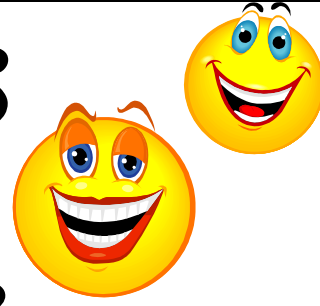




# Teaching Ideas That Leave Kids Smiling



## Ministry Direction

Smiles! I think Jesus made children happy—when He took them in His arms, when He multiplied a boy's lunch of just five loaves and two fishes, when he made a sick child well, when He acknowledged the children's praises in the Temple. And I believe He expects the same from me!

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me." (Matthew 18:5) Have you ever felt totally welcomed in a place? How did it make you feel? I'm sure you smiled.

How can we welcome children into our classrooms, our ministries, our congregations, our lives? How can we make them smile?

When we welcome guests into our homes we express positive attitudes toward them, focus entirely on meeting their needs, and plan our schedule and activities around what they enjoy.

Making children smile in our ministries requires no less—positive attitudes, child-focused ministry, age appropriate schedule, and activities that make them smile.

This week as you minister to the children in your congregation, I pray that you will bring a smile to every face!



## Ideas That You Can Use!

### CHOICE

Often teachers go into the classroom with a lesson plan that allows for no input from the children. But kids smile when we give them opportunities to make choices.

- **Children's advisory board.** Select several children from your ministry to participate in an advisory board. Meet regularly (quarterly or monthly) with the children to get input on what they would like to learn based upon their interests and issues. Let them give suggestions for ministry events, service projects, and other extracurricular activities. Be sure to rotate the board yearly so that all interested children get the opportunity to serve.
- **Children's Ministry Academy.** In high schools and universities students select courses within the parameter of their degree requirements. Why not allow the children in your ministry the same opportunity? For a specified period of time (one quarter or a month) offer the children course options. For example: Perhaps for one quarter the focus is on equipping kids to minister. Offer two or three courses that equip kids in a specific area of ministry such as intercession, witnessing, and giving. Let the children select the course they will attend (no course changes allowed). Provide reasonable course requirements for the students to complete (attendance, assignments, final project). Have a graduation ceremony and give diplomas to every child who participated in the academy.
- **Learning Centers.** Regardless of the age of kids (and adults), learning centers bring huge smiles because

they allow learners to choose how they will experience learning. Centers can be used in a variety of ways—to introduce the lesson truth, to help children experience the lesson truth, or to review the lesson.

### GAMES

Kids love games—all kinds of games. Games can be used to help children get to know one another, experience a Bible truth, to review the lesson, and just for fun!

#### A "Just for Fun" Game:

*What you will need:* A set of cards numbered from 1 to \_\_\_\_\_ (number of children in the classroom).

*How to play:* Ask the children to spread out in the playing area. Hand each child a small card with a number on it. Remind the children that they cannot tell anyone their own number. Blindfold each child. Advise the group that there is only one rule in the game and that is "No Talking". The object of the game is to form a single file line in numerical order with their assigned numbers. Remember, NO TALKING PERMITTED.

*Hints for playing the game:* Clap your number with your hands or tap the person with your number. Position the identified person's number in front of or behind.

*For even more smiles:* Video tape the game and playback for loads of laughter!

#### A Review Game: Bible Basketball

*What you will need:* Good questions related to the lesson that has been taught. A chair for each child.

*How to play:* Have the children place the chairs in a square with an equal number of chairs on all four sides. Place a large garbage can in the center of the room with the chairs around the can and facing the can. Each side of the square becomes a team. Let each team select a team name.

Ask a review question. The first player to raise his hand gets to answer the question. If the answer is correct, he gets to take a shot at the can with a basketball. If the player gets the ball in the basket his team scores two points. If he misses, the ball can roll until another person gets it. (While the ball is rolling no one can leave his or her seat.) The person who gets the ball can then try to get the ball into the basket for one point for his team.



## An "Lesson Introduction" Game

*What you will need:* Place an object that is significant to the Bible lesson in a brown paper bag.

*How to play:* The children may take turns asking 20 questions (must be answered with a "yes" or "no") to see if they can figure out what is in the bag. (A child may guess before the 20 questions have been asked but limit the number of guesses allowed.) The child who guessed the object gets a treat or the object.

## MYSTERY

Mystery is defined as something unexplained, unknown, or kept secret that excites our curiosity. Curiosity motivates children to learn with a smile!

### Science Experiments

Science experiments are great at introducing mysteries and allowing children to be hands-on participants in solving them. Many science experiments explain or illustrate Scriptural truth.

#### Make a Compass.

*What you will need:* A compass for the children to see and handle; several small bar magnets; For each child: a sewing needle (1 inch or 3 cm long); a small piece of cork, a small cup of water to float the cork and needle.

#### Lesson Plan:

1. Let the children handle the compass, moving about the room. Help them to discover that a magnet will always point toward the nearest pole (north or south).
2. Let the children make a compass from a needle and piece of cork following the instructions below.
3. Place a magnet near each compass and let the children observe what happens. How close/far does the magnet be to cause any effects?
4. Discuss with the students the following:
  - Read Colossians 3:17. Just as the magnet always points toward the north (south) pole, God's word reminds me that everything I say

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Managing Editor: Kathryn Creasy  
Layout & Design: Leslie Green

P.O. Box 2910, Cleveland, TN 37320  
Phone: (423) 559-5328 · Fax: (423) 559-5302  
Email: [cgpkids@cogop.org](mailto:cgpkids@cogop.org)  
Visit us on the Web: <http://children.cogop.org>

and do should point toward Him.

- The magnet can cause the compass to point away from the north (south). What are some things that might keep our lives (words and deeds) from pointing to Christ?
- What are some things I can do to make sure my words and deeds point toward Christ?
- Pray with the children asking God to help them always point toward Him.

#### How to do the experiment:

1. Run a magnet over the needle a few times, always in the same direction. This action 'magnetizes' it to some extent.
2. Drive the needle through a piece of cork--from one end of the circle to the other, instead of through the exact middle. (For younger children, this should be done by an adult.)
3. Float the cork with needle in a cup of water so the floating needle lies roughly parallel to the surface of the water.
4. Place your 'compass' on a still surface and watch what happens. The needle should come to point towards the nearest magnetic pole - north or south.

#### Who Done It?

*What you will need:* A gallon zip lock bag or some container for each detective team. A numbered paper bag for each object and clue. (Don't use clear bags as the children will guess before going through the clues.)

Each team could solve the same mystery or you could have a different mystery for each team around the same Bible story or theme.

*Lesson plan:* Divide the children into small groups of three or four. Explain that the bag contains a mystery to be solved and clues that will help solve the mystery. They are to read the mystery then begin with clue #1 and continue with consecutive clues until they have solved it.

Sample Mystery: I fought a battle against just one man. Who am I?

- Clues: #1 Lamb. I am a shepherd not a soldier.  
#2 Bread and cheese. I went to battle to take food to my brothers who were soldiers.  
#3 Tape measure. The soldier I fought against was almost nine feet tall.  
#4 Sword and/or spear. The soldier I fought against used these weapons.  
#5 Stone. I killed him with just one stone.

#6 To see if you've solved the mystery correctly, read I Samuel 17:48, 49.

## FOOD

Food definitely makes kids smile. So don't just give out candy as a reward. Use food to teach.

#### Taste Test

Let the children sample popcorn (or another food kids enjoy) with salt and without salt then take a vote on which tastes better. Read Matthew 5:13 and discuss, "Why do you think Jesus described us as 'salt of the earth'?"

#### Edible Play Dough

Let the children sculpt an object related to the day's Bible truth and then eat their sculpture. Here's the recipe:

- 1 c. Smooth Peanut Butter
- 1/2 c. Honey
- 2 c. Nonfat Dry Milk

Mix together the peanut butter and honey first. Add half of the dry and mix; then continue to add a little at a time until it feels soft and playful! Use less than 2 cups of dry milk if the clay seems to be getting dry.

# Resource Review



#### Instant Games for Children's Ministry.

Published by Group Publishing, PO Box 481, Loveland, CO 80539, 1-800-447-1070, [www.group.com](http://www.group.com); [info@group.com](mailto:info@group.com). ISBN: 9781559456951 Cost: \$16.99

101 just-for-fun games you can play on a moment's notice! All you'll need are common, inexpensive items like Ping-Pong balls, plastic cups, and balloons. And each 10- to 15-minute game encourages cooperation and team-building skills!

#### 200+ Activities for Children's Ministry

by Susan Lingo. Published by Standard Publishing, 8121 Hamilton Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45231; Phone: 513-931-4050. Cost: \$12.99



Inside this valuable resource, you'll find more than 200 ideas and learning activities for teachers that are organized into 8 categories: crafts, games, songs (rhymes and rhythms), seasonal ideas and activities, devotions and object lessons, prayer and worship activities, edible activities and food ideas, and organizational helps for teachers.