

## **Living B.I.G. Through Music**

One of my favorite childhood memories of Sunday school was singing songs. I could belt out "Jesus Loves Me" and "Jesus Loves the Little Children" with the best of them. I learned Bible stories by singing "Only a Boy Named David" and "Zacchaeus Was a Wee Little Man." To this day when I am looking for a Scripture passage in the New Testament, I sing the books of the New Testament to a tune I learned in the fifth grade.

Now, however, many children come to Sunday school and never hear or sing songs. Perhaps the teacher has other activities for the children to do, or maybe the teacher doesn't feel comfortable using music in the classroom. Whatever the reason, some children are not experiencing the fun of learning about God through music.

### **How Can Music Teach Children About God?**

Just as some children learn better when ideas are presented to them visually, others learn best when ideas are presented to them aurally, especially through music. Music is a great teaching tool because it reinforces the learning experience with:

**Repetition**—Repeating songs again and again helps children learn Bible verses, stories, and facts.

**Movement**—Children are more apt to retain things they have learned with their whole bodies. Singing and moving to music involves the whole child in ways that sitting and listening cannot.

**Fun**—Music is just plain fun! We want our children to want to come to Sunday school. And we know that children love music. What an easy way to incorporate fun activities that can also teach!

Even the most non-musical teacher can include music in the classroom. Every lesson incorporates music into the lesson plan, offering lots of songs that are fun to sing and listen to. Create opportunities for adding music to your children's Sunday school experience.

### **Musical Possibilities**

Play music as the children enter the classroom and while the children are working on craft activities or at centers.

Make a music listening center from a large appliance box filled with pillows, cassette or CD player, and headphones. Use a favorite CD of praise music, or have a church musician or youth group make a tape of a single song that you would like the children to learn.

Use music as a signal for transitions. Singing a song is a gentler reminder that it is time to put toys and materials away than the use of verbal instructions. Some songs tend to build excitement for active learning times, and some are better for preparing children for

quieter, more meditative activities.

Call children to worship with music. Use the same song each week to begin your worship time. Invite the children to sing along or just listen to the music.

Invite the children to move to the music. Ask the children to move in the way the music makes them feel. For smooth, flowing music, give the children scarfs or crepe paper streamers. For music with a heavy rhythm, have the children march or play rhythm instruments. Ask the children to show with their bodies what feeling or emotion the music evokes.

Directed dances such as the "Hokey Pokey" are always a lot of fun for children. Use "If You're Happy and You Know It" to gain the attention of an entire class quickly.

Use motion to help children memorize the words to longer songs. Often when given a little encouragement, children will make up their own motions. The use of sign language for repetitive phrases is often a part of the curriculum and encourages appreciation of those who must use signs to speak.

The best way to learn a song is to simply sing it a lot! When teaching a new song, have the children listen as you say the words in rhythm. Ask the children to repeat the words only. The next week invite the children to listen as you sing or play the song several times and encourage the children to sing along. By the third week, you may have children requesting the song or you may hear them singing it as they work on their art projects.

Whatever you do, give the children in your class the opportunity to experience some musical fun this quarter. Use music to teach your class about the love of God. In the process, you might just create some musical memories of your own.

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