

Tough Topics

by Kara S. McCoy



Summer 2011

Wouldn't it be great if Sunday school only consisted of teaching Daniel and the lions' den and the battle of Jericho? Well, we are expected to progress with our students into the many dark alleys and pitfalls that is the modern educational system. Our children are exposed on a daily basis to some of the most vile and confusing elements of this world. They will ask their parents for an opinion, but often then will shoot up their little hands in your class when you ask for testimony time or "prayer requests." Maybe you fumble through an answer, and just when you have sighed in relief, Little Johnny asks another embarrassing question that leaves you speechless. That is the worry; as your students grow older, the subject matter does not get easier.

Here are a few tips and tricks to remain neutral in theologically sticky situations as well as in juggling tough subjects.

Keep in mind that your students often ask questions out of ignorance. You may

have a few little stinkers who enjoy being sensational and push topics a little too far, but most children are curious and do not think twice before blurt-ing questions out. Even if they have a parent's opinion on their question, they are looking for your "educated" thought.

Some questions are just fun to ask. ("How

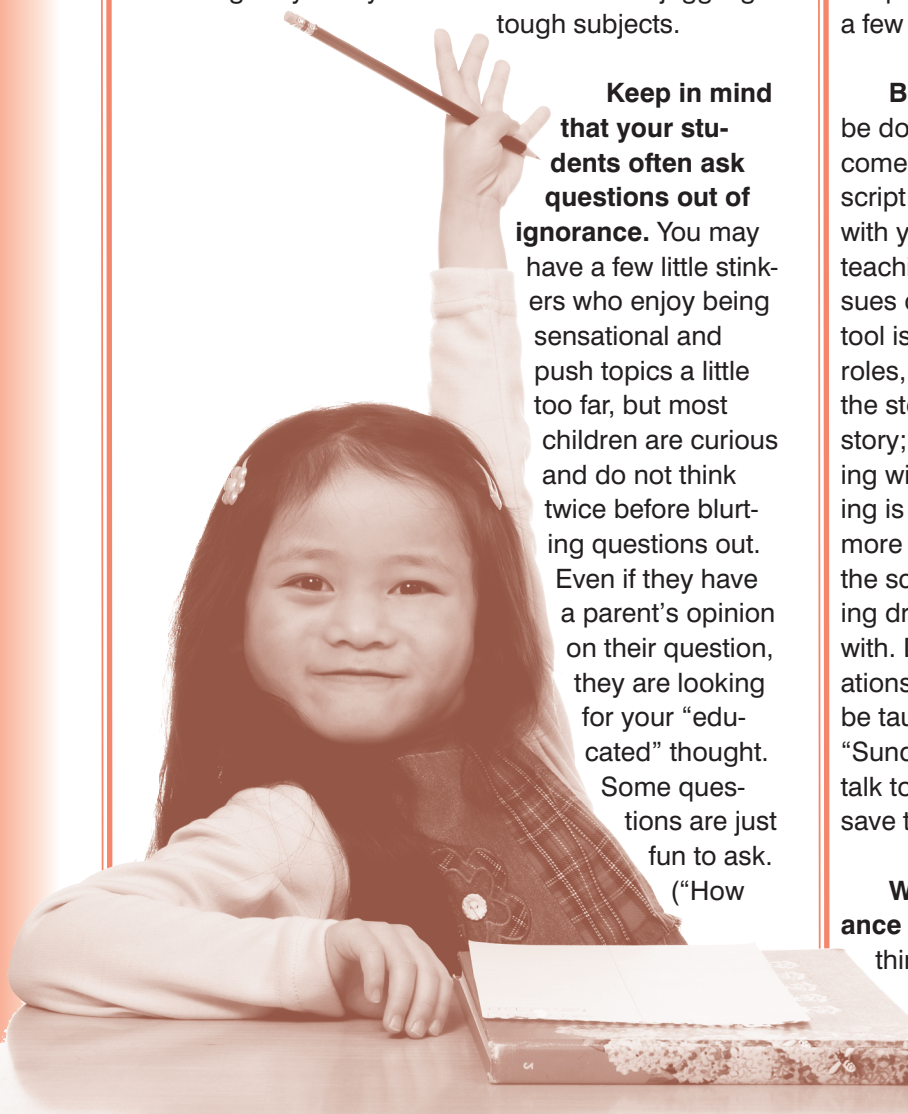
did Noah catch the ants to put on the ark?") Some questions are not fun to answer. ("What is a prostitute caught in fornication?")

Make sure you've done your homework! Do not go into class without being familiar with your subject. If you are planning on talking about the consequences of doing drugs, you better know the difference between substances. You want to be as prepared as possible so that the kids will believe that you have a plausible explanation. There is nothing worse than a teacher with book knowledge only. Try to relate to them and pull out the stops on studying for your class. The library has excellent resources as well as asking your pastor for his advice or experience. Your kids need viable and powerful examples to keep them on the path of good choices, so plan out your lesson with a few shockers included to keep their attention.

Be creative. Delivering serious applications can be done lightheartedly and actually help the students come up with valuable applications you could never script. Kids are creative beings. They will play along with your lessons and "help" you along with your teaching. Many times, they will bring to light hidden issues or subtopics you were not aware of. One favorite tool is the "role play." Many teachers use pre-scripted roles, or have the young people repeat their lines from the story. Consider letting the kids re-create their own story; just give them the topic at hand. If you are talking with the teen class about premarital sex, lecturing is out. Your students quite possibly know much more (and in greater detail) than you. Consider giving the scenario of three teenagers who are contemplating drugs, parties, and sex. See what they come up with. Do not blush . . . just guide them into real situations and see what happens. More life lessons can be taught by a realistic approach than by the typical "Sunday school" style. Their folks may not be able to talk to them about this stuff, so here is your chance to save the world one child at a time.

When diversions arise, search the Lord's guidance and then discuss. Give time and space to the things that surface in the middle of your lesson.

You probably had your morning packed full with



pearls of wisdom to share, but somebody brought up an issue that was near and much more relevant to their lives. God will take your preparation and lead it into an area that will harvest your kids' real needs. Once in a high school class, my teacher simply asked about future plans and life goals. The question was, "Where do you plan to be in five years?" Most of us answered with the usual, "I will be working for the Lord in my local church and going to college." However, one of the boys in the class nonchalantly mentioned, "As far away from this church as I can get." He stopped that teacher dead in her tracks. The tenor of the class changed immediately, and we suddenly found ourselves in a completely different discussion. Be sensitive to those kinds of needs.

Do not argue or overpower on touchy subjects.

You may be prepared to discuss the biblical stand on homosexuality when one of your students becomes offended because his or her parent is in a homosexual relationship. Where is the best place to end that conversation? When you run out of biblical things to talk about. Do not let it become a personal viewpoint discussion. Stick with the Bible. Ask for their opinion before launching off into yours. If things get too heated, always reiterate that you are in a class that seeks out new information. Tell your students how you want only the best and right things for them. Do not be ashamed to let them know you do not know everything, but will come back the next week with more answers if they need them.

Never miss an opportunity to stay on track!

Many times we have made an effort to answer a child's question and just wallowed deeper into the mire off the path. You only have so much time to deliver your message; do not stray too far from the subject if you can help it. Always acknowledge a question as being valid, even if you do not have time to explore the answers. Perhaps inviting the child to discuss the question after church that day will help him or her to put the subject to rest for the time being.

Take advantage of modern material and media.

Many organizations put out flyers, videos, and other materials that can be brought into the classroom as good discussion starters. If the Pentecostal Publishing House does not publish the materials, you may wish to clear them through your pastor. Simple "What Would You Do" games are priceless in reviewing the choices your students have to make.

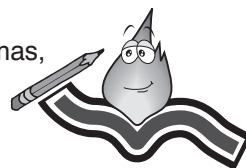
Honesty is the best policy. Do not sugarcoat and most certainly do not lie. If you have death, divorce, or other serious topics on your plate, realize that your kids can see through a smokescreen. Depending on the ages of the class, children understand the seriousness of a situation filtered through their own life experiences. If a young child seems to be unshaken by your revelation that "no, people do not become stars when they die," you may have to do some damage control when that small child then goes to his parent with the news. Not all parents attend church, and most certainly families may hold highly secularized views that clash directly with the Word of God you are teaching. Do not be intimidated and do not change your story. Be sincere and you will encounter better success with both children and parents.

Avoid being too personal. If you know there will be children from broken homes in your class during a session in which you intend to discuss the benefits of staying married and not divorcing, exercise caution and compassion. Do not ask for personal information or have them identify with any scenarios you mention.

Give yourself time and seek out the Lord for direction. Some thoughts will come to you after the ideas have been rolling around in your brain for a moment. Ask the Lord for guidance. He will see you through! Why not give Him the chance to speak through you?



The Word Aflame staff is here to serve you. If you have questions, dilemmas, or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact us. We will listen and do our best to help you. You may reach us Monday through Friday, 8-4:30 CST at 314-837-7300, or via e-mail at wap@upci.org.



Resources

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By Joni Owens

Resources

The following apostolic books from Word Aflame's elective series provide detailed lessons on tough topics such as abortion, euthanasia, making right choices, Bible doctrines, and Christian standards. Although not designed for children, they will give the teacher the foundational answers to topics children frequently introduce. They may be purchased online at www.pentecostalpublishing.com or by calling 866-819-7667. Visit our website for other titles in our elective series at www.upci.org/wap.

Facing the Issues

This book deals with several hot topics of today—issues such as abortion, euthanasia, divorce and remarriage, neglected and abused children, feminism, materialism, pornography, and others. This is a very important book that everyone should read, for we must face the issues it presents rather than pretend they do not exist.

Item code: 8799 \$7.99

Values That Last

Basic human values, which every Christian should possess and cultivate are examined—faithfulness, commitment, loyalty, humility, to name a few. Every chapter is inspiring and informational.

Item code: 8815 \$7.99

Bible Doctrines, Foundation of the Church

The teachings of Jesus Christ and His apostles and prophets have become the foundation upon which the church rests. These easy to teach lessons offer questions and suggestions at the conclusion of each chapter.

Item code: 8790 \$7.99

Life's Choices

Biblical principles to guide youth through the decisions of life, including relationship involvement, marriage, choosing friends, and working in the church. These easy to teach lessons offer questions and suggestions at the conclusion of each chapter.

Item code: 8803 \$7.99

Why? A Study of Christian Standards

A study of why you dress the way you do, talk the way you do, and live the way you do. These easy to teach lessons offer questions and suggestions at the conclusion of each chapter.

Item code: 8816 \$7.99

How long has it been since you've availed yourself of some teacher training opportunities? Consider these resources, also available through Pentecostal Publishing House.

Teacher Certification Workbook

General Sunday School Division

This workbook is used for the Teacher Certification program. It features over 200 pages of lessons, exams, and a certification application. The twelve lessons (including Apostolic Theology, Child Evangelism, Classroom Management, Principles of Leadership, and other vital teaching information) are written by David K. Bernard, Arlo and Jane Moehlenpah, James Littles, Gary Erickson, David Reynolds, and others.

Item code: 17057 \$29.99

Teacher Certification Workbook CD

The CD includes everything on the workbook, featuring over 200 pages of lessons, exams, and certification application.

Item code: 17058 \$19.95

Teacher Certification Workbook DVD

Twelve recorded teaching session (45–50 minutes each). PowerPoint visuals are intergrated with the teaching. Six DVDs in a nice case. Disc 1 covers chapters 1, 2, and 3. Disc 2 covers chapters 4, 5, and 6. Disc 3 covers chapter 7, 8, and 9. Disc 4 covers chapter 10, 11, and 12.

Item code: 21738 \$79.95

Teacher Certification PowerPoint CD

Set of PowerPoint slides to assist the teacher in teaching the teacher certification lesson.

Item code: 17059 \$11.95

Teaching as Jesus Taught

David Reynolds

An experienced professional educator, well versed in teaching methods, Reynolds has analyzed the methods that Christ used and applies them for us today. Book 1 of this dynamic series.

Item code: 10098 \$10.00

Classroom Discipline with a Christ-like Touch

David Reynolds

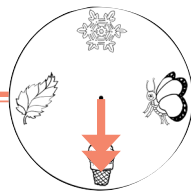
Sunday school and Christian school teachers, here is just the book you have been waiting for. Learn to prevent discipline problems, to discipline with dignity, and to keep teaching. Let Jesus be your model.

Item code: 9824 \$9.99

Prices subject to change.

Seasonal Ideas

By Linda Short



Let the Sunshine In!

This summer encourage your students to let the light of Jesus shine through them by incorporating the following crafts, activities, and snack ideas into your classroom. These suggestions cover a wide age appropriate range, so choose suitable ideas or restructure others to fit your students' needs and abilities.

Sunshine Picture Frame

orange and yellow art foam low-temp hot glue gun
digital camera photo paper
clear acetate film sheets adhesive magnetic strip
small, round plastic butter dish lid

Using the plastic lid, trace and cut a circle from the orange art foam. Cut out the center of the circle (leave at least a 1-inch frame) for picture to show through.

From the yellow art foam, cut various sized triangles. Hot glue these triangles to the back of the orange circle to create sun rays.

Take digital pictures of each child and print on photo paper. Trim each picture to fit in the center of the sunshine. Cut a circle of clear acetate film slightly larger than the center of the sun. Hot glue the film on to the back of the orange art foam circle. Center the picture and hot glue a cardboard circle to the back to protect the picture.

Place several pieces of adhesive magnetic strip on back of completed project.

Paper Plate Sunshine

This well-known craft is simple to make, but provides a splash of color and reminds students to share a sunny smile with everyone we meet.

small paper plates hot glue gun or craft glue
yellow crayons black markers
one-hole punch clear fishing line
orange and yellow construction paper

Each student needs two paper plates. Ask them to color the rounded sides yellow for the center of the sun. Using black markers students letter "Let the Sunshine In" on one plate and "Face it with a Grin" on the other. You may want to let them draw eyes and a smile as well.

Have students cut orange and yellow construction paper triangles for sun rays and glue to inside rim of one paper plate. After all sun rays have been attached, glue or staple the two paper plates together.

Hole punch the top of each project and hang from ceiling with clear fishing line.

Accompany this craft project with the Stuart Hamblen song *Let the Sunshine In*. For the complete lyrics, type the

song title into an Internet search engine. The chorus is provided here.

*So, let the sunshine in, face it with a grin.
Smilers never lose and frowners never win.
So, let the sunshine in, face it with a grin.
Open up your heart and let the sunshine in.*

Wax Paper Stained Glass Project

wax paper crayon shavings (all colors)
storage containers/bags iron
thin towel/dish cloth scissors
one-hole punch clear fishing line
optional: small suction cups

Prior to class, shave crayons and store individual colors separately in plastic bowls or bags. Cut two 6"x 6" squares of wax paper for each student.

Ask students to lay on sheet of wax paper on a flat surface and use the black permanent marker to draw an outline shape of a butterfly, sunshine, flower, or other simple object.

Next, students fill the shape with a thin layer of crayon shavings in whatever color and pattern they desire. Remind them that the colors will blend together when heated.

Carefully lay the second sheet of wax paper on top of the crayon shavings and place the cloth on top. Teacher should iron the project using low heat setting until crayon shavings are well blended.

Students cut out the object and punch hole at the top to hang from ceiling. Another option is to hang artwork in the windows using small suction cups and clear fishing line.

Sunshine Snack

Stained Glass Cookies can be made prior to class or if you have access to an oven at church, your students will enjoy helping you assemble them.

prepackaged sugar cookie dough
colored hard candies all purpose flour
cookie cutters (large and small) parchment paper

Hard candies should be separated by color, placed in plastic bags and crushed with rolling pin or flat meat tenderizer. This is something the students would love to do.

Roll out dough to ¼-inch thickness. Use large cookie cutters to cut shapes from dough and place 2 inches apart on parchment lined baking sheet. Cut small centers from cookies using mini or small cookie cutters. To lift from center, use a toothpick. Fill hole with crushed candies, making sure to fill hole but not allowing candies to be on top of cookie dough. Bake as directed. Allow cookies to cool before serving.

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