

Coffee Talk

Conversation Starter Sheet for Children's Bible Study Leaders

Guiding Behavior with Children

Read Proverbs 29:15, "Correct your children and they will be wise." Comment on this verse. Let's explore how to deal with behavior issues in Sunday School.

Remember that each one of your children has a unique personality. The methods you use in dealing with each child will vary because each child has his own way of relating to rules and to you as the authority.

Discuss how incorporating these guidelines into your classroom can make the Sunday morning more pleasant for each child and leader.

- Try to have a positive approach, using a kind firmness.
- Use a calm voice. This shows you are in control
- Give positive directions. Stress "do" instead of "don't" as much as possible.
- Give clear commands. Children do not pick up easily on hints.
- Plan for a variety of activities and projects.
- Change the way you are progressing on your plan or shift to another activity if the group is restless.
- Establish boundaries. Often the child is testing you with no real desire for the thing which he is asking for.
- Avoid nagging about a problem. Take action rather than continuing to threaten
- Offer options. Set the limits for the options. Be sure you are willing to give up the option.
- Reward acceptable behavior with genuine praise. Sometimes the child is only recognized when his behavior is unacceptable.
- Try to give the child reasons for doing certain things required of him.
- .Deal with the unacceptable behavior but leave the child's personality intact.
- .Be consistent in the discipline even when it would be easier to just let it slide.
- When you finish the reprimand, it's over! Do not dwell on the past.
- Consider all of the children in the group, and refrain from having favorites.
- Listen when the children talk to you.
- Be a positive role model

Evaluate behavior by asking yourself these questions:

- Is the child ill, tired, hungry, or have other unmet needs?
- Is something at home affecting behavior? New baby? Divorce? Illness?
- Am I in the room when the child comes in?
- Do I greet each child in a positive manner?
- Am I being consistent in my expectations?
- Are there any distractions in the classroom?
- Are appropriate choices being offered?
- What are the logical consequences of the action?

Discuss how one or more these phrases can be used to praise a child.

- You're important.
- I trust you.
- Nothing can stop you now!
- You've figured it out!
- What an imagination!
- You tried hard.
- Way to go!
- You're on target!
- You make me happy.
- You're beautiful!
- You're a good friend.

For more information on guiding behavior, refer to *Discipline 101* on the "Resources" *Coffee Time* sheet.

Pray together for wisdom to know how best to teach, correct and guide behavior when needed. Pray specifically for any challenging child that is in your class. Ask God to show you how to use any suggestions learned today to help him or her learn self-discipline. Covenant together to praise children often for good behavior.

Questions for the Pastor: How can you help the children's teachers in your church learn to guide behavior, know the difference between discipline and punishment, and learn what scripture has to say about these topics? Use these and other verses to help teachers know what the Bible says about guiding behavior: Proverbs 3:12, Psalm 94: 12-13, Proverbs 15:5,32 and Hebrews 12:11. How could we include parents in this teaching?