

# **Heart & Voice: Biblical Storytelling with Children**

**Workshop Leader: Barbara Tucker**

## **Introduction**

The following description of activities and list of resources is a result of the workshops that were held in Vellore, Bengaluru, and Thiruvalla. I am grateful to those who participated in these workshops for voicing their questions and concerns.

### **Planning a Session for Children**

#### **1. Begin with a gathering activity.**

**Sing a familiar song together.**

Examples - *This is the Day That the Lord Has Made* or *God is So Good*

**Play a clapping game.**

Example - *If You Can Hear Me*

The teacher claps and says, "If you can hear me clap 1 time."

A few children clap.

Teacher: If you can hear me clap 2 times.

More children clap.

The teacher continues the game until all the children are clapping and ends by clapping and saying, "Stop, look, and listen."

#### **2. Tell the story.**

The story is the central part of a biblical storytelling session with children. It is worth it for the teacher, to spend time the week before the session learning the story by heart. It is also a good idea for the storyteller/teacher to stay as close to the text of the Bible as possible.

**NOTE FROM THE WORKSHOP LEADER** - In Thiruvalla, a participant asked, "What Bible stories are appropriate for children?" Now that I have had more time to reflect, I would like to offer a better answer than the one I gave that day. Any story in the Bible is appropriate for children as long as it helps them understand more about what God is like and what it means to follow Jesus. As children hear Bible stories over and over again, they will grow in their understanding and see different meanings in stories at different ages.

Here are some of the stories that are important for helping children understand God and God's work in the world.

Genesis - The Creation  
Noah and the Flood  
The Stories of Abraham, Issac , and Jacob  
The Story of Joseph

Exodus - Stories from this Old Testament book are key to understanding the New Testament.

Joshua - The story of the Israelites entry into the Promised Land

Judges - The story of Gideon

Ruth

I Samuel - The story of Samuel's birth and his work with Eli in Shiloh.  
The stories of David

II Samuel - The stories of the return of the Covenant Box to Jerusalem, Nathan's message to David, and David's prayer of thanksgiving to God

The story of David and Mephibosheth

I Kings - The story of Solomon building and dedicating the Temple  
The stories of Elijah

II Kings - The stories of Elisha

Ezra - The story of the rebuilding of the Temple

Esther

Psalms - Choose psalms that children can use to praise God and express their concerns to God.

The stories of the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles

After the story it is a good idea to lead the children in a brief discussion of what they have just heard. Try to begin your questions with the words:

I wonder why . . . ?  
I wonder how . . . ?  
I wonder when . . . ?  
I wonder who . . . ?  
I wonder where . . . ?  
I wonder what . . . ?

You do not have to use all of these beginning phrases. One or two questions will do just fine.

**\* If you are working with children who have not been to school or have no experience working in a group**, you may want to go on to other activities until they are able to listen to you and other children in the group.

### **3. Activities**

**Sound Effects** - \*While the children are still all together, demonstrate a sound they can make while listening to the story. For example, in the story of Jesus calming the storm from Mark 4: 35-41, they could make sounds of howling winds for the storm. (You also need to give the children a signal to stop the noise so that you can continue the story.)

After doing this one time, let the children begin to suggest other motions and sound effects to do while listening to the story.

**Frozen Pictures** - Divide the story into parts. \*Tell the story again and work with the whole group to pantomime each part of the story.

After the children learn how to act out the story, choose a child or children for each part. Line them up in front of the group in order. As you tell the first part of the story, the child for that part will act it out. When that part is over, they will freeze. Tell the next part of the story and the next, until the ending. Keep doing this activity until everyone has had a turn or as long as the children remain interested.

**Make a Book or Mural** - Give each child with a part of the story written at the top and let them draw their own illustrations. (These should be prepared ahead of time.) The papers can be combined into books and kept for the children to read again.

This activity can also be done with one long piece of paper divided into parts for the different scenes in the story.

\* These suggestions should be helpful to teachers who work with children who have never been to school.

### **Resources**

**Books:** Even though the titles of these books speak of children and worship, they offer interesting ways of telling biblical stories. They are all available through [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

Stewart, Sonja M. and Berryman, Jerome W. *Young Children and Worship*. Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY. 1989.

Stewart, Sonja M. *Following Jesus: More About Young Children and Worship*.

Zwyghuizen, Helene G. *Leading Children in Worship*. Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI. 1996

**Websites:** The following websites offer ideas for activities to help children retell and think about biblical stories.

*Danielle's Place*. [www.daniellesplace.com](http://www.daniellesplace.com) . Accessed 18 Feb. 2018.

*Kid's Sunday School Place*. [www.kidssundayschool.com](http://www.kidssundayschool.com). Accessed 17 Feb. 2018.

*Pinterest: Sunday School Crafts*. [www.pinterest.com/explore/sunday-school-crafts](http://www.pinterest.com/explore/sunday-school-crafts). Accessed 18 Feb. 2018.

