

Practical points for developing a successful weekly children's club

By Shirley Davis

- 1)** Decide on a suitable, secure place to meet – with good options for when the weather is bad!
  
- 2)** Decide on the day and time to meet every week – and always try to continue with this. It is important so that the children know that if they cannot attend for a while, they will always know where and when the club still meets.
  
- 3)** Always begin on time and continue for a set length of time (such as 30-45 minutes). It's better for the club to be over sooner yet utilize every minute well, rather than waste time and cause the children to get bored. This also teaches the children the importance of being punctual and respecting you and your ministry. (I know this is often difficult in many countries but I believe that it is a part of being a good Christian, respecting others and managing our time well.)
  
- 4)** ALWAYS arrive 20-30 minutes BEFORE the starting time. This helps avoid problems (such as finding that the area is very dirty and must be cleaned up); helps you be able to minister to children that arrive early (also a good opportunity to get to know them better); gives time to pray and prepare fully. Also if possible, it's a good idea to play Christian songs or music to attract other children. Always stay for the whole time and teach, even if there are only 1 or 2 children that come.
  
- 5)** Have everything prepared for the teaching, including game or race, puppets, skit, illustrations, handout of announcements or puzzle page etc. It does need a lot of work and preparation but we should realize the club is as important as preaching a sermon in church (it has the same or even more potential!)
  
- 6)** Follow a schedule where the teaching is divided into short segments – and if possible, try to change the order a little each week (this way it is more interesting and the children never know what to expect!). For example the segments can be as follows:
  - a) Race or game – this is good to attract attention, and if children arrive a few minutes late they don't interrupt – but the next time they will probably make an effort to get there on time!
  - b) Everyone sits down – it is best to do this in order, such as in teams or with the smallest children in front as it is easier to handle everyone that way.
  - c) Teaching – something short to link the race or game with the spiritual principle you are teaching about.
  - d) A bible story to illustrate the spiritual principle. You could utilize a guest in disguise to tell the story briefly; or use puppets; use pictures and illustrations to help; or get the children to help act while you tell the story. They can use a few simple costumes and props (such as a false beard, crown, walking stick or baby doll....) to make it fun.
  - e) A short discussion, answering questions from the children about the story. (Remember that the majority of the children in a club DON'T attend church nor behave well, so they need to learn a lot!)
  - f) An object lesson to strengthen the teaching about the spiritual principle and how to apply it to everyday life.
  - g) A quiz or other activity to prove that the children have understood the teaching.
  - h) Brief time of prayer before dismissal.
  
- 7)** I believe that we should see the club as a "mini-church" because many times the parents of the children have no interest in attending church and sometimes won't even let their children do so. Obviously we can invite them to church meetings, but we should understand that even if they never attend, they can continue to grow in the Lord little by little and hopefully one day they will make the decision to follow Christ and attend church for themselves. We are truly like the "Sower" sowing seeds of the Word of God and Jesus' love.