

Building Relationships



Time Allotted 1 hour

Materials Needed

- Visual 1 - Cartoon of disciple expressions
- Visual 2 - Jesus the Master Teacher
- Visual 3 - Teacher knowing students
- Visual 4 - Physical characteristics
- Visual 5 - Social characteristics
- Visual 6 - Emotional characteristics
- Visual 7 - Mental characteristics
- Visual 8 - Spiritual characteristics
- Visual 9 - Listen
- Visual 10 - Observe
- Visual 11 - Show interest
- Visual 12 - Spend time
- Visual 13 - Teacher valuing students
- Five clear overhead projector transparencies and markers
- Large reversible happy/sad face for trainer (see page 19)
- Small reversible happy/sad face for each trainee (see page 20)
- Whiteboard and markers/chalkboard and chalk
- Trainee worksheets

Highlighted boxes

All highlighted boxes, such as this one, enclose instructions to the trainer.



Objective

Trainees will plan to build relationships with their children by getting to know them and by showing them they are valued.

By the end of this session, trainees should be able to demonstrate their understanding by the following:

Given a child they work with,

Trainees will...

- suggest at least two appropriate ways to get to know the child;
- suggest at least two ways to show the child that he is valued.



Introduction

Does this class sound familiar?

Display visual and point to the appropriate faces as you read each description.

Let's meet some of the people in the class.

1. Two well-to-do brothers who are used to getting their own way and who get annoyed easily.
2. The impatient student who is always interrupting the lesson.
3. The schemer in the corner who appears to be up to something.
4. Two students whose views on everything are about as opposite as they can be - a 'fight waiting to happen'.
5. Three students who sit in the back row and try to fade into the background.
6. The student who always has a puzzled expression on his face as if to say, 'I don't get it'.
7. The eager helper.
8. The literal learner who wants everything to be explained 'just so'.

If you recognised the class, you probably know their names.

1. Who are the two well-to-do brothers who are used to getting their own way and who get annoyed easily? (James and John)
2. Who is the impatient student who is always interrupting the lesson? (Peter)

3. Who is the schemer in the corner who appears to be up to something? (Judas)
4. Who are the two students whose views on everything are about as opposite as they can be - a 'fight waiting to happen'? (Matthew and Simon the Zealot)
5. Who are the three students who just sit in the back row and try to fade into the background? (Thaddeus; Bartholemew and James, son of Alphaeus)
6. Who is the student who always has a puzzled expression on his face as if to say, 'I don't get it'? (Philip)
7. Who is the eager helper? (Andrew)
8. Who is the literal learner who wants everything to be explained 'just so'? (Thomas)

This was the group of students Jesus worked with day after day. His class was not an ideal group but over three years Jesus moved them steadily towards the goal of knowing, loving and obeying God.



How did He do it?

- He modelled by living out what he taught.
- He built relationships with his disciples.

What things did Jesus do with His disciples that built a relationship with them?

Responses may include, but are not limited to, the following:

ate together, walked together, taught together, laughed together, went fishing together, worked together, cried together, faced problems together.

Most of us will not have the opportunity to spend the same amount of time with our classes that Jesus did with His. However, we must still make building relationships with our children an important part of what we do.



State Objective

My prayer is that by the end of this session you will plan to build relationships with your children by getting to know them and by showing them they are valued.



Presentation



If we are to build relationships with our children, we must first get to know them. While it is important we get to know them as unique individuals, we need first to understand them as children. Let's look at some of the characteristics of the children in our classes.

- Direct trainees' attention to Worksheets A and B.
- Allow trainees several minutes to quietly read the list of physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual characteristics.

Physical Characteristics

A child is still growing, unable to sit still for long periods of time, still learning fine motor skills, sometimes clumsy, sometimes energetic and tires easily.

Social Characteristics

A child likes to be with friends, wants to be accepted, is eager to please people he/she cares about, can be self-centred, has a strong sense of justice and looks up to 'heroes'.

Emotional Characteristics

A child is fragile, can be upset by seemingly small incidents, displays emotions more readily than adults and is enthusiastic.

Mental Characteristics

A child finds it difficult to understand abstract concepts, struggles to follow long sentences and difficult vocabulary, is imaginative, is curious, is still learning to read and write, has a good memory and is prone to exaggeration.

Spiritual Characteristics

A child can have great faith. He not only needs to respond but is as capable of responding to God as are adults.

Now, let me tell you about one teacher's experience. As I read her story, try to identify ways in which Mary, one of her children, is a typical child.

A Meeting with Mary

Mary came running into class one evening. She was eager to tell me all about her friend's birthday party that afternoon. All of her friends had been there and she told me she had eaten at least twenty pieces of cake. Mary said she was looking forward to her birthday since she planned to invite all her friends and wanted to know if I could come too. Then she sat down in the middle row beside her friends, Sarah and Rachel. They giggled a little at the start of the meeting but soon settled down.

They all joined in the singing with great enthusiasm but Mary became upset during the quiz when the other team was given two chances to answer a question while her side had been given only one. She sulked for a few minutes but soon cheered up. She recited the last week's memory verse perfectly, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' (John 1:29). However, when I asked her what it meant, she had no idea.

All the children listened well during the story until near the end when they started to fidget. The story was about David and Goliath. When I told them that Goliath was looking for someone to fight, Mary asked why Samson could not fight him since Samson was good at fighting the Philistines. I explained that Samson probably would have fought Goliath except that Samson had lived a long time before and that he was dead by Goliath's time. Then I went on with the rest of the story. The children loved the part where David told Goliath that he was coming in the name of the Lord and then killed him with a single stone.

I thought that they were all really interested in the lesson until Mary interrupted me and asked how the flannelgraph figures stuck to the board. I told her to sit down and not interrupt. She then burst into tears. I said I was sorry for being cross and she calmed down. At the end of the lesson, I asked the children how they could stand up for God like David had. Mary said that she was going to tell her best friend at school that she loved Jesus and would invite her to come with her the next week. Maybe it was not such a bad evening after all.

Does Mary's behaviour sound familiar? As a children's teacher, you can probably identify with some of the things that happened. If Mary sounds like the children you teach, it is because, in many ways, Mary is a typical child. As teachers working with children, it is our responsibility to get to know their developmental characteristics and respond appropriately to them.

Ask trainees to suggest ways in which Mary was being a typical child. For each category, ask trainees how teachers need to respond to children in light of their characteristics. Record trainee responses on a clear overhead projector transparency, using Visuals 4-8.



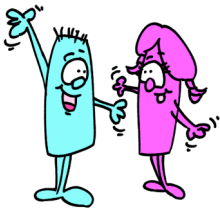
Answers may include, but are not limited to, the following:

Physical characteristics

- *The children struggled to sit still for the whole lesson. (Unable to sit still for long periods of time)*
- *Mary came running into the room. (Energy)*
- *By the end of the evening Mary was obviously tired after a busy day. (Can tire easily)*

Ways a teacher should respond

- *Provide for movement in the programme as well as in the lesson itself. Should be sensitive to the length of time children are capable of sitting still, even during a well-prepared lesson.*
- *Avoid scheduling meetings for the children late in the evening when they are too tired to learn well.*



Social characteristics

- *Mary sat with her friends during the meeting. She talked to her teacher about what she had done with her friends that day. (Likes to be with friends)*
- *Mary wanted her teacher to come to her birthday party. (Eager to please people she cares about)*
- *Mary sulked when she felt that the leader was being unfair in the quiz. (Strong sense of justice)*
- *The children enjoyed the story of David's courage and victory over Goliath. (Like having heroes)*

Ways a teacher should respond

- *Allow children to sit next to friends unless they are being disruptive.*
- *Be as fair as it is possible to be. Give reasons for decisions and avoid simply saying, 'Because I said so...'*
- *Share Bible stories of positive role models for the children. Perhaps share stories of other Christian heroes such as pioneer missionaries.*



Emotional characteristics

- *Mary cried when she got into trouble. (Fragile, upset by small incidents, displays emotions more readily than adults)*
- *Mary showed lots of enthusiasm in the singing and presumably also the quiz. (Enthusiastic)*

Ways a teacher should respond

- *Be sensitive to the feelings of the children in the class and treat them gently.*
- *Foster the enthusiasm of the children in any way possible, perhaps through team competitions or fun learning activities.*



Mental Characteristics

- *Mary memorised the Bible verse easily but did not understand the abstract concepts 'Lamb of God' and 'sin' presented in it. (Memorise easily, struggle with abstract ideas)*
- *Mary's curiosity got her into trouble when she asked about the flannelgraph figures. (Curious)*
- *Mary had no idea why Samson could not fight Goliath. Anything that happened before she was born was a 'long time ago'. (Limited perception of time)*
- *Mary's claim that she ate twenty pieces of cake was probably (!) just childish exaggeration. (Prone to exaggeration)*

Ways a teacher should respond

- *Use these prime years to help the children memorise God's Word.*
- *Avoid using abstract words where concrete ones will do. Use concrete illustrations to help explain difficult words like 'sin'.*
- *Accept children's curiosity and encourage them to ask questions. 'Less relevant' questions (how the flannelgraph figures stick to the board) can be answered at the end of the lesson.*
- *Gently probe for accurate reporting rather than accuse the student of lying.*



Spiritual Characteristics

- *None of the children questioned the feasibility of a young boy killing a nine-foot giant. The Bible said it and that was enough for them. (Capable of great faith)*
- *Mary's response at the end of the lesson showed not only that she had been listening in spite of all the distractions, but that she was ready to put the truth into practice in her own life. (As capable of responding as adults are)*

Ways a teacher should respond

- *Teach the children to the best of one's ability and challenge them to respond to God's Word in salvation as well as in Christian living.*



Children share many characteristics because they are children. However, we need to remember that although they may be similar to each other, they are not the same as each other. Each child is an individual with a unique family background, set of experiences, personality, group of interests, level of spiritual interest and so on. It is not enough to know the general characteristics of our children. We must also take time to know each child individually. Where there are too many children in our group for us to know each one personally, we need to enlist the help of others.

How do we get to know the individual children in our classes?

Record trainees' answers on the whiteboard/chalkboard. Review and elaborate on them using the material below.

1. Listen



- Listen to the children as they talk to each other.
 - ◆ What kind of things do they talk about?
 - ◆ What are you learning about their family and friends?
 - ◆ What do their conversations reveal about their characteristics and needs?
- Listen carefully to the children when they talk to you.
 - ◆ Give the child your undivided attention.
 - ◆ Let the child do most of the talking. Don't monopolise the conversation.



2. Observe

- Who do they spend time with?
- How do they interact with the others socially?
- What do they appear to be interested in?
- How are they responding to the teaching and activities?

Observation is an important tool in getting to know a child. Ask trainees what the following observations might suggest about a child. Point out that most observations could have a variety of explanations.

- ◆ A child always sits by himself before your meeting starts.

The child may not have many friends in the group or the child may not want to appear too interested in what is happening.

- ◆ A child has red puffy eyes.

The child may have had a fever or may have been crying and wants to talk about what has upset him/her.

- ◆ A child misbehaves whenever you ask him to read.

The child may have difficulty reading and not want to be put on the spot or the child may just hate being asked to be the focus of everyone's attention.

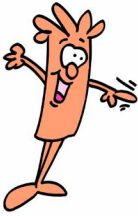
- ◆ A child has a piece of paper he is showing to all his friends.

The child may have something he should not have and is boasting about it or the child could have won a special certificate or competition he/she is telling the others about.

- ◆ A child has a large bruise on his arm.

The child may have fallen at play or perhaps someone has hurt him.

Observation is a key tool but it is dangerous to jump to conclusions without following through on your observations. Observations are a good starting point but we find out more about a student when we take an interest in him/her.



3. Show interest

- Learn the children's names. Use nametags at first if you must but make sure that you know and use the name of each child in your group.
- Become a good questioner. While you don't want to make your student feel that he or she is being interrogated, genuine questions are a good way to get to know a child.

Allow trainees to suggest questions which they could ask which would help them know the child. Perhaps you could go round the room and have each trainee suggest an appropriate question to ask.

Possible questions might include the following:

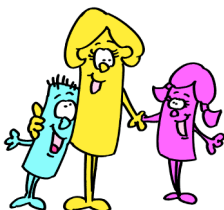
Do you have brothers or sisters? How do you get on with them?

What is your favourite subject at school?

What kind of music do you like to listen to?

What kind of things do you like to do in your spare time?

- Notice and comment on things the child appears to be interested in. For example, sports teams which he talks about; new clothes he is wearing; activities he especially enjoys.
- Have children complete a 'fact file' on themselves for you. As well as asking basic questions about the child's name, age, address, contact person, you may include more creative questions such as...
 - ◆ 'If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be?'
 - ◆ 'If you won a lot of money, what would you do with it?'
 - ◆ 'What do you want to be when you grow up?'



4. Spend time

- Free up your time before and after the meeting to allow for casual conversation.
- Plan special activities outside of class time for informal interaction with the children.

- Walk a group of children home after the meeting.
- Go to special events in which the child is involved; for example, a sporting event, a school programme, a birthday party.

Extension Option

Have trainees form small groups and share stories of how they have successfully built relationships with children they have taught. Alternatively, have trainees share stories of teachers who built relationships with them when they were children. Have each group share one story with the entire group at the end of the small group time.

Trainer Note

Warn trainees not to spend time alone with a child, especially in their own home. There should always be more than one adult present to avoid any potential allegations of abuse.

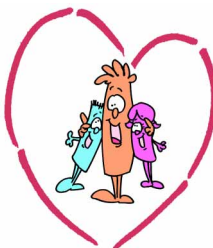
If there are important legal or church guidelines for preventing or reporting student abuse, you should seek to provide that literature as well as helpline numbers. While this session is not the place to present a full abuse prevention policy, it is important to raise teacher awareness of the dangers.

If we want to build relationships with our children, we need to get to know them. But we also need to show them that they are important to us and that we value them.



Let's review for a few moments what God has to say about the children we teach. In the session *Developing a Biblical Attitude* we saw that, according to Scripture...

- children are important to God;
- children are able to understand much about God;
- children are able to respond to God.



If we have brought our attitudes into line with God's attitude, we have realised that our children are of great value. We need to ask ourselves, 'Do my children know that I value them?' It is often the little things we do or do not do that speak the loudest.

- Distribute a small reversible happy/sad face to each trainee. Keep the large face for yourself.
- Challenge trainees to mentally put themselves in the place of a seven-year-old walking into a meeting.
- Ask trainees to consider the following 'trivial events' in a children's meeting. Ask them to indicate with the happy/sad faces whether the following incidents would make them feel valued.
- Direct trainees' attention to Worksheet C, which is an outline of the following material. They do not need to take notes during this activity.
- Read the following and allow trainees to respond after each statement. Turn your large happy/sad face appropriately after the trainees respond.

Do the children know that I value them by the way I welcome them?

- The teacher is busy getting the room ready and does not notice when I come in. (*Sad*)
- The teacher greets me by name and asks how my football game went last week. (*Happy*)

Do the children know that I value them by the way I listen to them?

- I tell my teacher that my cat died yesterday but she just nods and says, 'That's nice'. (*Sad*)
- I tell my teacher that I won a contest this week. He stops what he is doing and asks me to tell him/her about it. (*Happy*)

Do the children know that I value them by the way I invest my time in them?

- My teacher sends me a note saying the class missed me when I was absent. (*Happy*)
- The teacher sits down, opens the lesson book and says to the class, 'I wonder what we are going to learn about today?' (*Sad*)

Do the children know that I value them by the way I respond to their ideas and help?

- I tried to pick up a visual which had fallen to the floor. The teacher told me to stop being disruptive. (*Sad*)
- The teacher asked me if I could help the younger ones find the verses, since I'm so good at it. (*Happy*)

Do the children know that I value them by the way I provide for their physical needs?

- The teacher always brings a snack to ‘keep us going’. *(Happy)*
- I need to stretch my legs but the teacher tells me to stop fidgeting. *(Sad)*

Do the children know that I value them by the way I pray for them?

- The teacher asks if I have anything I would like him to pray about. He writes it down in his notebook. *(Happy)*
- The teacher never asked me about my test which we prayed about last week. *(Sad)*

Do the children know I value them by the way I respond to discipline problems?

- Johnny poked me and called me names during the whole meeting. The teacher ignored it. *(Sad)*
- I asked my friend what he was doing later today. The teacher shouted at both of us for being disruptive. *(Sad)*

Children are vulnerable. We can easily crush them in an instant if we are not careful. We need to treat them with care. They are of great value in God’s sight and our manner with them needs to reflect that value.



Practice

We have been thinking about building relationships with our children and how important it is that we get to know them and show that we value them. Now, let’s do an activity together to apply what we have learned to our own situations.



- Direct trainees' attention to Worksheet D.
- Give instructions for individual work.

Time Limit: 5 minutes

- ◆ Draw a simple picture of a child whom you teach but do not know very well. If you are not teaching at this time, draw a child with whom you have contact but do not know very well.
- ◆ List two ways you could get to know the child better and show that you value him/her.
- If trainees seem unsure of how they can know a child or how they can demonstrate value, share the following examples with them.

Get to know him

- ◆ Ask him to help set up for the meeting this week so that you can talk for a few minutes together.
- ◆ Find out what his favourite subject at school is and why.

Show him value

- ◆ Drop him a note later in the week thanking him for his help.
- ◆ If you see a newspaper article related to his favourite subject, cut it out and give it to him.
- If there is time, ask one or two trainees to share their plans with the group. Plans should be similar in form to the example above.



Challenge

Jesus did not have an easy class with which to work but He moved them steadily towards the goal of knowing, loving and obeying God. One of the key ways He moved toward the goal was by building relationships with them. Your children may be as varied as Jesus' disciples were. If you want your children to know, love and obey God, relationships are vital.

I want to challenge you to put your plan into practice. Invest some time this week in beginning to build a relationship with the child you identified. Show him/her that he/she is important to God and to you, also.



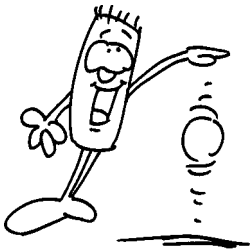
Building Relationships



Objective:

My prayer is that by the end of this session you will plan to build relationships with your children by getting to know them and by showing them they are valued.

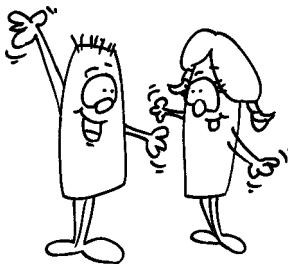
GET TO KNOW YOUR CHILDREN'S CHARACTERISTICS!



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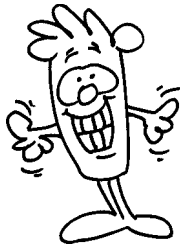
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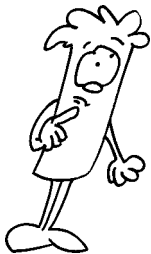
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Ways a teacher should respond...

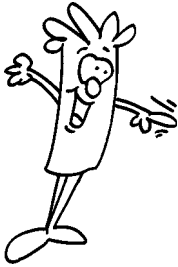
GET TO KNOW YOUR CHILDREN INDIVIDUALLY!



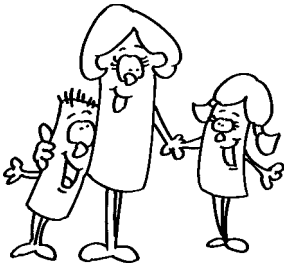
1. Listen



2. Observe



3. Show interest

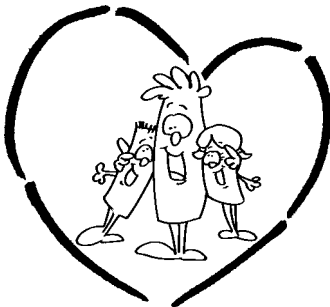


4. Spend time

SHOW YOUR CHILDREN THAT YOU VALUE THEM!

By the way you...

- welcome them
- listen to them
- invest your time
- respond to their ideas and help
- provide for their physical needs
- pray for them
- respond to discipline problems



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS ONE AT A TIME



Draw a simple picture of a child you teach but do not know very well.

Develop a simple plan to start building a relationship with that child.

Ways I can get to know him/her



Ways I can show that I value him/her

