

Shaping the Hearts

of Kids with Special Needs

Winter 2012-2013

A New Generation

NEW LIFE
THROUGH HIS WORD

featuring



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A Name Above All Names

When she was very small, most people handled her by giving her whatever she wanted, with a lot of space in which to do it. I often found Gillian sitting quietly in a corner with her back to the crowd playing a game by herself with her favorite toy; it was a behavior not terribly uncommon for a

the staff where her socks were and they replied that she wouldn't wear them. "You have to wrestle them on her and trust us, it's not worth it," they said.

When Gillian moved up to the 2-year-old class, I helped interface with the teachers about how best to approach her. Classroom routines that had been in place for years were quietly tweaked to accommodate Gilly. The days of enduring ministry by those teachers remain in my heart as some of the truest examples of Kingdom love I have ever witnessed. Still nonverbal, Gillian was a handful. She gave no eye contact. There was never a hint that anything was getting through to her. She wouldn't be touched. She rarely smiled, and when she did, not *at* anyone. Then one fateful Sunday, the unthinkable happened.

Gillian's mother entered the room as always to debrief the day with the teachers. She was preparing to hold Gillian down in order to get a pair of socks and shoes on her feet when Gillian began to pull her by the

"Gillian felt Jesus in the arms and hands of faithful teachers. And knowing Jesus became the starting place for Gillian's journey of self-discovery."

--Vangie Rodenbeck, Georgia

child not yet two years of age. But the words of the nursery staff caught my attention: "Not too close or you'll set her off." I wondered exactly how bad it could be to "set her off." This little blue-eyed, blonde-haired angel couldn't possibly be the terror everyone feared, or could she? Then I noticed it. She was bare-footed—on a cold February morning. I asked

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hand over to the story corner. Soon Gillian's mom was coerced into the corner where Gillian began to adamantly pat a pastel story picture of Jesus. The patting became so firm that her mother was forced to look at Gillian's little hand to see what the persistence was all about.

Just then Gillian looked up into her mother's eyes and with a smile uttered her very first word: "Jesus." Her mom held her breath as Gillian said the name over and over and over again. With tears streaming down her face, Gillian's mom said, "I don't care that it wasn't 'Daddy' or 'Mommy'! All I can think is that the ONE thing that got her through is the ONLY thing she can say—Jesus!"

The Name above all names had captured Gillian's mind. The Name of the only beloved Son had so enraptured her that it got through the dark, sensory jungle and connected to her heart. It didn't happen with highly trained professionals or adaptive therapy or cutting-edge technology. It happened because Gillian felt Jesus in the arms and hands of faithful teachers. And knowing Jesus became the starting place for Gillian's journey of self-discovery.

Gillian is nine years old now. She loves horses, whales, and singing. She has a beautiful singing voice and uses it in worship whenever she has the opportunity. She still struggles with the social and emotional issues that accompany those on the autism spectrum, but Gillian's central concept of life is still Jesus. During a recent discussion about wishing stars, Gillian decided they aren't true because Jesus is in charge of everything—but it might be OK to think about them.

Gillian is Jesus' girl. She still prefers to walk around barefooted. So do I.

✍️ by Vangie Rodenbeck

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Winter 2012-2013
Toddlers & 2s Teacher.

Toddlers & 2s

Seekers and Avoiders

Materials

small shakers filled with rice, plastic cat toy bells, small boxes

One of the most difficult aspects of instructing children with challenged nervous systems is detecting what aspects of an environment might set off behavioral responses. One way of mapping out a child's sensory tendencies is to view certain senses as avoided and others as craved. For instance, a child might repetitively seek out vestibular stimulation (the input a body receives when experiencing movement or gravity) as he enjoys the calming effects of swinging and spinning. The same child, however, might avoid touch or noise as these can overstimulate the child and cause anxiety and fear.

Bells and instruments are often suggested for use in classroom settings. But bells (even child-size wrist bells) can sometimes emit a frequency that is painful to a child's ears. Small shakers filled with rice produce a softer sound that can be gentler to the ear. Additionally, producers of pet toys have fashioned a plastic bell contained inside a ball that chimes more quietly. Supplementing a small box of the plastic cat toy bells can still produce a ringing effect, but in a more soothing way.

Activity adaptation for:

Bible Time Story for Unit 1; "Ring the Happy News," Lesson 1; "Jesus Christ Was Born," Lessons 3 and 4; any activity involving rhythms or bells

Don't Get Me Wet!

Materials

"Rain Sounds" from *Resources CD*, Track 9; CD player; empty spray bottles; blue bedsheet; oscillating fan

For children with sensitivity to touch, water can represent a very real sensory danger. Not only is the sensation of something wet undesired, the act of drying with a soft, fluffy towel can feel, to the child, like being rubbed by sandpaper.

While traditional water play might not be an option for sensory-sensitive children, alternatives abound! Instead of using water in the classroom you might: (1) allow children to pretend they are spraying water from empty bottles, (2) play rain or water sounds on a CD, (3) shake a blue bedsheet to make "waves" and use an oscillating fan to produce a gentle "wind" when you teach about a storm.

Activity adaptation for:

Bible Time Story for Unit 2; all water activities, Lesson 8; "Good Things," Lesson 9; "Wash Time," Lesson 9; "Bath Time," Lesson 10

Materials

colored string, silicon
aquarium tubing

When children are nursery age, it is common to be on the lookout for anything they might want to put in their mouths. Children with developmental delays, however, may continue this behavior into their early pre-school years. More than just a sign of teething, mouthing is a way of developmental exploration. While choking might not be a hazard, as they are mouthing on objects large enough to be safe, germ transmittal still is.

For children with this characteristic, putting something in their mouths is a calming activity. Sensory receptors placed under the jaw provide the input these children need for relaxing themselves and ordering their environment. (Much the same way chewing on ice can be a calming habit for adults.) Providing these children with a preferred object of their own to chew on is the easiest way to insure they don't put random objects from the classroom in their mouths.

Some parents might provide a pacifier or teething object that can be used for this objective. Therapists also recommend silicon aquarium tubing, which can be purchased at pet supply stores. It does not deteriorate in water and holds up well to chewing. A six-inch string of tubing knotted and given to the child for chewing provides lots of resistance and input for the child who needs to have something in her mouth. Or, thread short sections of the tubing on colored string and create a necklace or bracelet that can be chewed on.

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Winter 2012-2013
Preschool Teacher.

Preschool

Find the Figures

Materials

plastic manger scene figures (1" to 2" tall), container of dried beans

One of the goals for Winter 2012–2013, Unit 1, is to teach familiarity of the characters surrounding Jesus' birth. While teaching pictures and books can beautifully illustrate the persons involved in this story, children who seek tactile stimulation will internalize the story more quickly if they can collect and touch the individual characters. Additionally, children who are not yet adept at joining a story circle might be more inclined to sit and search through a tub of dry, cool beans for story figures.

Bury the manger scene figures in a container of dried beans. Be sure to hide them deep enough to encourage the children to spread their fingers and receive the stimulation on their hands from the pressure of the beans. Children who seek interaction through touch will enjoy searching for these characters again and again.

Activity adaptation for:

Unit 1; "Hidden Surprises," Lesson 3; fishing activities, Lesson 11 (substitute small plastic fish for the manger scene figures)

Special Needs Tip:

Be aware that children who avoid tactile stimulation may avoid this activity. If they seem overly sensitive to the sensation of the beans, allow these children to use a digging implement such as a small trowel.

This Little Light

Materials

flashlights, doll

The key to preventing children with delays in development from becoming over-stimulated and anxious is to seek a balanced sensory diet. In "The Traveling Game," children follow the light from a flashlight to seek a doll that is hidden in a dimly lit room. The activity reduces stimulation for the visual senses by dimming the classroom lights. This decrease in sensory input can be a great comfort, especially since fluorescent lights can be harsh and even noisy to children who are oversensitive to visual and auditory input.

Children who have limited verbal capacity can be successful at this activity too as they shine a flashlight on the hidden object without having to speak. The adaptation can also be used for the *Quick Step*™ "Eye Spy" activity in Lesson 13. Simply allow children to use flashlights to identify the objects they spy in the classroom.

Activity adaptation for:

"The Traveling Game," Lesson 4; "Eye Spy," Lesson 13

Don't Spill the Beans

Materials

tablecloth, towels, or
bedsheet

Repetitive behaviors are stereotypical for children with developmental delays. Some research indicates that children find comfort in the predictability of the results that can occur over and over again as the same task is accomplished. Unfortunately, this can be very frustrating if these behaviors become counterproductive to classroom management.

One such frequently noted behavior is the compulsion to spill out or dump objects simply to watch them fall. With larger objects, such as stuffed animals or blocks, the mess can be minimal for the teacher to manage. However, with materials like rice or beans, the behavior can create such disorder that a teacher will choose to avoid the activity altogether. Try these tips for allowing for repetitive behaviors, yet still maintaining an orderly classroom.

Tip #1: The bigger the object, the easier the clean up. If you can substitute larger beans for rice, sand, or water, the activity can still be meaningful without as much mess.

Tip #2: Create a “spill zone.” Children can be encouraged to contain their spills in an area that allows for the clutter. Small tablecloths, towels, or bedsheets in the corner of a classroom make cleanup easier for the teacher.

Tip #3: To transition children away from repetitive behaviors, it is often helpful to give them a number of times they will be allowed to perform the behavior before transitioning to the next activity. Assist children in counting down the number of times they are accomplishing the task so they know when they have completed this task. While they may still be hesitant to stop the repetitive behavior, over time this method can help children stop behaviors they cannot stop without your help.

Activity adaptation for:

“Fill It Up!” and “Packing Up,” Lesson 9

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Winter 2012-2013
Pre-K & K Teacher.

Pre-K & K

Jump for Jesus

Materials

local newspaper; large marker; masking tape; pictures of a star, a baby, an angel, a sheep, etc.

This “Jumping into Special News” activity included in *Pre-K & K Teacher* promotes both wayfinding and kinesthetic movement. Each of these concepts is valuable in therapies for children with special needs. However, special needs children may not be familiar with letters of the alphabet.

To adapt the activity, place an easily identifiable picture, such as a star, on a sheet of newspaper and place it on the floor. Continue to create a path of pictures using pictures of other familiar items—a baby, an angel, a sheep, etc. Call out pictures to find and jump to. Along the way, add sheets of newspaper that have the letters of Jesus’ name.

If children who are unfamiliar with letters in the alphabet can successfully participate on this level, they will be more likely to follow the children who can identify the letters in Jesus’ name when those letters are called out.

Worship Jesus Lights

Materials

crown pattern from p. 117, *Pre-K & K Teacher*; scissors; flashlights

Children with delays in development often experience overstimulation in one of the five senses. In addition to these senses, there are several hidden senses, such as balance (vestibular sense) and the sense of our body in space (proprioceptive sense), that can be over or under responsive in special needs children. The key to preventing these children from becoming overstimulated and anxious is to seek a balanced sensory diet.

The “This Little Light” activity adaptation suggested on page 5 of this newsletter can also be used for pre-K & K children. For pre-K & K, make several copies of the crown pattern included in the teacher guide. Cut out and hide the crowns around the room. Give each child a flashlight and then reduce the visual stimulation by dimming the classroom lights. Children who have limited verbal capacity can be successful at this activity too as they find and shine their flashlights on the hidden crowns without having to speak.

Activity adaptation for:

“Looking for a King,” Lesson 4

Say It Again

Children who struggle to integrate sensations of sights, smells, and sounds often experience difficulties in differentiating these senses as well. For this reason, many children experience auditory delays as their nervous system struggles to deliver to the brain the information they hear. This is often evidenced in a child who might not be able to answer a direct question, even though you are certain he or she understands the question and is certain of the answer. Try using one of the following tips when reviewing a story with children who experience auditory delays.

Tip #1: Cue children ahead of time. With a little preparation on your part, you can provide the question in advance. For instance, you can say: “Today’s story was about Jesus. Billy, when I ask you who was in today’s story, I’d like you to tell me it was about Jesus.” This way, Billy still gets to participate. If you allow that child to go first, it seems to the rest of the class that Billy has shown them how the review activity will proceed.

Tip #2: Repeat the question for every child. If you ask the same question to each child around the circle, the question will be easier for children with auditory delays to answer. Using this tip, allow children who appear to hear slower than others to go last so they have heard the appropriate response several times before it is their turn.

Activity adaptation for:

Bible Review for every lesson; “Beanbag Toss,” Lesson 10

No Spritzing

For children who are sensitive to touch, water play can be an activity that is non-preferred. Additionally, children who wear listening aids cannot get these devices wet. While removing the aids is an option, the removal of their ability to hear can make the children anxious as well.

Using small amounts of water is a start to safely allowing these children to participate in water play. Avoid methods of squirting water that place these children in the line of the spray. Small squirt bottles, such as those used for cosmetic purposes, don’t have the distance that water guns or hoses have. If the child is comfortable doing so, allow him to gently spritz his friends if the lesson calls for that. If the lesson is service oriented, form teams that wash and teams that dry. Children who are sensitive to the wet part of the activity can perform the dry tasks.

Activity adaptation for:

“Sense It,” Lesson 11; any kind of water play or service project involving water

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Winter 2012-2013 *Early Elementary Teacher*.

Early Elementary

What Happened Next?

Materials

Early Elementary Activities, p. 4; craft sticks; glue; sheets of Styrofoam (1½" or 2" thick)

Before class, cut sheets of Styrofoam into 2" x 8" blocks.

Numbering a story in order might be harder for students who struggle with organizing information. Cutting story pictures apart can give them a hands-on activity and an opportunity to practice telling the story in order.

Give each student an activity page, a pair of scissors, a glue stick, and a Styrofoam block. Say, **We have been talking today about Zechariah and Elizabeth. Let's see if we can remember this story.** Assisting as needed, have the students cut out the activity pictures and glue a craft stick to each picture. Then have class members work together to put the story pictures in order. Once the students have the story pictures in order, they can push their craft sticks into the foam blocks.

Ask questions, such as **"What does this story tell us about patience?" "How do you think Zechariah and Elizabeth felt when they learned they were having a baby?"**

Activity adaptation for:

Bible Review Activity, Lesson 1

Story Sequencing

Materials

pictures from *Early Elementary Activities*, p. 11; scissors; glue sticks; plain index cards; manila folders; self-adhesive hook & loop buttons

Children with learning disabilities may have difficulty recalling a story in order. This activity reinforces the Bible story in a multisensory activity and gives the student a product to take home and "read." The use of hook-and-loop fasteners allows the child to retell the story multiple times.

Say, **Today we have been learning about some wise men who traveled to visit Jesus. Let's remember how this story happened.** Assist children as needed in cutting out the pictures from the activity page. Glue each picture to an index card. Attach a loop button to the back of each index card. On the inside of the manila folder, attach five hook buttons. Have the children put the pictures in order by attaching the cards to the buttons inside the folder.

As children place the pictures in order, ask: **"What happened first?" "What happened next?" "How were the wise men obedient to God?"**

Activity adaptation for:

Bible Review Activity, Lesson 5

Early Elementary

Follow Jesus Standups

Materials

Early Elementary Activities, p. 19; scissors; index cards; glue

Reading activities are difficult for students who struggle with reading and comprehension. Modifying such an activity takes the reading requirement away and provides a hands-on opportunity for the child to show mastery of a concept.

Say, **We just heard the story about Jesus' first followers from the book of John. Let's retell the story so we can remember it.** Have the students cut the pictures of Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, and Jesus from their activity pages. Fold index cards in half and glue a figure to each card, making the figures stand. Once this is finished, children can place the disciple figures in order behind Jesus. As they do this, the teacher can tell what each man did to help other people follow Jesus. Then have the students work in pairs and explain the story to each other.

Activity adaptation for:

Bible Review Activity, Lesson 8

Listening to Jesus

Materials

selected pictures from *Early Elementary Activities*, p. 21; chart paper; marker; glue; scissors

Before class, draw a web on chart paper. First, draw a circle in the center of the paper. Inside the circle, write "I obey Jesus." Then draw several spokes coming out from the center circle.

Because we can't literally *hear* the voice of Jesus, the idea of *listening* to Jesus is very abstract and can be especially confusing for students with autism spectrum disorder. Focusing on reading Jesus' words and obeying Him is more concrete. Also, students with anxiety might obsess that they are "bad" if an activity suggests that something they do, such as reading comics or watching cartoons, is labeled as a wrong activity choice. Using this activity adaptation can help these children understand that making good choices about what we read and watch is a way to obey Jesus.

Have the children cut the pictures from the activity page. Take turns gluing one of the pictures onto each spoke of the web you have drawn. Say, **We know from our Bible stories that it's important to learn what Jesus said and try to obey Him. Each of these pictures shows a way that we can obey Jesus. How can we obey Jesus by talking on the phone?** (We can use kind words, encourage people, and be respectful.) **How is reading our Bible obeying Jesus?** (We learn more about Jesus' teaching when we read the Bible.) **How can we obey Jesus when we read comic books?** (When we make good choices about what we choose to read, we are obeying Jesus.)

Activity adaptation for:

"Listening List," Lesson 9

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Winter 2012-2013
Middle Elementary Teacher.

Middle Elementary

Jonah's Journeys

Materials

Middle Elementary Activities leaflet, Lesson 1; strips of paper or index cards; tape; 2 sheets of chart paper; markers; tape (optional: stickers or pictures)

Before class, write on paper strips or index cards each sentence included on the "Jonah's Journey's" activity page.

The "Jonah's Journeys" activity might be visually confusing for some students. In order to help them understand the story, a "story sort" may be more helpful. Display two sheets of chart paper. Title one chart, "Disobedient"; the other chart can be titled, "Obedient." Students can be assigned a variety of roles (taping sentence strips to the charts, matching pictures, etc.) so that all students can be involved, even if they are not fluent readers.

Say, **Let's retell the story of Jonah by working together to put the story in order.** Have the students work as a group to sort the "disobedient" and "obedient" details of Jonah's story. Divide the large group into two small groups. Have one small group tape the "disobedient" details in order on one sheet of chart paper; the other small group can tape the "obedient" details in order on the other chart. If possible, provide stickers or other pictures to correlate with the details of the story. The pictures can be added at appropriate places around the charts.

When the charts are ready, ask a good reader from each group to share what the group has done. Talk about the results of being obedient, rather than disobedient.

Activity adaptation for:

Bible Exploration: Jonah's Journeys, Lesson 1

Ways to Praise

Materials

poster board, glue, markers, photos of students, pictures representing the following activities: praying, singing, reading Bible, doing artwork, writing, smiling, serving

Before class, cut 22" x 28" sheets of poster board into 11" x 14" individual posters.

Word scrambles are very difficult for students with cognitive or learning disabilities. This adaptation can help students apply the information and relate it to their own unique personalities and interests.

Say, **There are lots of creative ways we can praise God and thank Him for what He has done! Each of us likes to praise in different ways.** Have the kids glue pictures of themselves in the center of their poster boards. (Note: if photos of kids are not available, kids can simply draw self-portraits.) Then they can choose pictures of activities that represent ways they like to show praise for God and glue those pictures on their posters. Encourage kids to title their posters: "I praise God through my actions."

Allow time for sharing. Observe how each poster is different. Say, **These posters show how each of us can praise God in our own way—and each way is pleasing to God!**

Activity adaptation for:

"Ways to Praise," Lesson 5

Middle Elementary

Following the Leader

Materials

pictures of community leaders (teacher, crossing guard, coach, firefighter, doctor)

The “Follow Me!” activity in *Middle Elementary Activities*, Lesson 10, features cartoons that illustrate different meanings for the word *follow*. For students who have learning disabilities, the multiple meanings of *follow* might be confusing. Use this adaptation to emphasize how Jesus was a trustworthy leader who had good news. That is why His disciples wanted to follow Him—and that is why we want to follow Him today!

Say, **We might not realize it, but we follow lots of leaders every week.** Show the pictures of the community leaders. Ask, **What is this person’s job in the community? When does he ask us to follow him? Why?** (e.g., A teacher asks us to follow him on a field trip. A doctor asks us to follow her to the exam room so she can help us get better.)

Have students find partners. Ask, **Who else do we follow? Think about this and then tell your partner who you follow.** Allow time for students to do so. Then lead into the lesson on how Jesus chose men who were willing to follow Him.

Activity adaptation for:

“Follow Me!”, Lesson 10

Jesus Is Powerful

Materials

Middle Elementary Activities leaflets for Lesson 12; Bibles; chart paper; pictures of the following: water jug, loaves and fish, tree, eyes, thermometer, storm clouds, cross or empty cave

Middle Elementary Activities for Lesson 12 includes a word scramble with Scriptures to find. Some students might struggle with finding verses in the Bible and reading the verses fluently. In addition, word scrambles can be visually confusing for some students. A modification will allow students to work together so that all will be successful at the activity.

Say, **We have learned that Jesus had power over the wind and the waves. The Bible gives examples of how Jesus has power over many things!** Form two teams: a reading team and a picture team. Ask the reading team to look up the verses included in the “Jesus’ Power” activity in their activity leaflets. Ask the picture team to glue to the chart paper each picture provided and label it.

As the reading team finds each verse, have a team member read the verse aloud. Ask the picture team to choose which picture corresponds with the verse. Write the Scripture reference by that picture. Ask: **What might be a good title for this chart?** Let students suggest titles; choose a title and add it to the chart.

Activity adaptation for:

“Jesus’ Power,” Lesson 12

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Winter 2012-2013
PreTeen Teacher.

PreTeen

Stop, Look, Listen

Materials

printed copy of any audio recording or important information given orally

Students with auditory processing disorder have a hard time filtering out noises. They struggle with being able to hear information and process it quickly and accurately. Having this student sit close to the CD player or the person giving instructions will eliminate some of the noise distractions. Clarifying the instructions or having the student repeat back the information will assure that the student knows what is expected. Providing the student with a printed copy of recordings or instructions will help the student follow along and better grasp what is being taught.

Remember the following techniques for helping the student who had an auditory disorder: (1) STOP. Get the student's attention. (2) LOOK. Make eye contact. (3) LISTEN. Keep oral directions clear and concise. (4) Give examples. (5) Have the student repeat information, if needed.

Activity adaptation for:

Bible Exploration: Greedy or Giving?, Lesson 2; Bible Exploration: Angelic Announcement!, Lesson 3; Bible Skill Builder: All Wrapped Up, Lesson 5; "How Do You Deal with That?", Lesson 8; "Clean Up Your Act!", Lesson 10; "Everybody's *Not* Doing It," Lesson 12; any activity that requires special instructions or concentrated listening

Buddy Up!

Students with learning disabilities may struggle with reading comprehension, fine motor activities, and/or attention. Having a buddy system in place will set up the student for success. Prayerfully choose a student who has a patient and compassionate heart and is willing to help his or her peers. Provide training as needed for this student. What an awesome opportunity to allow students to show the love of Christ to one another! Everyone benefits in the buddy system.

Activity adaptation for:

any activity that allows for students to get into pairs and perform a task, especially activities with puzzles, matching, sequencing, and Bible skills

Write Your Bio!

Materials

camera, 5" x 8" index cards or 8" x 10" card stock cut into 4 squares, biography questions written on the board ahead of time

Students learn better when they can apply what they have learned to their own lives. Reflecting on the characters in the Bible and how they lived a life that glorified God will allow students to think about their own lives and the choices they make. After leading the Bible Skill Builder: Brief Bios, introduce "Write Your Bios."

Say, **Kids, today you are going to write your own biographies. A biography is a true account of someone's life. Just as the people in the Bible made good choices and are remembered for what they did with their lives, I want you to write a bio about yourself by answering the following questions: What is your name? Who is in your family? What activities do you do outside of school? What is something special about you? What do you want to be remembered for?** (These questions can be modified to fit the kids in your class.)

As the kids are working, take pictures of each person. Have the pictures developed for next week and attach the pictures to the bios. Display the completed bios; ask the kids to take turns sharing their bios each week so they can get to know each other better. Tip: Show an example by creating your own bio ahead of time and sharing it with the class. The kids will love getting to know more about you as well.

Activity adaptation option for:

Bible Skill Builder: Brief Bios, Lesson 9

Tips and Encouragements

for Families and
Volunteers



Think Sensory!

A Note from the Editor



Welcome to *Shaping the Hearts of Kids with Special Needs*. In this quarter's newsletter, some of the adaptations, such as the "This Little Light" preschool activity and the "Worship Jesus Lights" pre-K & K activity, highlight activities already found within our New Life Through His Word curriculum that can be used successfully with children who have special needs. Our elementary specialists have written adaptive ideas that will help you with Bible story reviews and student activity pages.

May God bless you as you teach His beloved children.

Sincerely,

New Life Through His Word
Editorial Staff

Many teachers and parents comment on how children are often more spirited and sometimes difficult to manage during the holiday season. Truthfully, the added lights and decorations to most of our environments simply add to the stimuli our nervous system is already processing. It is important to take a sensory view at decorating ideas as we approach the holiday season. Tinsel and foil, for instance, are pretty because they reflect light. But for children with difficulties in sensory processing, this shimmery affect can actually be a painful piece of information for their eyes to process. Stringing holiday lights in a room, especially the new bright and energy-efficient LED lights, can add sensory information so complicated to process that it might affect the behavior of a child.

If you plan to use a strand of holiday lights (especially the LED variety), try removing some bulbs so the strand of lights is not so bright. If possible, select the "frosted" bulbs, as these will cast a much softer glow on a room. If the softer bulbs are available, string multiple strands around the room and turn off the fluorescent light source in the room. This lighting is actually preferable to many sensory palates as fluorescent lights are a known source of agitation for children with sensory disorders. Soft lights and a room full of quiet anticipation. What a great way to introduce the story of a wondrous starry night sky over Bethlehem!

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