



2 Year Olds

One of our priorities in teaching children is that we do so in biblical, age-appropriate ways. The following guidelines are certainly not exhaustive for each age group, but our hope is that this information would be helpful to teachers as they seek to teach God's Word in meaningful ways to the specific age group they've been given. All excerpts are taken from Faith Teaching, by Steve Wamburg & John Conway.

Two-year-olds are:

- Imitators
- Experimenters
- Learning language skills
- Learning through important relationships
- Self-contained (group exercises don't mean as much as individual encounters)

What Works, What Doesn't:

DO:

- Create a safe, interesting environment where children can freely explore
- Refer frequently to God, Jesus and the Bible to lay a solid foundation for future spiritual growth
- Create an emotionally warm environment that builds trust (this begins with the happy welcome at the door!)
- Present Bible stories in short presentations, encouraging movement and participation by the children
- Encourage lots of talking and repeating (at appropriate times)
- Teach children individually or in small groups (during handwork time, snacks Bible worksheets, etc.)
- Encourage crafts and projects which allow children to enjoy the process of creating (children this age LOVE play dough!)

DON'T:

- Have unsafe conditions which would keep the children from moving safely about the room
- Assume that toddlers are too young to be exposed to Bible truths
- Tell lengthy Bible stories as children sit passively
- Discourage children from talking & interacting (at appropriate times)
- Plan class activities which require fine motor skills (coloring in the lines isn't necessary at 2!) or in which all the crafts look exactly the same when finished. Allow the children in your class to express individual creativity.



3-5 Year Olds

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Preschoolers' brains are hungry for input from a variety of sources. That's why they love the question "Why?"

Three to Five-year-olds are:

- Questioners
- Able to focus on only one aspect of a situation at a time
- Sensory learners
- Able to do many more things physically than toddlers and two
- Group Learners
- Roaming Learners

What Works, What Doesn't:

DO:

- Tell the Bible story with the Bible open to the appropriate passage to reinforce the fact that the stories come from the Bible and they are true
- Provide activities that allow children to use their large muscle skills (for example, march around the room when telling the story of the wall of Jericho!)
- Offer choices of activities – varied learning centers with options that use as many of their senses as possible
- Provide opportunities for children to practice their developing finger dexterity skills such as cutting, coloring, and sorting.
- Have creative play experiences – role-playing, music and movement
- Allow their expanding vocabularies to be stretched through small-group discussions and sharing projects
- Encourage their natural curiosity by valuing their questions

DON'T:

- Concentrate so much on making the Bible stories entertaining that the children miss the point that the stories come from the Bible, which comes from God
- Expect preschool children to sit quietly for long periods of time
- Have only one activity for all children
- Give preschoolers craft activities where the adults have done most of the work and the children do the assembly (though this is tempting, it can often frustrate preschoolers because the project doesn't look like "theirs")
- Expect preschoolers to be the audience and not the participants
- Be the one to always do all the talking
- Discourage or ignore the constant "whys" you will hear!
- Creativity.



Kindergarten & First Grade

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Kindergarten and First Grade Children are:

- Dramatists and role-players
- Hands-on creators
- Simple, focused, concrete thinkers
- Almost consumed by the process of learning to read

What Works, What Doesn't:

DO:

- Establish eye contact with the children and smile
- Provide reading material that is a match for their reading abilities
- Encourage students to show that they know exactly what the Bible story is about by retelling the Bible content using dramatization, puppets or role-playing
- Promote interactive creativity by providing activity choices which include cutting, constructing and creating
- Encourage activities that match the learning of new readers – recognizing letters, frequent writing opportunities, repetitive text to read
- Recognize that the most important book these children will ever be exposed to is the Bible

DON'T:

- Underestimate what children will pick up from your facial expressions
- Expect most of the children to be able to read complex material (or even follow along in a Bible text)
- Assume children have understood the Bible content simply because the story is finished (let them ask questions, act out the story, etc., to reinforce what they just heard taught)
- Pass out worksheets to early elementary students which require no interaction, activity or response (this may take a bit of creativity on your part, but it isn't hard to make a "plain" worksheet interactive)
- Ignore the fact that learning to read is a consuming (and sometimes frustrating) part of their lives
- Miss opportunities to relate their new reading abilities to a future of reading the Bible



Second & Third Graders

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Second and Third Grade Children are:

Elementary children (2nd & 3rd graders) share these characteristics:

- Logical thinking
- A love for facts
- Demonstrated reasoning and sorting skills
- A sense of right and wrong "justice"
- Cooperation with common group goals

What Works, What Doesn't:

DO:

- Work hard to catch every child "being good" and praise each one!
- Have opportunities for group projects, activities, games and interaction
- Provide as much factual and background information as you can when presenting a Bible story
- Encourage students to use their Bibles to find verses and references (a good time to practice "sword drills!")
- Allow students to make choices between activities, if possible
- Enjoy the corny jokes and puns of elementary students

DON'T:

- Simply discipline bad or annoying behavior (praise good behavior often!)
- Require the children to sit quietly and do all work individually throughout the class
- Present Bible stories without giving some sort of context for the stories
- Tell the students about Bible content without allowing them the chance to look up verses themselves
- Have students do the same thing throughout the entire lesson
- Expect sophisticated humor or adult thinking



Fourth Graders

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Fourth Grade Children are:

These characteristics describe your upper elementary children:

- An emphasis on group membership
- Ability to analyze facts and intentions
- Logical thinking
- A love for facts
- Demonstrated logic and sorting skills
- A strong sense of right and wrong "justice"
- Cooperation with common group goals

What Works, What Doesn't:

DO:

- Provide opportunities for students to study the Bible and look up verses, references and passages
- Encourage acceptance of all God's children – vary the seating frequently to avoid "cliques"
- Allow students to suggest & come to group consensus about classroom rules (with teacher guidance)
- Provide opportunities for cooperative group work as well as independent study
- Allow children to make choices between activities
- Keep classroom instruction as concrete as possible

DON'T:

- Tell the students all the Bible content as they passively listen
- Allow children to sit in cliques or always with the same peers (talk about getting to know other classmates and making new friends – many of these children have been together since infancy)
- Present a set of rules to follow and exclude students from sharing thoughts and input
- Have children do the same thing for the whole lesson
- Present abstract concepts like "witnessing" without concrete examples and role-playing practice