

CORE TRAINING SERIES



PREPARING & TEACHING A LESSON

MINISTRY ROLE:
Teachers

TARGET AGE:
Elementary Classrooms

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by Jill Nelson



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Teaching the next generation of the glorious deeds of the LORD and the wonders He has done is both an awesome privilege and a grave responsibility. When teaching the Bible, we are teaching His Holy Word, divine Truth—Truth that is objective, absolute, authoritative, unchanging, and universal. Truth that provides the only means of salvation. Therefore, we must teach with eternity in mind, understanding that our students' everlasting joy or everlasting misery is at stake. These are glorious and weighty matters. Teaching that effectively communicates these realities does not merely convey information and facts for young minds to absorb. Teaching should also reflect the life-changing power of God's Word as we are called to personally respond to it. In other words, teaching is both an intellectual and a relational endeavor.

INSTRUCTING THE MIND

If children are to know, honor, and treasure God through Christ, they must become well acquainted with His Word. In the classroom setting, the teacher's main job is to instruct the students' minds with God's Word. This does not diminish the need to engage the heart or influence the will. Rather, it reflects a natural progression in the Christian faith. Consider these words from R. C. Sproul and John Piper:

There is a primacy of the mind in the Christian faith. There is also a primacy of the heart... However, for my heart to be right, there is the primacy of the intellect in terms of order. Nothing can be in my heart that is not first in my head. How can I love a God or a Jesus about whom I understand nothing? Indeed, the more I come to understand the character of God, the greater is my capacity to love Him.
—R. C. SPROUL¹

Education of the mind in the rigorous discipline of thoughtful reading is a primary goal of

school. The church of Jesus is debilitated when his people are lulled into thinking that it is humble or democratic or relevant to give a merely practical education that does not involve the rigorous training of the mind to think hard and to construe meaning from difficult texts... We need an education that puts the highest premium under God on knowing the meaning of God's Book, and growing in the abilities that will unlock its riches for a lifetime.—JOHN PIPER²

Our lesson content and format is intentionally designed for the “rigorous discipline of thoughtful reading” of the Bible. This process begins in earnest in first grade, and increases in depth and rigor as children age and mature. We also incorporate an interactive teaching style. This serves to develop critical thinking and reasoning skills aimed at a deeper understanding of the things of God and the ability to rightly apply the Word of God.

THE ROLE OF “ACTIVE” LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM

Too often, the term “active learning” is equated with active bodies. We believe that active learning is, first and foremost, about encouraging *active minds* in the learning process. This is accomplished by interacting with Scripture—discovering, imagining, questioning, organizing, analyzing, evaluating, drawing conclusions, and applying God's Word.

Our lessons are structured to encourage this type of active engagement with the Bible. The lesson format uses an interactive teaching model by which teachers lead children logically through a series of questions designed to lead them to correct conclusions. In doing so, we are encouraging our students to discover what God actually says in His Word.

Our questions should teach them to observe, interpret, and apply the truth. The mind then becomes a conduit for the truth to reach the heart. In this way, we are moving them from not only discovering truth, but then responding to that truth in their lives.

TEACHING FROM A HEART OF PRAISE

In teaching children, it's very important to keep in mind that it is not just *what* we teach that is important, but also our *demeanor* as we teach. In his sermon, "One Generation Shall Praise Your Works to Another" (from Psalm 145:4), John Piper says:

It is the Biblical duty of every generation of Christians to see to it that the next generation hears about the mighty acts of God. God does not drop a new Bible from heaven on every generation. He intends that the older generation will teach the newer generation to read and think and trust and obey and rejoice. It's true that God draws near personally to every new generation of believers, but he does so through the Biblical truth that they learn from the preceding generations. The Spirit comes down vertically (you might say) where the truth of God is imparted horizontally.

But there is another reason that Psalm 145:4 is so relevant... Not only does it speak of the imparting of truth from one generation to another, it speaks of a certain kind of imparting. It is an imparting with exultation and for exultation. Notice the words. It does not say, "One generation shall merely teach Your works to another." It says, "One generation shall praise Your works to another." Praise is exultation in God. The education of the next generation must not only aim at exultation, it must involve exultation.

The first and most important aspect in teaching the Truth78 curriculum is the spiritual preparation of the teacher. Good teaching comes from a mind that has been instructed by the Word of God and a heart that has embraced His Word, evidenced by a confidence and delight in God and heartfelt praise of Him, through Christ.

Teachers and parents who do not exult over God in their teaching will not bring about exultation in God. Dry, unemotional, indifferent teaching about God—whether at home or at church—is a half-truth, at best. It says one thing about God and portrays another thing. It is inconsistent. It says that God is great, but teaches as if God is not great.

Psalm 145:4 shows us another way: "One generation shall praise Your works to another." Let praises carry the truth to the next generation, because the aim of truth is praise. The aim of education is exultation. So let education model exultation in the way it is done.³

Therefore, *the first and most important aspect in teaching the Truth78 curriculum is the spiritual preparation of the teacher.* Good teaching comes from a mind that has been instructed by the Word of God and a heart that has embraced His Word, evidenced by a confidence and delight in God and heartfelt praise of Him, through Christ. This teaching foundation and aim is summarized in our vision,

Our vision is that the next generations know, honor, and treasure the truth of God, setting their hope in Christ alone, so that they will live as faithful disciples for the glory of God.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER IN TEACHING

As teachers, we must humbly acknowledge that true regeneration and saving faith is by God's sovereign grace, through the work of the Holy Spirit, who makes us alive to Christ and empowers us to walk in His ways. Therefore, it is important for teachers

to approach every lesson with earnest prayer for ourselves and for our students. Many lessons include specific prayer prompts for this purpose.

What follows then, is both a reflection of these convictions and very practical help in preparing and presenting a lesson.

GENERAL CLASSROOM ISSUES

Work in cooperation with the other members of your team.

- Understand your role in the classroom: A teacher's main role is to be responsible for preparing and teaching the **Large Group Lesson** found in each lesson of the curriculum.
- Understand the roles and responsibilities of other classroom volunteers: team leader, worship leader, and small group leaders.
- Clearly communicate your expectations during the lesson to all volunteers (e.g., have them sit with the children and help deal with any disruptive behavior during the lesson.)

A teacher's main role is to be responsible for preparing and teaching the **Large Group Lesson**.

Consider the physical attributes of your room and use them to your best advantage.

- The room should be bright and cheerful, and not overly messy or cluttered.
- It is preferable to have chairs for children to sit on during the lesson.
- Have adequate blank wall space or easels for lesson visuals.
- Arrange class seating in a way that minimizes distractions.

Get to know your students.

- Use nametags and plan other simple activities to get to know your students' personalities, interests, etc. This will help you become a more effective teacher.

- Ask about your church's behavioral policy and be ready to clearly communicate and implement it in the classroom in age-appropriate ways.
- Understand the abilities and limitations of the age group in which you are teaching (e.g., reading skills, attention span, etc.).

GET TO KNOW YOUR CURRICULUM

Use your Teacher's Guide to become thoroughly acquainted with the content of the curriculum.

- Read the **Curriculum Scope and Sequence** found in the **Preface**. Notice the flow of the study and the main concepts that will be taught. There is a step-by-step, precept-upon-precept design to the lesson order.
- Carefully read the entire **Introduction**. Make sure you have all necessary curriculum teaching components (e.g., lesson visuals) found in the **Classroom Kit**.
- After reading the Introduction, work with your ministry team to design an organized class structure—transition time, worship, lesson presentation, small group time—that incorporates the curriculum as a whole and prioritizes time for the Lesson Presentation and Small Group Application.
- Look at the total number of weeks available in your Sunday school year. If it is necessary to combine or skip lessons, make these decisions as early in the school year as possible, and base these decisions on a careful review and understanding of the curriculum **Scope and Sequence**.
- Look at the list of additional helps found in the **Appendix**.
- Read the **About Truth78** section at the end of the Teacher's Guide.

PREPARING AND TEACHING A LESSON

Know the lesson.

- At least a week ahead of time, carefully read the entire lesson including the Small Group Application. Read and meditate on the Scriptures and biblical truths to be taught. Ask the Holy Spirit to instruct your mind, engage your heart, and influence your will through your study of the Word. How might this lesson serve to increase your knowledge, honor, and love of God through Christ? Ponder how this might be evidenced in your teaching.
- If you have any questions about the concepts or theology presented in the lesson, talk to the appropriate ministry leader/s for clarification and guidance.
- Make sure to understand the lesson format—the use of italics, bold fonts, illustrations, etc.
- Examine how the lesson fits in with the previous lessons and future lessons.
- Consider how the lesson visuals and/or illustrations demonstrate and explain key biblical concepts. If you need to change an illustration for your particular class situation, make sure the change reflects the purpose of the original illustration.

Prepare the lesson.

- To present the lesson, decide whether it will work best to use the actual lesson from your Teacher's Guide, whether it would be better to create an outline on a series of index cards, or if there might be another format that works best for you and is a minimum distraction for your students.
- Assemble and prepare the lesson visuals. They should be colorful, clear, and easy to see and/or read. You may need to adjust their size depending on the size of your class (i.e., you could print them to a larger format

from the PDF included with the Classroom Kit). Practice using the visuals and doing the illustrations.

- Plan how you will use the room, visuals, volunteers, etc. throughout the lesson. Think through the logistics. For example, a shy child may not be comfortable being called upon to participate in an illustration in front of the class. Some lesson illustrations call for a certain number of children or an adult participant.
- Decide how you will present the Bible texts. Which texts will you read to the class? Which will you call on students to read? Consider the age and reading ability of your students carefully.
- If you are presenting a Bible story, what parts will you read directly from the text? How will you engage the children's attention as you tell the story?
- Think through the vocabulary that you will use to make sure it is age appropriate.
- Are there ways in which the lesson themes have a special relevance in the life and people of your church? If so, is there a way to incorporate these briefly into the lesson without distracting from the overall lesson flow?
- Do any of the concepts covered in the lesson tend to lead to certain types of questions from the children? How might you answer these questions?
- Run through the lesson informally at home to check for flow and timing.
- Consider how you will end the lesson. Is there a particular way to challenge the children to know, honor, and treasure God, setting their hope in Christ alone? How might you end by praying toward a right heart response?

Teach the lesson.

- Start on time and have a familiar lead-in before the lesson (e.g., a special song). Whatever you choose, it should have a calming effect on the children.
- Make sure that you clearly communicate your expectations to the class (e.g., raising hands and waiting to be called upon to speak, staying in your seats, etc.)
- Follow your prepared lesson and stay focused.
- Keep the Bible front and center. Biblical instruction should be the focus of the lesson—not illustrations or other activities and unrelated discussions.
- When asking children to participate in some aspect of the lesson, tell them what is required ahead of time, before they volunteer.
- If a visual or illustration is not making the point it is meant to make, simply explain how it is supposed to work and move on.
- If necessary, defer unrelated or difficult questions. Tell the child that you will address the question after the lesson.
- Handle distractions quickly and calmly. If necessary, have another adult intervene.
- Use the appropriate tone and volume during the lesson. For example, when speaking of something powerful, use a powerful voice.
- Be expressive with your face, hands, and movements.

- Encourage active participation when applicable and watch for signs of attentiveness in the children. If necessary, stop the lesson for a moment, and regain their attention.
- Allow the children moments of silence to think about important points and serious questions.
- End the lesson, on time, with prayer.

FURTHER TRAINING

Visit Truth78.org/training to read other articles in the Core Training Series and browse conference sessions.

For further training on teaching Truth78 curriculum, we encourage you to listen to following seminar on our website:

- [Elementary Lesson Preparation and Presentation](#)

(Note: This seminar was produced under our previous name, Children Desiring God.)

Endnotes

1. Sproul, R. C. Essential Truths of the Christian Faith. (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), xix.
2. Piper, John. "A Compelling Reason for Rigorous Training of the Mind: Thoughts on the Significance of Reading." Article published July 13, 2005, copyright 2014 Desiring God Foundation, desiringGod.org.
3. Piper, John. "One Generation Shall Praise Your Works to Another." Sermon delivered on March 19, 2000 at Bethlehem Baptist Church of Minneapolis. Copyright 2013 Desiring God Foundation, desiringGod.org.

NOTES



Equipping the Next Generations
to Know, Honor, and Treasure God

Truth78 is a vision-oriented ministry for the next generations—that they may know, honor, and treasure God, setting their hope in Christ alone, so that they will live as faithful disciples for the glory of God.

Our mission is to nurture the faith of the next generations by equipping the church and home with resources and training that instruct the mind, engage the heart, and influence the will through proclaiming the whole counsel of God.

We are committed to developing resources and training that are God-centered, Bible-saturated, Gospel-focused, Christ-exalting, Spirit-dependent, doctrinally grounded, and discipleship-oriented.

RESOURCES AND TRAINING MATERIALS

Truth78 currently offers the following categories of resources and training materials:

VISION-CASTING AND TRAINING

We offer a wide variety of booklets, video and audio seminars, articles, and other practical training resources that highlight and further expound our vision, mission, and values, as well as our educational philosophy and methodology. Many of these resources are freely distributed through our website. These resources and trainings serve to assist ministry leaders, volunteers, and parents in implementing Truth78's vision and mission in their churches and homes.

CURRICULUM

We publish materials designed for formal Bible instruction. The scope and sequence of these materials reflects our commitment to teach children and youth the whole counsel of God over the course of their education. Materials include curricula for Sunday School, Midweek Bible programs, Backyard Bible Clubs or Vacation Bible School, and Intergenerational studies. Most of these materials can be adapted for use in Christian schools and education in the home.

PARENTING AND FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

We have produced a variety of materials and training resources designed to help parents disciple their children. These include booklets, video presentations, family devotionals, children's books, articles, and other recommended resources.

Furthermore, our curricula include Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) Pages to help parents apply what is taught in the classroom to their child's daily experience in order to nurture faith.

BIBLE MEMORY

Our Fighter Verses Bible memory program is designed to encourage churches, families, and individuals in the lifelong practice and love of Bible memory. The Fighter Verses program utilizes an easy-to-use Bible memory system with carefully chosen verses to help fight the fight of faith. For pre-readers, Foundation Verses features 76 key verses with simple images. Visit FighterVerses.com for weekly devotionals and free memory aids. Download the Fighter Verses App for quizzes, songs, devotionals, review reminders and other helps.

For more information on any of these resources and training materials contact:

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