

Suggestions for Teachers

Suggested Uses

This series is designed for four to seven-year-old children. It could be used in a Christian day school, children's church, Bible clubs, Sunday night or Wednesday night programs. It could also be used by homeschoolers. It can easily be adapted for family devotions with young children or simply to be read to a child.

Pages to Color

At the end of the book are the letters of the alphabet. Make copies of these and use to make a set of flashcards. Also, make enough copies for each child to color the letter during the activity time of each lesson.

Instructions for Flashcards

1. Cut off the verse that is printed on the bottom of the page. Color the letters and mount each one on construction paper or squares of poster board to make your flashcards. You may want to glue the printed verse on the back of each card as a "reminder" for yourself!
2. When saying verses, hold the flashcard up and say the letter, the verse, and the reference. For example: "A" — *A soft answer turneth away wrath (Proverbs 15:1).*

Instructions for Puppets

1. Missy and Bill puppets are on pages vi and vii. Color them, cut them out and back them with poster board. Glue craft sticks on the back. You may want to make copies of the puppets and make a set for each child. These could even be given when a child completes the ABC Memory Program.
2. You may prefer to purchase puppets from a school supply.
3. In using puppets, you do not have to "hide" the fact that you are doing the talking. You may

want to change your voice to sound more like a child. Move the puppet who is talking and the children will get the idea!

4. Have a special "house" for Missy and Bill. They may live in a drawer, or you may decorate a shoe box as their house.

5. Missy and Bill can be helpful in maintaining order in your classroom. Tell the children that Missy and Bill are afraid of loud noises. Whenever the children are too noisy, remind them that Missy and Bill will be afraid to visit unless they are quiet.

6. Whenever you have a new child in your class, introduce him/her to Missy and Bill. Let Missy and Bill be very excited about having a visitor. You may want to call the child to the front and let Missy and Bill "kiss" him/her. The puppets can help you make a new child feel welcome. They can also help you teach children how to welcome visitors.

7. Always let Missy and Bill be very excited about all that the children are learning. Praise, encourage and love your children through Missy and Bill. This will teach the children to praise, encourage and love one another! *"...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds..." (Hebrews 10:24).*

Suggestions for Memorization

1. If you want to encourage individual recitation, make a chart from poster board with the ABCs across the top. List the names of the children down the left side of the chart. When a child says a verse to you, let him/her put a check under that letter. You may also want to keep an additional record in a notebook. Use pre-session activity time to listen to verses.
2. If you have a large class, you may need a "listener" to hear the children recite verses. If you do not have a regular helper, this could easily be done by a different parent each week. It is often helpful to have parents participate in this way.

3. Call the parents (or you may prefer to send notes or have a meeting) and tell them about the memory program. Ask them to review the verses with their child during the week. Make copies of page 80, which lists all the verses, and give to the parents.
4. After the children have learned eight or ten verses, you may want to invite the parents to hear them or arrange for them to say the verses in your Sunday school assembly or as a part of the evening worship service. Tell the children that you plan to do this and it will be an incentive for them to work harder. Children love to perform!
5. When reviewing the verses, or when children are saying verses individually, encourage them to stand straight and still and to speak distinctly. Recitation is becoming a lost art!
6. When reciting verses, say them with the children. Hearing you helps them to learn.
7. Verses that can be said in a rhythm or with motions will be indicated in the lesson. This makes it easier for the children to remember. It also makes it more fun!
8. You may find it helpful to have review lessons periodically. Spend the lesson time reviewing the verses and asking questions about the meaning of each verse. Do not teach a new verse. For activity time, the children could draw their own pictures of Missy and Bill.
9. Use your Bible as you teach! Show the children the verses in the Bible. Continually remind them that these verses are from God's Word.
10. When there are ideas in a lesson that work well with your children, use them again. Children feel secure with the same procedures, games, and methods. Repetition, review, and making it fun are essential!

Catechism

1. You may want to incorporate some of the questions from the *Catechism for Young Children* into these lessons. This will be especially helpful if the children are learning the Catechism in another class. Questions 14 and 15, relating to the Bible, would be particularly applicable.

Suggested Classroom Procedure

1. Greet the children as they arrive. You may want to have books, puzzles, drawing paper, and toys for those who arrive early. You can also use this time to review verses and to listen to verses. If a child was absent the previous week, you may want to let him/her color the letter from that lesson.

2. You may want to begin with singing, depending on the amount of time you have.

3. Story / Memorization Time:

Begin with prayer, led by the teacher, asking for the Lord's blessing on the story time. The lesson includes the memorization of the verse, the review of previous verses, and the story.

4. Prayer Time:

After the lesson, close with a prayer time. Encourage all of the children to pray, but do not pressure or embarrass them. Teach them that we can pray because Jesus died for our sins, so we end our prayer by saying, "In Jesus' name." Suggestions will be given for relating the prayer to the lesson.

5. Activity Time:

Make enough copies of the letter for the children. Be sure the children put their names on their papers (you will need to do this for children who cannot print). As the children color, review the story and recite the verse. It is good if the children can be at small tables with a helper at each table. You may also use this time to let the children come to you, one at a time, to recite a verse and put a check on the chart.

6. Closing Time:

Have a "closing procedure" so that the class time ends in an orderly manner. You may want to collect the papers the children have colored, have the children clean the room, and then gather in the story circle to review the verse and to have a closing prayer. Call the children up individually, give them their papers and a hug, and have them leave quietly or form a line to wait for their parents.

Presenting the Gospel to Covenant Children

I believe that little children can know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. The Holy Spirit's work is not limited by age. God applies the message of salvation to whomever He chooses whenever He chooses. Perhaps the following thoughts will be helpful as you present the Gospel to covenant children.

When God created man, He entered into a covenant with him, thus elevating man to a position of fellowship with Himself. God could have created a puppet, but He didn't. God gave man the ability to respond. God gave man the ability to love and to obey. Without this covenant there would be no exchange of love – no fellowship. Man's privilege and responsibility in the covenant was to glorify God by loving and obeying Him.

The truth that the Creator of the universe was willing to live in fellowship with the creature of His hand is too glorious to comprehend. What is even more amazing is that when the creature did not keep his part of the covenant, when he disobeyed, the Creator already had a better plan. He was still willing to live in fellowship with His people and He was even willing to provide the way. This is what is known as the covenant of grace.

The covenant of grace demanded that sin be punished. God met that demand by doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. God gave His own Son as the sacrifice for the sins of His people. He then elevated His chosen people to the position of covenant partner, though in reality we are only the beneficiaries of the covenant agreement. Our covenant partner, the Lord Jesus, met the demands of the covenant for us, and now we receive the blessings of salvation and become joint heirs with Him. The Christian is able to live in covenant fellowship with God because of what our covenant partner has done for us. It is now the privilege and the responsibility of the Christian to obey God from a heart of love. The glorious truth that must be emphasized is that the Christian CAN live a life of loving obedience because of what our covenant partner did for us on the cross and because of what He is doing in our lives through the power of His Holy Spirit.

But God went a step further. Whereas salvation is a very individual and personal matter, we do not live in isolation. In Genesis 17:7, when God revealed the covenant promise to Abraham, He said, *"I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you **and your descendants** after you...."* God again emphasized the importance of our children in the covenant when He gave circumcision as the sign and seal of the covenant. The fact that circumcision was to be administered to children shows that the covenant promise extends to believers and to their children.

In Deuteronomy 6, we read that Israel was commanded to love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their strength – and they were commanded to teach all these things to their children. The same is true for the church of Jesus Christ today. As Peter said in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, *"For the promise is for you **and your children**, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself"* (Acts 2:39).

In the New Testament, circumcision, the Old Testament sign and seal of the covenant of grace, became baptism. Because of the continuity of the covenant in both testaments, believers and their children are to be recipients of the sign and seal. This does not mean that we presume that babies are saved at baptism. But we do believe that because of the covenant relationship God has with believers and their children, He works in a special way in their lives.

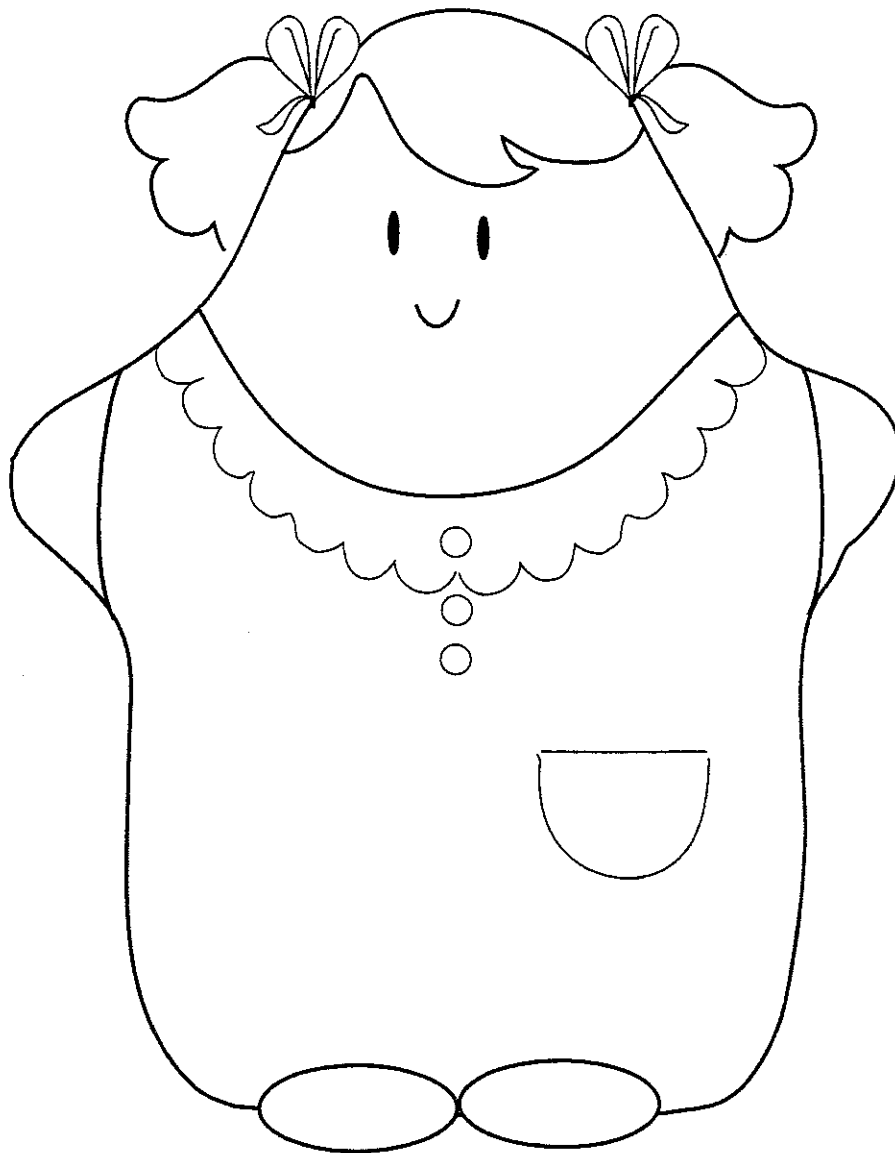
What are the practical implications of this? There are many, but we will mention four:

1. Covenant children are entitled to certain benefits of the covenant. These benefits include hearing God's Word, prayer, and being a part of the fellowship of the church. They are entitled to the privilege of being taught God's Word within the loving atmosphere of the home and church.
2. Because of our emphasis on baptism as a covenant sign to be administered in the presence of God's covenant family, we believe this implies that covenant children have a special place within the church. We believe that covenant children are to be taught that they are members of God's covenant family, that they have responsibilities within that family, and that the family of God has responsibilities concerning them.
3. In presenting the Gospel to covenant children, we must realize that for some children there is a definite time and place when they repent of their sins and turn in faith to Jesus Christ, while there are others who never remember a time when they did not love Jesus. The important thing is not an instantaneous experience, but rather signs of regeneration such as a love for God, a desire to hear His Word, a loving and obedient attitude, a love for others, and a growth in holiness. At the same time, we must not be negligent of our responsibility to teach them what a Christian is and how one becomes a Christian. We believe this will be done naturally as you help children understand the Bible and how it applies to their lives, and as they see the reality of Christ in the lives of the adults around them. Though normally covenant children grow into salvation by gradual nurture and training, be sensitive to key opportunities to instruct them in how to ask for forgiveness of sin and how to exercise their faith in Jesus Christ. Do not be hesitant to pray with a little child who says, "I want to become a Christian," or "I want Jesus in my heart." The child may not fully understand all of the implications, but neither did we. That understanding will grow. We believe that faith precedes understanding, and our growth in the Christian life is a process.
4. What about children in your class who are not from Christian homes? God has brought these children to you, and they must be taught the same truths that covenant children are taught. However, knowing the implications and the blessings of the covenant, your greatest responsibility to these children may be to seek to reach out to them and their parents with the good news of Jesus Christ. Your sincere love for and interest in that child may give you a wonderful opportunity to share the Gospel with the parents.

Jesus said, "*Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them...*" (Matthew 19:14). We "let them come" by being faithful in our responsibility of teaching them God's Word and modeling the Christian life before them. As we teach, we remember "*...no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit*" (I Corinthians 12:3). Salvation and Christian growth are not merely intellectual experiences. They are spiritual truths comprehended as the Holy Spirit gives understanding. We can teach God's Word to little children with confidence in God's promise that "*It will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it*" (Isaiah 55:11).

Directions for Making Finger or Hand Puppets

Copy illustrations below and color with crayons or felt-tip markers. Glue on cardboard to reinforce and cut out. Glue craft sticks on back for holding.



A felt puppet may also be made. Enlarge the outline of illustration below and use as a pattern to cut out two felt pieces, approximately 8 1/2" x 9 1/2". Glue the two parts together around edges leaving bottom open for hand. (Ponytail pieces for Missy should be inserted and glued in at this time). Different colors for hair, clothes and shoes can be glued in place on top. Draw eyes and mouth with black ball-point pen or glue on small cut-outs of felt. Add freckles and rosy cheeks with crayons. Be creative. Bows for Missy's hair, buttons and trim on clothes and string for shoelace ties are a few ideas. Hand stitch along collar line for about 1 1/2" from shoulder.

