, this is a first exposure to group learning and the children must be taught that there is a time to sit and listen to a teacher. For the child with learning differences, the challenges of participating in group time multiply. Children with tactile defensiveness, for instance, may fear being touched by what appears to be a crowd of kids crammed into a small space. The child who is sensitive to touch will probably avoid sitting with the group. A simple accommodation would be to have this type of learner sit at the end of a line or horseshoe-style grouping. This way one of child's sides is open and the child might feel less threatened.

The direction, "Have a seat on the carpet, boys and girls," might not define a specific enough area of the room for children with visual perception difficulties or delayed spatial reasoning. One easy solution may be the use of carpet squares. Useful for many activities, an individual carpet square strategically placed in the Bible Discovery area can define the proper space and help a child understand your expectations.

Activity adaptation for:

Step 2 Bible Discovery activities, group activities that call for children to sit together

Huffin' & Puffin'

Materials

large open floor space or tabletop; straws; masking tape; light weight objects, such as cotton balls, tissues, feathers, ping-pong balls

Wind may seem frightening for some children, but teaching children to create their own wind can be fun and therapeutic. Children who have an aversion to water may find this activity safer to participate in than the "Wave Painting" suggested in *Preschool Teacher*.

Clear a space, either on the floor or a tabletop. Use masking tape to mark a finish line. Give each child a straw and encourage the children to blow like wind on the objects you have provided. The goal is to move the objects toward the finish line. Children may choose various objects as they learn how much wind it takes to move each object.

To vary the activity, toss a tissue in the air and see if children can keep it afloat by blowing on it. Or place a group of feathers in a bowl and watch them disperse as children blow small puffs of air into the bowl. Blowing and puffing promotes oral-motor awareness and strengthens lip and cheek muscles.

Activity adaptation for:

"Wave Paintings," Lesson 1

Shopping Cart Derby

Materials

multiple laundry baskets or sturdy boxes, grocery material (play food, boxes of non-perishable foods, other heavy groceries)

Playing grocery store is a fun game, but this twist will incorporate more of a child's senses to make it ordering and calming. Use of a child's large muscle groups promotes the proprioceptive sense, which provides information to the brain about our bodies through our joints, ligaments, and muscles. Often times the integration of this sense in activities can help a child organize their other senses more efficiently.

Display groceries around the room. Allow children to form pairs and have one child push another in a laundry basket "cart." Ask each pair of children to retrieve a special item from your makeshift grocery store. Children must listen to what you are requesting, thus emphasizing the importance of listening—just as Lydia listened to Paul (Acts 16). The weight of the basket provides wonderful heavy work and deep pressure for a child's muscles, while at the same time increasing body awareness and large motor skills.

Activity adaptation for:

"Grocery Basket," Lesson 9

Match That Sound

Materials

an even number of empty, identical containers with lids (bottles, margarine tubs, film canisters), different kind of small objects (beans, rice, coins, paper clips, buttons, small erasers, etc.)

Differentiating between unfamiliar sounds may be difficult for children with auditory processing problems. For them, all sounds may simply prove to be abrasive and harsh and, therefore, an activity to be avoided. Anxiety with sound is likely to lessen when the child has been involved in the preparation. Invite children to help you prepare a variety of shakers. Children can practice counting as you add a selected material to the containers. Allow children to make copies of the shaker you are making. (Note: Fewer objects put into a container will result in a louder sound because there is more room in the container for sound to be created. For quieter shakers, add more objects.)

When preparation is complete, encourage children to listen carefully and match the sound you make with one of the shakers. How many times did you shake your container? Did you shake it gently or vigorously? This activity promotes basic language skills (counting aloud), fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination (picking up small objects and dropping them in the containers), as well as auditory discrimination and memory.

Activity adaptation for:

"Listening Maze" and "I Can Listen," Lesson 9 Extra Hour

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Spring 2013
Pre-K & K Teacher.

Pre-K & K

Feeling Welcome

Materials

Resources Sheet 1 Ways to Welcome picture TEa, a variety of welcome mats with different textures (carpet, artificial grass, etc.)

During the week, call and ask other volunteers to bring their doormats from home. This will help you have a good variety!

Children who experience tactile defensiveness often feel trapped in our sensory-rich world. Some feel out of touch with their hands and have trouble using tools such as crayons and pencils. Some may display complete avoidance of the use of their hands and feet, while others may seem overly aggressive as if they do not feel sensations unless the sensations are intense. Tactile defensiveness is a relatively common symptom of many developmental disorders. However, small, controlled exposure to different textures can desensitize children to their fear of tactile stimulation.

Show children the picture of the house from *Resource* Sheet 1. Tell them that welcome mats make guests or family members feel at home. Distribute your collection of mats around the room. Allow children to feel the mats first with their hands. Ask if they would like to step on the mats with their shoes. Finally, allow the children to take off their shoes and socks and step gently on the mats with their bare feet. Don't force children further into the activity than they feel comfortable; even the smallest exposure will likely make a difference.

Activity adaptation for:

"Dynamic Drama" (a unit center), Special Unit; "Welcome to Our Group" and "Welcome Mats," Triumphal Entry Lesson

Special Needs Tip:

For a welcoming idea you can use with kids who have social impairments, see the "Welcoming Faces" article on page 15 of this resource.

Blow like the Wind

Materials

large, open floor space or tabletop; straws; masking tape; light weight objects, such as cotton balls, tissues, feathers, ping-pong balls

Use the Preschool "Huffin' and Puffin" activity adaptation explained on page 5 of this resource. Older children can experiment and determine which objects are easier than others to move. They can also tell how different shapes affect the direction in which objects move. Blowing and puffing promotes oral-motor awareness and strengthens lip and cheek muscles. Breathing deeply also benefits the respiratory system and is a calming and ordering activity.

Activity adaptation for:

"Wind Painting," Lesson 1 Extra Hour

Emotional Connections

Materials

Resources CD Feelings
picture activity cards
printable file, magazines,
scissors

Characterizing the emotions of others can be a skill that must be purposefully developed in children with social delays, especially children on the autism spectrum. While the *Resources* CD printable file provides activity cards displaying “happy,” “angry,” and “sad” faces, these animated drawings are only a starting point for children who have difficulty internalizing the emotions of others.

Magazines are a wonderful source for finding pictures of people playing games, advertising helpful products, and expressing questions through facial expressions. Reinforcing the emotions through pictures of real people can facilitate the ability to internalize these feelings. Once the concepts are firmly introduced, keep the Feelings picture cards on hand and available for students to tell you how they are feeling on any specific day.

Activity adaptation for:

“Feelings Charades,” Lesson 2; “Find the Feelings,” Lesson 2 Extra Hour

“Let Me Show You!”

Materials

flashlights
(optional: photocopies of
flashlight on p. 117 of
Pre-K & K Teacher)

Our brains utilize language in two ways. The first way, *expressive language*, is best characterized by the verbal communication we use when relaying our thoughts to others. Think of this as out-going language. Impairments in expressive language manifest themselves in difficulties with verbal expression. The other way our brains utilize language is through *receptive language*. This refers to the incoming language our brain receives or hears.

It is important to realize that often there can be a significant discrepancy between expressive and receptive language abilities. It is completely possible (if not probable) for a child to receive every piece of your lesson but not able to relay back to you verbally his or her thoughts about the lesson. This can make basic lesson review activities frustrating for both the student and teacher.

A wonderful example of a lesson review that does not utilize a high level of expressive language is found in Lesson 8’s Extra Hour “More! Bible Review.” Holding flashlights at an up/on position for statements that are true or at a down/off position for false statements, students can answer questions without the verbal stress usually associated with traditional methods of answering questions.

Activity adaptation for:

“More! Bible Review,” any lesson

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Spring 2013 *Early Elementary Teacher*.

Early Elementary

Jesus Feeds a Crowd

Materials

paper bags, oyster crackers, fish-shaped crackers, 2 small scoops, glue sticks, *Activities* p. 14

Before class, cut out for each child a set of pictures from page 14 in *Early Elementary Activities*.

Helping the child who has a learning delay experience or review a Bible story in a more concrete, multisensory way enhances the likelihood that the child will remember the story. Pointing to pictures rather than verbally answering questions helps the child with verbal expression difficulties.

Tell the Bible story from John 6:1-14. Say, **When Jesus performed miracles, He met people's needs. We're going to make a story bag to help you remember how Jesus performed a miracle to feed 5,000 people.**

Distribute supplies and let the children paste the pictures of the crowd, the boy, and Jesus onto the outside of their paper bags. Each child should then put one scoop of oyster crackers and a scoop of fish inside their bags. As they do this, remind them that the boy had five loaves of bread and two fish to share.

When the bags are finished, ask children to point to the pictures as you tell the story again. Have them point to the crowd of people, to the boy, and to Jesus. Say, **Jesus fed all the people and there were even leftovers!** Have students look inside their bags to see and enjoy the leftovers!

Activity Adaptation for:

"Bible Review Activity," Lesson 3

"Thank You" Web

Materials

selected pictures from *Activities* p. 13, pictures from magazines, large sheets of construction paper, glue, scissors

The "Thanking Jesus" activity might confuse some children, especially nonreaders and emerging writers. An activity adaptation will allow children to identify things they are thankful for in a more concrete way and provide a prayer guide for them to use when they are at home.

Draw a web (circle with spokes coming from the center) on a sheet of construction paper. Write "I thank Jesus for everything" inside the circle. Prepare one of these sheets for each student.

Say, **Jesus provides everything we need. It's important to thank Him. Let's make a web of things we can thank Jesus for.** Distribute the web pages and supplies. Encourage kids to cut out and paste on the "spokes" of the web pictures of things they are thankful for. When finished, lead in a prayer time, asking kids to point to or say things they are thankful for. Encourage them to use their prayer webs at home during the week.

Activity Adaptation for:

"Thanking Jesus," Lesson 3

Early Elementary

Water Lab

Materials

plastic tub or child-size swimming pool, towels, items that sink and items that float

Some children are very detail-oriented and need to see a concept in action in order to grasp the idea. Rather than a small tub or bucket, provide a plastic tub or child-size pool large enough to step in. Fill the tub with about 1" of water. Say, **Let's pretend we are scientists investigating water. Let's find out what objects sink and what objects float.** Have the children take turns testing the objects. Sort the objects according to the results of the experiment. After all the objects have been tested, ask the students if they would like to try to walk on top of the water. If none of the students volunteer, the teacher can demonstrate.

Say, **Some of our objects floated and some sank. What happened when we tried to walk on top of the water? Did any of us stay on top of the water? We know this isn't possible for us, but it was possible for Jesus!**

Activity adaptation for:

"Water Laboratory," Lesson 4

What Is the Church?

Materials

photographs of the teacher's family and house, photos of each child or of other church members, photos of your church building

Church is an abstract, but important concept to teach all children. We can help children who are on a more concrete level of understanding to try to grasp this teaching by using additional visuals and a comparison to the family.

Say, **When we come to this building on Sundays, we often say, "We're going to church!" But the church is more than a building. We are going to learn what church really means.** Show the pictures of the teacher's family. Name each person. Place the pictures below the picture of the house, and say, **We are a family and we live in a house.** Move the pictures away from the house. **We are still a family even when we are not inside the house.** Repeat with the pictures of the children or of church members and put them below the picture of the church building. **Just like the house and family, we meet inside a church building, but we are the church family.** Spread the pictures out and away from the picture of the church building. **When we are not at the building, we are still part of the church family!**

- **If you are part of a family, raise your hand.** Encourage all to respond.
- **Raise your hand if you are part of the church family.** Let kids respond.

Then say, **The people are what make the church.**

Activity Adaptation for:

"What Is the Church?," Lesson 7

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Spring 2013
Middle Elementary Teacher.

Middle Elementary

What's in the Bible?

Materials

Bibles (one per group),
Activities for Lesson 2, chart paper, marker

The “What’s the Problem?” activity encourages students to tap into their background knowledge and relate the scenarios from the activity leaflet to themselves. This kind of activity can be helpful for students who have trouble with perspective-taking abilities. A simple activity adaptation will allow students who struggle with reading to manage the activity without having to find verses independently.

Say, **The Bible has answers for all of our problems. Let’s read about some problems kids your age might have.** Read aloud each scenario and ask if the kids have ever had a similar problem. Write each problem on the chart paper. Have kids form groups of three or four and assign to each group one of the Scripture passages listed. One person can find and read the verses and then the group can decide for which problem the Scripture could be helpful. Write the verse reference next to the problem on the chart paper.

Activity adaptation for:

“What’s the Problem?” in *Activities* for Lesson 2

Gospel Story Ring

Materials

Activities for Lessons 6–9 and Special Lesson, 1” metal book rings, printed copies of John 3:16, hole punch, 4” x 6” index cards, glue

The opportunity to retell a story in sequence and connect it to Scripture is helpful for students who need repetition and visual cues to recall information. In addition, adding pictures from week to week can help students understand that the Bible is a series of stories that tells one big story of God’s love for humankind.

Say, **Jesus was sent to earth to teach us about God and to save us from our sins. Let’s make a story ring that will help us remember and tell others what Jesus did for us. We’ll call it a “Gospel Story Ring.”** As lessons 6–9 and the Special Lesson are taught, have kids cut out the Bible story illustrations from their *Activities* leaflets and paste the pictures onto individual index cards. Punch a hole in the top left-hand corner of each card. Create a cover card with the title, “Gospel Story Ring.” Place the cards in story order and fasten them together with a metal book ring. The last card can include a copy of John 3:16.

Activity adaptation for:

Lessons in Unit 2 and Special Lesson

Jesus and Lazarus

Materials

blank paper, ruler, marker, *Activities* for Lesson 3, small stones or pebbles, scissors, paper towel, craft glue

Before class, draw lines to divide a sheet of paper into eight sections. Number the sections 1-8. Copy the page, making a copy for each student in class.

For some students, identifying others' emotions is a very abstract and difficult skill. These students will need more help with the "Tell Me How You Feel" activity. An activity adaptation can help learners integrate the emotions of the Bible story characters with the story sequence.

Say, **Jesus performed a special miracle to help people know He is God's Son. Let's listen to the story about Lazarus.** Read aloud the lesson Scripture text from John 11. (Note: The Scripture text is printed inside *Activities* for Lesson 3.) Give each student one of the prepared story pages.

Help students fill in the people's faces on the activity leaflet. Cut out the people and lay them in story order on the sectioned pages. Use a stone or pebble to signify Lazarus's tomb. In addition, cut out the Bible story illustration of Jesus kneeling by the tomb. Have the students draw Lazarus' happy face (alive again) and pair it with a small piece of paper towel to signify burial cloths. Glue all of the pictures and objects in order onto the story pages. (Order could be: 1. stone, 2. Jesus sad, 3. Mary and Martha sad, 4. Jesus kneeling by the tomb, 5. Lazarus happy with burial cloth, 6. Jesus happy, 7. Mary and Martha happy/loving, 8. Mary and Martha surprised/happy.)

Ask students to choose partners. They can use their story pages and work together to retell the Bible story.

Activity Adaptation for:

"Tell Me How You Feel" in *Activities* for Lesson 3

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Spring 2013 *PreTeen Teacher*.

PreTeen

Be Not Anxious!

Materials

materials as listed in *PreTeen Teacher* for activities in Units 1 and 5

Anxiety disorders among our youth are increasing. There are several different types of anxiety disorders, yet the Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is most common. Students with this disorder worry excessively. You may have students who are experiencing fears, worries, and even panic attacks. Many of these students know they have the disorder and are taking medication. Some may be in therapy.

Anxiety is a disorder that can affect children in serious ways. Often the disorder masks itself with stomachaches, headaches, having to go more often to the restroom, restlessness, and/or sweating. Knowing these signs and being aware of what causes them will help in your lesson planning.

When involving kids in discussions or role-plays, emphasize positive outcomes and the hope we have in Christ—especially when you are dealing with topics such as natural disasters, sickness, and family problems. Help kids with anxiety disorders understand that God will never leave them or forsake them. This will be some of the best teaching they will ever receive.

Activity adaptation for:

discussion and role-play activities that deal with tragedy, sickness, or fearful situations kids face; various activities in Units 1 and 5

Seize the Moment

Materials

Scriptures about salvation

After you have taught Lesson 9, there may be students who want to obey the gospel. Students with learning difficulties may need more one-on-one explanation. Simplify terms for them: *repentance* means saying, “God, I am sorry”; *receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit* means God comes and lives in your heart.

For students who indicate a desire to be baptized, you have an awesome opportunity to seize the moment and help the students become part of the kingdom of God. Baptism can be a scary event for many students. Use props to show exactly what happens in a baptism (possibly an object with water) and role-play without water the process of being baptized. A student may need an aide or parent who can be in the water with them. Special accommodations may be needed for students with physical disabilities. Whenever possible, parental permission should be obtained.

Baptism is a decision that can only be made by the student, along with the parent; providing the opportunity without pressure is your role as the teacher.

Activity adaptation for:

Evaluate, Lessons 4 and Lesson 5; “We Can Believe,” Lesson 9

Students Who Hurt

Materials

copies of selected Scriptures (see references below), glue, scissors, bright-colored card stock

Before class, type out the Scriptures listed below in the Bible version your class uses. Make copies and cut apart in strips so that you have several sets of the passages.

Psalm 9:9, 10

Psalm 34:18

Psalm 46:1-3

Psalm 55:22

John 14:27

Philippians 4:6, 7

1 Peter 5:6, 7

As you discuss the tragedies of life, there will be students who have gone through personal losses and difficult times. Students who have lost a family member or have fears of the future may be overly sensitive to the topics discussed in Unit 5. You should have someone ready to intervene and/or counsel students whose emotions may have been stirred during discussion times. Know your students and if you feel that there is a student who should leave the room during a particular session, then be sensitive.

Students with developmental problems may struggle even more with coping skills needed for dealing with topics such as death, divorce, and even the fear of hell. An activity that might help these students would be to prepare a page of Scripture verses they can refer to later. Provide the prepared Scripture strips and other supplies. Encourage each student to choose four or five of the Scripture strips and glue those strips to a sheet of card stock. Ask students to share the Scriptures they have chosen. Give extra help as needed for reading the verses. The Scripture pages can be taken home and read as needed for comfort.

Activity adaptation for:

“Tell It to Us,” “A World of Tragedy,” “How Would You React?,” and “Where Do You Go for Help?,” Lesson 11; “Turn Something Bad into Something Good,” Lesson 12

Tips and Encouragements

for Families and
Volunteers



featuring



Welcoming Faces

A Note from the Editor



Welcome to *Shaping the Hearts of Kids with Special Needs*. We hope this resource will help you minister to the child with special needs. How is your hearing? Do you hear things the way the children in your class hear them? Just as differentiating between unfamiliar sounds may be difficult for children with auditory processing problems, so we as adults sometimes have difficulty distinguishing God's voice. Be still and listen. What does God want you to say to the children in your class? to the child with special needs?

Be sure to read all of the tips given by our experts. Know that even the student who seems to have a blank stare is absorbing God's Word in his or her own way. Pray that you will be ready when this child needs comfort and guidance for getting through a tough situation. Rejoice with the child who makes Jesus the Lord of her life!

May God bless you as you teach His beloved children.

Sincerely,

New Life Through His Word
Editorial Staff

Just as Jesus welcomed the little children to Him, teachers and volunteers seek to make each week a welcoming experience for all children. For children with social impairments, this can seem an almost impossible task. We want church to be the place where these children connect with people who support and will follow them throughout childhood and into adolescence. We desperately desire church to be their safety zone. But how can we begin to develop this relationship when social skills are delayed?

Visual cues have proven very successful in connecting children with social impairments to other children. Getting to know one another through pictures that do not change expressions can be less threatening than face-to-face encounters.

Capture pictures of everyone in your class. Don't forget to include the teachers. (Sometimes a teacher is the child's first and best friend!) Trim the pictures to a manageable size that can be held in a child's hand and then use squares of self-adhesive hook-and-loop tape to attach the pictures to a sheet of poster board. Place the poster in a prominent place in the classroom. As part of each week's welcome, find each child's picture and say, "We are so glad _____ is here today." If a child is not present, use his or her picture as a prayer prompt. Hold up the absent child's picture and pray aloud: "God, please bless _____ wherever he is today. Bring him back to us soon. In Jesus' name, amen."

Bonus Idea! For an added blessing to the family of a child with special needs, make extra copies of the pictures and assemble the pictures on a ring. Give the picture ring to the parents to take home. During the week, parents can talk with their child about "church friends." This makes a wonderful visual aid that can help a child learn to pray at home for their friends.

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