

OBEYING GOD'S WORD

MEMORY VERSE FOR THIS UNIT

"Jesus said, 'Blessed...are those who hear the Word of God and obey it'" (Luke 11:28, NIV*).

OBJECTIVES OF THIS UNIT

This unit will help the children:• Learn to depend on God and trust in His care.• Learn that Jesus teaches us to love God's ways.• Learn that Jesus teaches us to share.• Learn they can be Jesus' disciples.

THE REASON WE TEACH THIS UNIT

Please allow adequate time as you prepare for each of your sessions. Nazarene Discipleship International (NDI) desires these children's discipleship lessons to both engage the teacher in personal discipleship as well as to be children's disciple makers.

Evangelism and the Teaching of Preschoolers from New Testament Evangelism Today encourages us to ask: "At what age in children's lives does a Christian teacher's discipleship begin to have evangelistic significance?" The answer is: "In the very first weeks!" The earlier the nursery teacher gets the opportunity to care for the child, the greater the evangelistic responsibility. At the age of two or three weeks the baby's first smile will occur in response to a parent or perhaps a teacher. This is a big event. It means the child's capacity to respond is developing properly. The mother (or teacher) is smiling the child into smiling back. When the infant responds to love, the child is learning the first lesson in responding to God.

At what age should a teacher try to bring about the conversion of the child? Age is not the only factor. When children reach in their development what Gaines S. Dobbins, in his book *Winning the Children*, calls "the level of choice-consciousness," these children can be led to Christ. There are four developmental levels of consciousness:

1. Self-consciousness occurs during the first few months of life. Infants sense themselves as being apart from others. At this stage they are primarily concerned with themselves.
2. The second level, God-consciousness, soon follows. Now the children wants to know where the animals, trees, stars, and insects came from. They are especially concerned about where they came from. The answer to most of their questions is God.
3. Sin-consciousness develops as the children find themselves in conflict with God.
4. Soon the children realize that they have the power to choose good or bad, falsehood or truth, revenge or forgiveness. This is choice-consciousness. Now they are ready for Christian conversion.

Nazarene Discipleship International offers the following guidance for ministering to children, Infancy—Toddler (Age 0 – Age 2). Key relationships are parents, siblings, and caregivers. Regarding what these children need to know is that they belong to a family of faith. They can learn basic words and language related to Christian faith and practice. How to know it? Parents, family, and caregivers use "faith words" as they speak and interact with children. Regarding heart matters, what they need to feel is trust and love, as foundational emotional experiences. How they can feel it is by being surrounded by love, nurture, consistent care

that provides security and safety. Regarding what they can do, they can be prepared to be baptized or dedicated. We can help them experience the world as a safe and secure place. Parents take children to church and practice faith at home. Why should we do it? We can help establish one's identity as one of God's people. We can enable them to have faith in others and God at later stages of life. We can help them become accustomed to Christian practices from early on. Development markers include: celebrating with the congregation through infant baptism or baby dedication, and attending Sunday School or other children's discipleship groups.

Nazarene Discipleship International offers the following guidance for ministering to children, Early Childhood (Age 3 – Age 5). Key relationships are parents, siblings, caregivers and teachers. Regarding what these children need to know are stories of God and God's people as well as a basic sense of right and wrong, loving and unloving ways of treating others.

How can they know it? By having Bible stories read to them; re-telling and acting out Bible stories; and some reading the Bible for themselves. Careful parent instruction and modeling of Christlike treatment of others is important.

Regarding heart matters, what they need to feel is positive view of God and God's relationship with people as well as love and appreciation for the Bible.

How can they feel it? Through play and imagination, play-acting worship and other church activities. It is also important for them to observe parents and others treasure and enjoy Bible reading and study.

Regarding what they can do, they can give thanks to God through prayers and attending worship. They can also show kindness and hospitality to others. Why should they do it? To acknowledge God as Creator and giver of good things as well as to practice thankfulness, gratitude, humility.

Development markers include: receiving a children's Bible such as a Story Bible or other child-orientated Bible story book as they enter this time of life. Another marker is meeting with the student and his/ her primary faith influencers to discuss the importance of family and personal devotions. Also receiving Holy Communion is a marker.