

Lesson #17: Oh, I know that old story...or do I?" Fight Bible boredom in well-taught children.

How many times have you seen it? That glazed look or know-it-all expression; that groan or sigh that comes when you introduce the story of Daniel in the lion's den to a 3rd grader who has heard it from the time he was a two-year-old. I've seen it frequently. To make matters worse, many times curriculum love to recycle the same Bible stories, year after year, creating a situation in which de-sensitization, not deeper appreciation, seems to be the outcome.

When you are faced with this situation, here are four things to consider doing:

#1 Dig in deeper yourself! Get a commentary, word-studies book, or a Bible backgrounds book on your passage; listen to a sermon; talk to a pastor; or, look online (be careful you find a reputable source!) Usually there are many interesting details you can add (about the city, the people, the word choices, etc.) that bring depth and life to a story that they have heard before.

#2 Sometimes use the Hebrew/Greek root name of the familiar people involved so the children won't hear the name and tune out immediately. For instance, *lobi* is the Hebrew word for Job. Substitute *lobi* and tell the story. It will let the children hear the story with new ears.

#3 Split the children into two groups, asking each group to write down the story, the best they can remember. Then read the story to them and give them another chance to modify their story to come closer to the real text. Read both teams' versions and decide who came closest to the actual text. Then, continue your class session with a discussion of the Bible truths and applications.

#4 Change how you present the story. For example, with the story of Esther, instead of reading and telling it at the beginning, make a set of props of key elements from the story and ask the kids to guess what story they come from. After they identify the story, have the children tell what each of the props had to do with the story. Ask them questions to help the kids tell the significance of each prop and a deeper, spiritual application. For example, if the king's scepter was one of the props, you could ask them to identify it as the scepter that the king had to hold out to accept someone who entered his throne room with asking. When you ask them the significance of this in the story, they could tell you that Esther asked Mordecai and the Jewish people to pray for the Lord to work in the king's heart so that when she went to see the king without asking, he would treat her favorably. The application questions that go with the scepter could be: Why did Esther ask the people to pray? What does this tell you about who Esther knew was even more powerful than the king? What should we do when we are faced with a seemingly impossible situation, against an enemy that seems to be too big for us? etc.

Lesson #17: Questions for You in Your Ministry Setting:

1. Do you have many children who have been well-taught? How often do you run into a bored attitude from children like these? What age does this boredom start to appear?

2. What have you done to help fight Bible boredom?