

Characteristics of a Kindergarten Student

- Physically** Kindergarten children are not yet able to sit still for a long time; therefore, it is imperative to plan the class time accordingly. Alternate physical activities with quiet moments. These children learn a great deal by doing and by using their five senses.
- Mentally** Attention span is short, but growing perhaps even up to ten minutes at a time for some. They have an active imagination, are very curious and eager to learn, and like to ask and answer questions. They need simple explanations of one idea at a time and lots of repetition. They are literal-minded and accept words they hear to mean exactly that. Figures of speech are extremely confusing to them.
- Socially** Children at this age are friendly and enjoy being with other people. They want to be helpful. Cooperation, sharing, and taking turns now tends to come quite easily. Adult approval is important to them, and they often want to be like the adults they admire and will imitate their actions.
- Emotionally** Experiencing intense feelings of love and hate, joy and sorrow, fear and satisfaction is typical for young children. They often reflect the emotions of the adults around them. They are very trusting and should be surrounded by an atmosphere of love and security.
- Spiritually** God is very real to these children. They readily believe God is able to do anything! They have a simple trust in God and are eager to accept all you tell them about God; therefore, it is essential the information taught is clear and accurate. They should be taught to talk to God at any time, thanking Him for His love and asking Him for the things they need. Their conscience is developing, enabling them to recognize right and wrong. They need to be assured that God always loves them even when they sin, and that they can ask God for forgiveness knowing He will always forgive them. They think of Jesus as a friend who loves and cares for them.

Tips for Teaching

- ◆ Before Sunday school starts, send a postcard or letter to each pupil introducing yourself. Explain what you will be doing in class, when the first sessions will be, and where your classroom will be.
- ◆ Pray for your students and their families by name. Ask God to help you find the most effective ways of sharing God's love with them.
- ◆ Get to know your students personally. Greet the children as they come in the door. Learn about their interests and concerns. Have play dough, coloring sheets, clay, Duplos, wooden blocks, etc., out before class begins. Have appropriate music playing softly in the background before class or during activity times.
- ◆ Share about your own relationship with Christ as you talk with children and their parents.
- ◆ Always stress that we are saved by *grace* (Ephesians 2:8). Students at this age are usually "pleasers." They may think salvation has to do with being good. If they have been reprimanded, they may feel they are not worthy. Love them.
- ◆ Give positive notes to the child to take home. Call parents with a positive message about their child.
- ◆ Find a way to meet the parents if you do not know them. Talk to them as they bring or pick up their child.
- ◆ Instill in your pupils the life habit of daily "devotions," the turning over of ourselves every day to God by asking for forgiveness for our sins and thanking God for His great love for us.

Tips for Storytelling

- ◆ Build a background for students before beginning the Bible story. Ask a question to grab their attention. For example, ask the children if they have ever shared their lunch with anyone. Then explain, "Today we are going to hear a story found in the Bible about a little boy who shared his lunch with many people. Listen to what Jesus did with a boy's lunch."
- ◆ Give a purpose for listening. Explain how important it is to learn about Jesus and what He did. Tell them they should not only read the Bible at Sunday school, but should ask their parents to help them read the Bible every day.
- ◆ Use a variety of storytelling techniques such as:
 - * tell the story on a flannel board
 - * listen to a cassette tape of the story as you turn the pages of a book or show pictures
 - * as you tell the story, encourage the children to listen very carefully. Have the children perform actions when certain words are heard (for example when the word rain is heard, wiggle fingers).
 - * use puppets
 - * show videos or films
 - * ask parents or other older children or adults to act out the story

Tips for Memorization

- ◆ After children have heard the verse to be memorized, say the verse together several times. You may have to break the verse into smaller chunks. Then place chairs in a circle, and have the children sit on the chairs. Play music while children pass two balls around the circle. When the music stops, the children holding the balls recite the memory verse together. Children could also sit on the floor and roll the ball to each other taking turns saying the verse when they have the ball.
- ◆ After children have heard the verse to be memorized, say it together. Then read a section of the verse leaving out a word. For example, say “For God so loved the _____ that He gave His only begotten _____.” Ask children to fill in the missing words.
- ◆ Say the verse using a rhythm. Later have the children join in. You may add patting, tapping, or other sounds or rhythm instruments.
- ◆ Children can step on construction paper footprints that have been taped to the floor. Have the same number of footprints that there are words in the verse. For each word recited, a student steps on a footprint.
- ◆ Rather than limiting memorization to one segment of the Sunday school hour, recite the verse periodically throughout the hour, perhaps as you change from one activity to another. Keep reviewing regularly the verses you have already memorized

Tips on Discipline

- ◆ Keeping children busy will prevent most discipline problems from occurring.
- ◆ Pray for patience, understanding, and guidance when discipline concerns arise. Prepare in advance to be flexible so that you are able to switch activities if something is not working.
- ◆ Give gentle reminders about proper behavior and affirm good behavior.
- ◆ Point out natural or logical consequences. For example, when a child writes on the table, he or she must wash it off.
- ◆ Sometimes a child needs some thinking time or cooling down time. Ask the child to put his/her head down for two minutes with no eyes showing. Make sure you explain or that this has been discussed earlier so that children know why they are being asked to do this.
- ◆ Discuss behavior concerns with your superintendent or pastor for further suggestions.

Teaching Music

Great joy fills our hearts when we hear children singing to our Lord. Music used as a tool for learning can open up a time for all students to participate and express themselves in a beautiful way. Music can make your class time an encouraging and uplifting time for you and your students as you worship God.

Singing is a form of WORSHIP (John 4:24). As we sing, we give all praise, honor, and glory to God. With wise choices of songs and hymns, music is a wonderful window of opportunity for our hearts to be filled with love to the Lord as we respond in praise, confession, and prayer.

The music you use can set the tone for your classroom. Be sure music is played and sung in a prayerful way. Teach the music with reverence and respect toward God. Hymns and their stories are a gift from God and a beautiful treasure of our Christian heritage.

- ◆ Record the theme song and play it as the children are arriving for class. Consider your time frame and plan to teach a verse a week. Explain in your own words what the verses mean to you.
- ◆ Capture the children's interest before you introduce the song so that they are attentive to the words and music.
- ◆ Make a music poster. Print the words of a song on large poster board. Substitute some key words with pictures. Make it bright and cheerful. For example, for the theme hymn of "Jesus Loves Me," use a red heart for every "loves" and a Bible for "the Bible." A sample poster is included in the Teacher Manual for this hymn.
- ◆ Make a list of the songs and hymns that you have learned as a class during this quarter. Allow the children to choose a favorite from the list from time to time.
- ◆ Play "name that tune" with songs and hymns you have learned. Play or hum the melody line. When the first person raises his/her hand, stop and see if he/she guessed correctly. If not, play or hum it again. When the right song is guessed, sing the song together.

JESUS LOVES ME

Theme Hymn

VERSE 1

*Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to Him belong, they are weak, but He is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.*

Yes, Jesus loves YOU! Take the time now to read in your Bible these verses about the love Jesus has for each one of us. Read John 3:16 and Revelation 1:5. He is our strength and our stronghold...we belong to Him. Read the words of the song slowly and with clarity to the children. Substitute the children's names in place of the "me" in the chorus. For example, "Yes, Jesus loves Becky! Yes, Jesus loves Jimmy! Yes, Jesus loves Sammy! The Bible tells me so!"

VERSE 2

*Jesus loves me! He who died, heaven's gate to open wide;
He will wash away my sin, Let His little child come in.
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.*

As we say the words and sing the second verse to this song, we learn that Jesus died for us so that we can have the gift of eternal life. God sent His Son Jesus to die, and because of that supreme sacrifice the gates of heaven were opened for those who believe in Him. Read Acts 16:31; John 1:12; and I John 5:12-13. Explain to the children the gift of salvation. Jesus loves us and wants all of His children to come to heaven and be with Him. We gladly sing "Yes, Jesus loves me!" with an abundance of love and gratitude to our Savior Jesus Christ.

VERSE 3

*Jesus loves me! He will stay close beside me, all the way;
If I love Him when I die, He will take me home on high.
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.*

Jesus is always with us—through our joys and our sorrows. We can come to Him for any reason. Read Matthew 28:20 and emphasize God's promise, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Remind the children that when we love God, we will want to grow closer to Him. We can show our love for God and grow closer to Him by taking time to read our Bibles, talking to God in prayer every day, telling others about Jesus, going to church, and showing love and concern for others. God will help us to love Him and others. He will take us home to heaven someday to live with Him forever.

Projects for Theme Hymn

- ◆ As a family project, ask parents to create a visual that shows how they share and see God's love in their daily lives. This could be in the form of a collage, poetry, written statements, photographs with captions, etc. Give families a month to complete. Display products in hallways or on bulletin board.
- ◆ As a Sunday school opening, invite parents and grandparents to a sing-along. Sunday school children and guests can sing favorites that express God's love.
- ◆ Have a small booklet for each child. Put a large red heart on the cover with the child's name on it. Each week, make pictures of how Jesus loves them. For example: Jesus dying on the cross; our families; creation; etc.
- ◆ As a Sunday school-wide project on this theme, have children create a mural that depicts what they have learned about Jesus' love. Different classes can make large pictures of items they have found in nature, acts of kindness shown, or family members. Magazine pictures could also be cut out and glued onto the paper.
- ◆ Learn "Jesus Loves Me" in sign language. This could be sung and signed during a church service. (One source for this is the Wee Sing songbook.)
- ◆ Teach "Jesus Loves Me" in a foreign language. Talk about children in other countries and what Sunday school is like there. Remind students that Jesus loves all the children in the world, and that children in other countries can sing about Jesus too. (Little Ones Sing Praise gives words for this song in five different languages.)
- ◆ As a culminating activity in Quarter One, children can present to their parents the booklets they have created (see above) and a cassette tape or video of their child singing "Jesus Loves Me" alone or with the class.

History of Theme Hymn

The text for "Jesus Loves Me" was written by Anna Warner. She and her sister were the talented daughters of a New York lawyer living on Constitution Island in the Hudson River at West Point. For years, they taught a Sunday school class for West Point cadets in their home. Each Sunday the boys would crowd into the family sitting room, sing heartily some familiar hymns accompanied by a small reed organ, then engage in the Bible study taught by one of the sisters.

The two sisters wrote more than 70 books. One of their books was a novel entitled Say and Seal written in 1860, which became a best-selling book of the day. The story was about a young boy, Johnny Fax, who suffered from a lingering disease. Near the end of the story, Johnny asks his Sunday school teacher to hold him and sing to him. Anna Warner wrote this hymn as a song of comfort for the dying boy.

The truths expressed in this hymn are profound, yet simple. This hymn has been translated into many languages and is the best known hymn in the world.

William Bradbury, a famous New York composer and publisher, composed the music in 1861. The words and music were published that year in a collection of Sunday school songs.