

Welcome to the Adventure!



As you begin this Children's Church Adventure, I pray that the fun versions of memory verses, the creative teaching ideas, songs and PowerPoint sermons will be great tools for you and your team; but please know, that as children's pastors and leaders, our greatest responsibility is to connect kids with Jesus.

"GOD'S TIME"

One moment in His Presence can change a child's life...forever. One moment, one touch from Him will do more for a child than all of our creative teaching ideas ever can. But...that one moment might not happen during "worship." It might happen through a Small Group leader taking time to really care. It might happen through a greeter at the door remembering a child's name and being genuinely interested in hearing about their week.

Or it might happen in two minutes of quiet. One thing I have used throughout the years is what I call, "God's Time." The kids would know that very regularly in Children's Church we would be quiet and listen. I would say, "What time is it?" And their response would be, "God's Time!" I would go on to explain that for the next two to three minutes we wouldn't talk or listen or interact with our friends...we would just listen to God.

I would then say something like this: "God speaks in many, many languages...and most of His languages aren't even words! He speaks in pictures, and ideas, and music... Have you ever heard God speak to you? The Bible says He is our Shepherd; we are His sheep - and the sheep know the voice of their shepherd. Hearing God's voice should be a common, every day thing for Christians! So...have you ever heard God speak to you? Has He ever given you a picture or an idea or a song...? Suppose, when we are listening to God here today, you see a picture in your mind of, let's say, your mom... Ask God what He wants you to do - pray for your mom? Give her a hug after church? Maybe apologize for something you said or did? Or - maybe you see a picture of our pastor? Why would God put our pastor in your mind...maybe to pray...? Anyway...when I count to 3, we are all going to go very quiet and listen to God. Ready? 1...2...3....listen...!"

And God would speak to the children. I have found that He is very eager to speak to them and they are very able to hear.

After two-three minutes (no longer - because minds wander and bodies get fidgety) I would say, "OK - did anyone hear God's voice? Did He show you a picture or give you an idea...?" and MANY hands would go up. We would choose a few children to come to the front and tell us what God showed them...it was often PROFOUND...and then we would take time to PRAY about what God showed them.

The first time I ever lead children in a time of listening to God absolutely changed my life. It was over 35 years ago and I was very new to children's ministry. I loved the kids and thought my job was to make sure that church was so much FUN they would drag their parents there every week.☺ One Sunday evening service we were teaching the kids about the lost sheep and Jesus being our Shepherd. We went on to mention the Bible reference I just referred to (John 10:27) that the sheep know the shepherd's voice... And I thought, hey - let's give it a try! Let's listen to God! And in my limited understanding and experience with such things, I fully expected the kids to come up with prayer requests and some testimonies. I was totally not expecting Him to actually speak to them! We listened quietly for a few minutes...then I asked if anyone heard God's voice. Many hands went up; and I was inwardly thinking, "Oh, this is so cute. I guess we'll be praying for things like someone's sick puppy..." I shake my head and repent yet again for my limited faith and my limited recognition of how children can hear God!

I vividly remember the first child who came to the front to tell us what God said. She walked with confidence and determination, her dark curls bobbing up and down. She took the mic and proclaimed with great authority, "The Lord just told me that my spirit is just as big as an adult's!"

She walked back to her seat and I stood there, amazed.

All that week, her words echoed in my mind and heart....and I realized - my job wasn't what I had thought. My job was to feed the spirits of the children in my care. My job was to equip and enable and empower them to serve God - NOW - not just someday when they grew up. And I started to pray; really pray - "Lord, HELP!!! Give me ideas and ways to teach Your truth to kids in ways they understand and enjoy. Help me prepare spiritual meals that are colorful and interesting and fun and very nutritious!"

And the adventure began. The Lord started giving me "downloads" of ideas, stories and songs (FYI - I can't read music and have a terrible sense of rhythm☺), even full-blown musical theater productions - all filled with scripture and Biblical truths presented in very fun ways.

So...there you have a little background. Now perhaps the memory verses and teaching ideas will have some context. My prayer is that the iBELIEVE curriculum will provide helpful, easy-to-use tools for you and your team; but please know that the heart behind it all is connecting kids with Jesus and building His truth into their lives.

On with the Adventure!



iBELIEVE Curriculum - A 52 Week Children's Church Adventure

"BUILDING TRUTH INTO THE LIVES OF CHILDREN"

It is so important for children to know what they believe, why they believe, and how to share that belief with others. This curriculum is about equipping kids for life; it is about building faith foundation line upon line, week after week...in ways that kids enjoy!

The iBELIEVE curriculum is structured in four 13 week units, some consisting of four or six week modules that can be purchased individually. Every unit includes at least one Review Party Sunday - which is also a great opportunity for the children to present their songs and verses to the congregation!

Children from Kindergarten through Grade 4 will enjoy the materials. Preschoolers might join in for the singing and memorization and then go to their own class for a simplified lesson and craft. For older children, we suggest involving them - welcoming at the door, helping to lead the singing, verses, creative teachings etc; then giving them their own club-house kind of space for the Small Group time.

iBELIEVE UNIT THEMES

(52 weeks in four 12 week units plus a “Review Party Sunday” following each unit)

UNIT #1: THE APOSTLE’S CREED - A 13 WEEK MODULE

Kids will learn very fun versions of the Apostle’s Creed and the Books of the Bible plus some main Christian doctrines including: Salvation, Water Baptism, the Holy Spirit (overview) the Church and Communion

UNIT #2: THREE 4 WEEK MODULES

MODULE #1: THE BE-ATTITUDES

Kids learn the “Be-Attitudes” in 4 weeks and will be able to say which number each one is!

MODULE #2: TROUBLE Kids learn where to run when they are in trouble, what to do when their heart hurts, and how power-filled their praise is!

MODULE #3: HOLY SPIRIT Kids learn the Holy Spirit is a wonderful GIFT – for everyone, including KIDS! They will learn about some things INSIDE the Gift. (This module is easily adapted for a variety of doctrinal beliefs.)

UNIT #3: THREE 4 WEEK MODULES

MODULE #1: WISE BUILDERS

Kids learn that they are like “houses” that need to be built strong. They will learn the importance of obedience and following instructions along with the “Ten Command-Meants” (because God meant it!).

MODULE #2: SELF-CONTROL

Kids get some great tools to help them control their THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, WORDS and ACTIONS

MODULE #3: FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

The Fruit of the Spirit is exactly that - the Fruit of the *SPIRIT!!* They are **God qualities!** This module focuses on kids LOVING Jesus and learning about His goodness, patience etc - so they will WANT to stay close to Him - and as a result, the Fruit will grow in their lives!

UNIT #4: TWO 6 WEEK MODULES

MODULE #1: PRAYER

Kids learn the Lord’s Prayer; prayer is talking and LISTENING to God, their prayers are powerful, pray with faith & persistence and how to PRAY GOD’S WORD.

MODULE #2: EVANGELISM

Kids learn that they are ambassadors and how to share the Good News using 5 colours and Scripture; plus they will have a good understanding of how to keep growing in their faith.

This curriculum is written in a Large Group/Small Group format with a 75 minute time frame. Some churches find there is too much content and choose to take twice as long to go through the material; splitting the lessons in half for each week. This allows more time for worship, more time in Small Groups and more time for on-going review.

LARGE GROUP (approximately 40 minutes)



Each lesson includes:

- Large Group leader guide - with the suggested order and transitions
- Singing and worship (with song MP3s and PowerPoints plus suggested links for other songs)
- Memory verses and raps (with video guides and PowerPoints)
- Creative Teachings (Easy/fun/dynamic skits, object lessons and creative sermons; plus some video clip links)
- Response time
- Take Home Pages

M/C - This person is the host of the service. They need to be “pre-prayered” to lead the PowerPoint teaching and memory verse review and to make sure things keep things moving on time and that there are smooth transitions between each segment. (NOTE: print the Leader Guide plus the PDF version of the PowerPoint and refer to that - don’t read directly from the slides. This also applies to all teaching PowerPoints. LOOK at the kids and make eye contact - don’t have your back to them, reading PPT slides.)

The M/C is also responsible for the weekly salvation/ recommitment opportunity. This can happen during singing, at the end of the Creative Teaching or during Small Group. The LAST SLIDE in each week’s PPT leads into an opportunity for children to become part of God’s family, His Church. Have a team ready to pray with children who respond. NOTE: Children *want* to respond to Jesus. Explain clearly what salvation means. They don’t need to be “born-again” again and again! But we should repent and turn to God every day!

SINGING

In each lesson, there is a small time allotment for “singing.” We haven’t referred to it as “worship” because worship can take many forms - including things like giving, which is a definite form of worship.

In some churches, the children are in the sanctuary for “worship” and then go to Children’s Church...so they might only want to do one or two songs. Other churches might have the children for longer than the 75 minute schedule that the curriculum provides; they might want to do three songs and have time for the children to really connect with Jesus. Still other churches might choose to split the lessons in half to make sure there is adequate time for all the segments.

A SONG FOLDER is provided for each Unit. Go through in advance and choose which songs to use and have your team be PRE-PRAYERED to lead. Just 10 minutes has been allotted in the schedule but LET GOD LEAD YOU - sometimes pause to linger in His Presence, even if it means skipping another part of the lesson material.

Suggestion: have the “Candy Rappers” lead the Singing/Worship Time plus the Memory Verse review. This could be a HIGH ENERGY group of any number and any ages - dressed in fun bright colours. This team would need to rehearse and prepare ahead each week. Be sure to INVOLVE KIDS on this team.

OFFERING

Unit #1 introduces the topic of giving- with the “Get Along Cowboy” and then each Unit includes an “Offering Folder” with the offering theme song and rap. The offering provides a great opportunity for kids and leaders to present a mini message about giving and tithing. Perhaps there’s a special project they could contribute to over the next few weeks...? Be sure to have a team ready each week to take the offering; and INVOLVE KIDS on this team.

CREATIVE TEACHING

There are numerous skits, object lessons, and character-style sermons throughout the curriculum. Be sure your team is PRE-PRAYERED with all needed props and costumes and that they have rehearsed and know their lines so they can present with confidence! And again, INVOLVE KIDS on this team.

DOWNLOAD ANY SUGGESTED VIDEO CLIPS AHEAD OF TIME

CLOSING REVIEW

At the end of each lesson there is a review list. This can happen in Small Group time or gather the kids back into Large Group again. See the REVIEW GAMES file for suggestions to make the review times FUN!

NOTE: All Large and Small Group leaders and junior leaders should wear lanyards and/or name tags and/or themed t-shirts - this is for the benefit of the children and also the parents - so they know that the team members are approved volunteers.

SMALL GROUP (approximately 30 minutes)



WORD/PRAYER/CONNECT

WORD

The Bible is our Manual for LIFE and kids need to know how to use it! Even very young children love to hold a Bible and “read it.” You will need plenty of copies (at least enough to share between 2-3 kids) of an easy-to understand version. (Suggestion - perhaps a business leader in your church would cover this cost. What a great investment!)

PRAYER

Each Small Group outline includes a suggested prayer that applies to that day’s teaching; some include a prayer activity. Kids grow in confidence in praying out loud; and each child is prayed for, by name, every week.

CONNECT

The Connect segment is when the children have a themed snack and craft or learning activity. It is vital that each child is getting connected and building friendships. (Note: when a new family visits your church, the children are somewhat interested in what program you offer, but they are MOST interested in whether or not the other children will welcome them.)

We recommend that each week you have a basket ready for each group - with Bibles, the “Fast Facts About the Bible” page (double-sided on cardstock), the outline page printed on cardstock, and all the necessary craft and snack supplies and nametags. (Use name tags - it’s important for kids to be called by name; plus that way they can know the names of the other children and their leader.)

The Leaders sit with their kids during Large Group, encouraging them to participate. (Suggestion: “Let’s say the memory verse louder than any other group!”)

NOTE: The Small Group Leaders must understand that their job is to support and strengthen what the children learned during Large Group. They must use the provided outline and gently guide the conversation away from “bunny trails” or from any personal teaching passion they might have. 😊 We want to be wise builders - building line upon line, precept upon precept; and we want the children to clearly answer that inevitable question, “What did you learn in Children’s Church today?” For consistency - we suggest your Small Group teams serve one month on, one month off instead of alternating weeks. Pray for people who are CALLED by God to shepherd the young of the flock. Those people might really appreciate being able to serve every week! (If you have multiple services, they could serve a service and attend a service.)

The Small Group Leaders have the amazing opportunity to affect the lives of the children in their group - forever! The kids might forget the memory verses and fun teachings - but years later they will still remember that leader who truly cared for them. It's a fact.



Some ideas to help your adventure be a success...

PRAYER TEAMS

What you are doing is spiritual; you NEED GOD!!! It is vital that you have a faithful team of people praying for you, the teams, the children and the families. Recruit parents, grand-parents, aunts, uncles...people who have a vested interest in what goes on in Children's Church. Send them a weekly update - with a few specific requests and at least one praise report. INVOLVE KIDS on this team.

BUY BIBLES!

In this curriculum the kids USE the Bible, not just talk about it. The Bible is our manual for LIFE and kids need to know how to use it! You will need plenty of copies of an easy-to understand version - and all the same version so the kids are literally on the same page. 😊

Go to your local bookstore or online and buy a modern translation - enough copies to share between 2-3 kids. (Suggestion - perhaps a business leader in your church would be interested in covering this cost. What a great investment!)

MEMORIZATION is a main factor in this curriculum. Weekly review is CRUCIAL. Each leader must be prepared to review what the children learned previous weeks, or have someone come each week just to lead the raps and verses. Video guides are provided for all the raps and verses. These can also be used to lead each week - along with kids who know them well.

SKITS AND CREATIVE TEACHINGS TEAMS

Instruct your leaders and those doing skits and creative teachings: HAVE IT IN YOUR HEART! Don't stand in front of the kids, reading the lesson word for word. OWN it! Be "pre-prayered!" INVOLVE KIDS on this team. NOTE: Download any video clip links AHEAD OF TIME

SALVATION/MINISTRYTEAMS

Two birthdays! Kids get SO excited about that. We take the decision to follow Jesus very seriously (so does God!) and we want to make it as clear and as memorable as possible. Each Unit comes with a "Salvation Packet" with birth certificates, birthday cards and a guide for leading children to Jesus. (This includes a conversation about re-commitment; kids often respond multiple times to a salvation invitation - they need to understand that they don't need to be born-again, and again, and again!)

From <http://www.cef-singapore.com/childevan2.html>

... children who make an early profession of faith sometimes struggle with assurance and make a second public commitment later. They often say, "I didn't know what I was doing the first time."

More likely, however, the personal worker attending the child didn't know what he was doing.

It would be great to have a designated person or team to lead children to Jesus each week. They would also be responsible to make sure there is always a good supply of "Birth Certificates" and "Birthday Cards."

PARTY TEAMS

Recruit a team of "Review Party Volunteers" to do the decorating and game set-up. This team would serve just 4 times a year. Please see the PARTY FOLDER for more details.

INVOLVE THE FAMILIES

Our role in Children's Ministry is to help and support parents in the spiritual training of their children. That means interaction and communication is VITAL. Place value on the weekly "Take It Home" page; encourage parents to talk about it during the week. Make the "iBELIEVE Link" available to families so they can review the memory verses and raps.

Encourage families to ask a variety of questions when they pick up their children. Some suggestions: "Did you meet any new kids today?" "What was your Small Group Leader's name?" "Can you say today's memory verse for me?" "What part of church today made you feel closer to Jesus?" These kinds of questions develop an awareness in children that THOSE things are important. Parents need to get beyond asking "Did you have fun today?" That question makes children feel that THAT is what is expected and important for them at church; so they will work hard at being able to answer, "Yes!" And we all know that the definition of fun for a child usually means running, jumping, sliding etc. 😊

INVOLVE THE KIDS

Watch for ways to INVOLVE CHILDREN - setup/tear down, leading verse review, welcoming, taking the offering, greeting at the door, etc. Remember, when new children visit your church, they are slightly interested in what the lesson is about - but they are VERY interested in how the other children will treat them, and if they will make some new friends. Suggestion: have a team of kids each week who are "Connectors." Their job is to welcome newcomers, introduce them to their particular Small Group Leader, and help them get seated beside some kids who will make them feel at home.

INVOLVE GRANDPARENTS (and/or aunts and uncles)

Having these teams in place provides a win/win/win situation! In today's world children and their grandparents (aunts/uncles) might not see each other very often, and they miss that! Many older people are looking for a meaningful place to serve. And some children come to church NEEDING someone to take time to hug them or listen to their story. (Example: It's hard to concentrate on the memory verses when you so badly want to tell someone you got a new puppy yesterday!)

Members of this team might also be part of the prayer and/or salvation/ministry teams.

Suggestion - have a few seats in the back of the room where older people can sit. Have space beside them where Small Group leaders can send any children who need some extra care and attention. When you invite people to join this team, make it clear what their role would be - if you say "help out in children's church" they might think you are asking them to speak or lead in some way. No. You just need them to sit in the back and put an arm around a child and help that child focus on the service.

INVOLVE THE CHURCH

It's our job as children's pastors and leaders to communicate with the larger church the AWESOME things that are happening in kids' church! One way to do that is for the children to present their verses and songs to the congregation on a regular basis. In this curriculum, every quarter there is a Review Party Sunday. The presentation could happen that day, or perhaps the following week. Here are just a few of the potential positive results:

- ✓ It will help grow the church - families and extended families LOVE to see their kids on the stage and they will usually be eager to an invitation to come to church that day.
- ✓ It will provide a time for positive recruiting. Example - as the children leave the sanctuary, make a closing statement like: "Wasn't that great?! YOU!!! could be part of training and equipping the next generation! Fill out a volunteer application - we would love to talk to you!"
- ✓ The children get to show how MUCH they learn in kids' church; and it adds incentive for memorization - especially if each Presentation Sunday you do things like give opportunities for kids to lead on microphones.

