

# Helpful Teaching Techniques

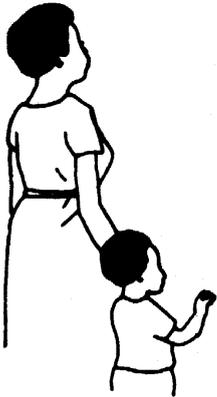


## Questions and answers

Often in our teaching of a lesson we are scared of allowing children the opportunity to ask questions for a number of reasons. Perhaps it is inconvenient and could distract the lesson, or perhaps we are scared we may not be able to answer the question, or even sometimes we do not really want to know how the children are thinking.

However it is through asking questions that children learn and often the best learning occurs through this time, so we want to encourage you to try it and allow it in your time of teaching the children.

Be enthusiastic about the children's questions. Be glad they asked! Commend them for using the good minds God has given them to find out about the truth. Encourage them to keep asking questions. Remember that questions give us valuable insight into their thinking and understanding. Dealing appropriately with the children's questions and answers can be tricky, so the following Do's and Don'ts may be useful.



- Treat all questions seriously
- Affirm that it's good to ask questions
- Give simple answers and stick to the point
- Ask the child 'What do you think?'
- Give the child more information if they are unsatisfied with the answer
- Ask the child to restate the question if you think you may have misunderstood what is being asked
- Take care with the language you use. Keep in mind the age, understanding and experience of the child. Avoid using Christian jargon which the child will not understand.

## DON'TS

- Use complex language or concepts
- Be afraid to say you don't know the answer - tell them that you will try to find out and invite their participation in finding the answer
- Invent an answer or say something that you know to be wrong just to satisfy a child
- Ask and answer your own questions or the children will learn to wait for you to provide the answers.

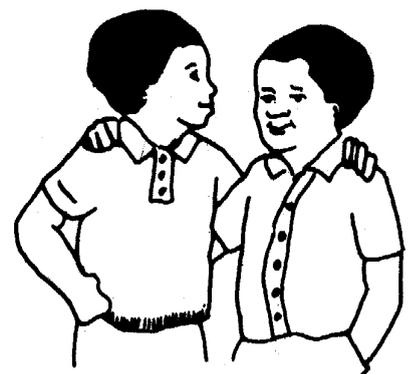
## What to do when...

A child suggests an answer that is incorrect:

- ☺ Affirm that it was good for the child to offer an answer
- ☺ Suggest that the child considers something from the lesson that will help them to see the correct answer
- ☺ Clarify any misunderstanding before you move on.

No-one offers an answer:

- ☺ Give the class some extra information that will help



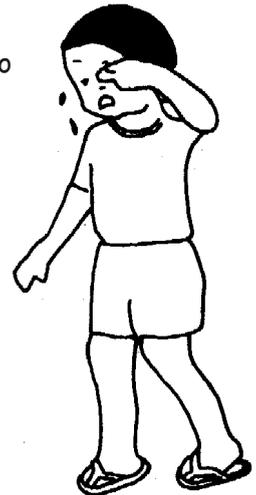
- ☺ Retell the section of the lesson that contains the answer
- ☺ Tell them the answer and move on with the rest of the lesson.

A child's answer is very lengthy:

- ☺ Affirm that the answer is thoughtful but that others in the class should also have a chance to answer
- ☺ You may like to suggest that the child could see you later and continue to talk with you (don't forget to do this).

A child begins to give you personal details or information that is not appropriate:

- ☺ Tell the parents of the child.
- ☺ You may have a responsibility to inform the pastor of any information regarding sexual or physical abuse.
- ☺ Report it to your Sunday School Superintendent or person in charge of children's work or the pastor and ask for their advice.



### More suggestions for questions and answers

**Why do we use question and answer techniques?**

- ? They involve the children in thinking about learning for themselves.
- ? They help the teacher discover some of what is going on in the children's minds and hearts.
- ? They help reinforce the Bible truth.
- ? They help make links between new learning and what the children already know.
- ? They encourage children to relate Bible truth to life as they know it.

**So how should we handle children's questions?**

- ? Always be enthusiastic about their questions. Be glad they asked!
- ? Ask yourself what the question is telling you about the children's thinking and understanding.
- ? Don't expect to be able to answer all the questions the children ask. Our ability to answer their questions depends very much on the answers to the questions of life that we have found ourselves. It's okay to say 'I don't know, but I'll find out the answer!' or 'That's a good question - I'm still working on it myself.' Children respect honesty in their leaders.
- ? Plan work together sometimes to discover the answers to difficult questions.
- ? Young students often want a simple, quick answer. Avoid overloading them with information. Answer only what they have asked. If the child asks further, expand your answer.
- ? Listen actively to the questions they ask. Try to identify the real problem that needs an answer. Some questions are straight forward, others may indicate that the questioner is grappling with a much deeper problem. Careful listening will help you know at which level to answer.
- ? Take care with the language you use. Keep in mind the age, understanding and experience of the child.



- ? Invite the questioner, then other group members to share their thoughts on the answer to the question. Build on what they contribute.
- ? Make sure the answers you give to theological questions are biblically based.
- ? If questions come at an inconvenient time, allow yourself the freedom to make another time to answer...and don't forget to do so.
- ? Consider the possibility of writing an answer to a student's question in letter form and delivering it personally. Children love the personal interest this shows and can read your answer in the next lesson. Most importantly, encourage the children to keep asking questions.