

Practical Ideas For Making Life-changing Connections With Children

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Equipping the CM team with a good curriculum is critical, but even the best curriculum can be “dry” or boring. A good CM teacher knows that a lesson from the provided curriculum can be like a bowl of white rice. White rice can be an okay meal, but it is much better if you add some sauce to it. The ideas in this document is a “veritable cornucopia” of practical ideas for making life-changing connections with the children and stimulating their faith. These are ideas that you can use right away or prepare to use soon. Today’s children need our creativity!

Ideas For In Class Presentations

1. Careful use of video clips and music in the classroom

Today’s children are visual! They like to see things! Show them visual examples of the lesson!

- Check with supervisor first (understand the church boundaries).
- Pre-approve the video or music clip if needed.
- Use clips or songs the children know.
- Use the “show, stop/discuss, show more” pattern to facilitate discussions during video.
- For older children, challenge them to “tell me what you see/hear.”
- Use video clip or song to introduce, reinforce, or summarize the lesson.
- Wingclips (wingclips.com) is a great source of short clips that are searchable.
- Youtube is also a source for video clips.



2. In-class “performances” or presentations

Today’s children like to watch a “show.” Plan for demonstrations that represent the lesson.

- By you.
- By the children themselves for the rest of the children.
- By parents.
- By “stars” who attend your church (music, sports, talents, etc.).
- Let the children “interview” afterward – “season” the time with lesson-related talk.

3. Presentations for the parents

The parents enjoy knowing what their children experience.

- By the children themselves.
- “Open house” type environment.
- “Quiz” the parents on things that you’ve been studying – the children are experts!
- Songs, memory verses, role plays, art pieces, etc.



4. “What If” challenges

Children love “absurd” or unusual questions or situations. Stir their imagination about the lesson by asking them “What if” questions like:

- What if Jesus came and ‘walked among us’ today?
- What if God didn’t send Jesus to die?
- What if God stopped all bad things from happening?
- What if God wasn’t friendly and loving?
- What if Paul never changed from “Saul”?
- What if you were the only Christian in your school?



5. Science experiments / object lessons

Children remember interesting experiences! Connect the lesson to visual things that amaze them!

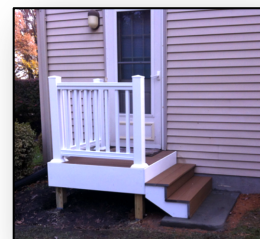
- a. Science Bob (a website with science experiments) - <http://www.sciencebob.com/experiments/>
- b. Science Kids - <http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/experiments.html>
- c. Science Experiments on Youtube - <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/40-cool-science-experiments-web>
- d. Steve Spangler Science - <http://www.stevespanglerscience.com/lab/experiments>
- e. The Science Explorer - http://www.exploratorium.edu/science_explorer/
- f. KidZone - <http://www.kidzone.ws/science/>
- g. PBS Kids ZoomSci - <https://indiana.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/zoom/>
- h. Funology - <https://www.funology.com/>
- i. BuzzFeed Life - <http://www.buzzfeed.com/peggy/kids-science-experiments-that-adults-can-enjoy-too#411m1kn>
- j. Red Tricycle - <http://redtri.com/classic-science-experiments/>



6. “Back door” lesson examples

Children expect a “normal” presentation, surprise them by doing something they don’t expect!

- a. Teach the lesson using the “opposite” example such as:
- b. Be late to class to teach about discipline, respect, etc.
- c. Dress messy to teach about first impressions.
- d. Burp loudly to teach about manners.
- e. Talk on phone or text while teaching to teach about focus, respect, etc.
- f. Throw trash or empty water bottle on ground to teach about responsibility.



7. “Who am I?” Bible guests

Stir the children’s imagination while you let them hear, see, and feel the lesson!

- a. Let the children interview the Bible character, then guess who he/she is.
- b. A “time machine” (with dry ice pouring over it – a character steps through it).
- c. An electronic “transporter” (with lights, sounds, etc.).
- d. A Skype or Zoom interview (with someone in another room).



8. Room transformation

Turn the room into an experience! Immerse the children with the lesson! They’ll never forget it!

- a. The belly of the whale (Jonah) – dark room, tuna cans on foil in corners, humidifier, ocean sounds, etc.
- b. Disrupt the room (everything upside down) to teach about cooperation.
- c. Teach the story of Noah by turning on and off the lights, spraying water (“rain”) over the children’s heads, flashing lights for lightning, and assigning children to make animal sounds when prompted.
- d. Give inexpensive glasses (from Oriental Trading Co.) to each child. The “lenses” are taped over with cellophane tape to block clear vision. Tell the story of the man Jesus healed of blindness, then have the children take off the glasses to see clearly.

Ideas To Create Interaction With Others

1. Use Video Conferencing Platforms (Zoom, Skype, Facetime)

Let the children explore outside of the room without ever leaving the room!

- a. Local “heroes” or sports stars
- b. Missionaries
- c. Famous people
- d. Visits to interesting places – mines, factories (with an on-site narrator)
- e. Museums
- f. Amusement parks (behind the scenes)
- g. Airplane, boat, train adventures (recorded earlier)
- h. Farmers
- i. Law enforcement officers
- j. Fire or paramedic personnel



2. Connecting with children outside the classroom

Connecting with children outside of church lets them know you as a “real” person!

- a. Always communicate with the parents beforehand.
- b. Never go alone (take a fellow team member).
- c. Communicate with parents afterward – give brief “report” of the visit.
- d. Visit their sports events (encourage, compliment, etc.).
- e. Visit their recitals (encourage, compliment, etc.).
- f. Visit at school lunch time (never alone, with parents aware).
- g. Visit school Christian clubs.

3. “Get out of the chairs!”

Getting children out of their chairs gets their bodies and minds active. Movement enhances the learning!

- a. Pre class games – play during check-in, purposeful interaction (questions, comments, etc.).
- b. **“Go find a classmate who...”** (feels the same as you do, has the same pet, has a similar prayer request, also needs help in school, etc.).
- c. **“Impromptu” role plays or dramas** – children form groups to put together a role-play or a reenactment of a story related to the lesson. They perform for the class.
- d. **“Stand up of you...”** (think this scripture applies today, think this person did the right thing, we should do something about this, etc.).
- e. **“Go sit over here if you...”** (like peanut butter, have memorized a scripture this week, prayed for someone else this week, etc.).



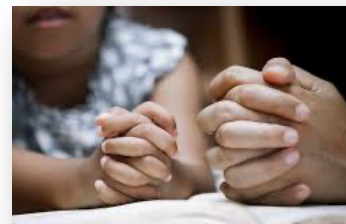
4. Cross-age ministry (to a younger group of children)

Involving children older than them in the lesson or inviting the children to visit a younger class stirs interest and enhances the learning!

- a. Sing a song
- b. Perform a skit
- c. Present a lesson
- d. Answer questions (about the Bible or life)
- e. Assist with a lesson or craft
- f. Share testimonies
- g. Share talents

5. **“Prayer warriors”** (pray for church leaders, church families, etc.)
God hears children’s prayers! Asking children to pray stimulates their personal relationship with God!

- a. Pray for church leaders (cautiously edited).
- b. Pray for church families (cautiously edited).
- c. Pray for missionaries.
- d. Pray for children’s ministry team members (cautiously edited).
- e. Pray for local government leaders.
- f. Pray for church prayer requests (cautiously edited).
- g. Pray for fellow children (cautiously edited).
- h. Pray for peers at school (names changed) who need the Lord.



6. **Make your own PowerPoint games** to challenge and reinforce lessons
Children love to play games! Use their natural desire to play to enhance the lesson!

- a. PowerPoint Games - <https://www.lifewire.com/free-powerpoint-games-for-teachers-1358169>
- b. EdGames - <http://people.uncw.edu/ertzbergerj/msgames.htm>
- c. Internet 4 Classrooms -
http://www.internet4classrooms.com/technology_tutorials/powerpoint_game_templates_technology_tutorials.htm
- d. Microsoft Office Quiz Show - <https://templates.office.com/en-US/Search/results?query=free%20powerpoint%20template>
- e. How To Create PowerPoint Games -
http://www.pptfaq.com/FAQ00616_Creating_games_in_PowerPoint.htm

7. **Class “interviews” of fellow classmates**

Let the children interview each other! This is a fun activity that engages children in the lesson!

- a. Children write their own lesson-related interview questions, then break up into pairs and “interview” each other.
- b. Results of the interviews are shared and discussed with whole class.



8. **School “interviews” of fellow students at school**

Challenge the children to interview other students at school.
This is a great way to get the children involved in others’ lives.

- a. Children brainstorm lesson-related questions to ask other students at school. These questions can be designed to collect “data” or as an introduction to telling others about Jesus.
- b. Results of the interviews are shared and discussed with whole class.

Learning Experiences

Children learn best when they experience the lesson! The traditional children's ministry classroom or area requires the children to "sit and learn." This is not the best way to teach, nor is it something that interests children! Here are some ideas to create interesting learning environments for the children!

1. Inspiring guests

Invite interesting people to visit the children and to show off their talents! Connect the talent or expertise to the lesson!



Guest / Experience	Application / Scripture
1. Beekeeper with observation beehive	Love, care for mother – Ex. 20:12 Work / sacrifice for others – Phil 2:3,4 Work joyfully – Phil. 2:14 The body of Christ – Rom. 12
2. Medical rescue team (helicopter?) or paramedics	God's omnipresence – Psalm 139 God's care for your needs – Phil. 4:19
3. Motorcycle racer	Full armor of God – Eph. 6:11-13 Practice, discipline – I Cor. 9:27
4. BMX bicycle racer or stunt person	(Same as #3 above)
5. Skateboarder	Practice, discipline – I Cor. 9:27 Spiritual growth – Eph. 4:15; 2Peter 3:18
6. SWAT team officer	Full armor of God – Eph. 6:11-13 Temptation – I Cor.10:12,13; II Cor. 10:3-6; I John 2:15,16; James 1:13-27
7. FBI agent	(same as #6 above)
8. Exotic, dangerous animals (with handler) (contact school district for contacts)	God's creation – Gen.1,2; Ps. 104;
9. Model rocket launching	Minds set on things above- Col. 3:1-17
10. "Mad Scientist" – with bizarre experiments (smoking, exploding, stinking, etc.) (Local high school teacher) madscience.org	God's power (Holy Spirit) – Acts 1:8 Results of sin – Gal. 5:16-21
11. Cooking show (messy, strange, etc.)	Following God's "directions" IITim. 3:16; Josh. 1:8
12. Juggler	Concentrate – Phil. 4:8 Minds set on things above- Col. 3:1-17 Be sure, stand firm – I Cor. 15:58
13. Sports "star"	Practice, discipline – I Cor. 9:27 Be a "star" yourself – I Tim. 4:12
14. Child actor / actress	(same as #13 above)
15. Crickets or mice let loose among kids	"Little" things make big difference – I Tim. 4:12
16. Balloons filled with shaving cream or candy "coupons," then exploded over heads of kids	"Messy / Blessy" friends – I Cor. 15:33
17. Helicopter lands on church parking lot (ideally a medical evacuation helicopter)	God is omnipresent to help and comfort (Psalm 139: 7-10)



2. “Field trips” on the church campus (during church time)

There are some excellent places to explore right on the church campus! Visiting places at church stimulates them to think about the lesson from a different perspective.

- a. **NOTE:** Make sure security knows where you have taken the children! Leave a note on the door and communicate with the parents beforehand.
- b. Pastor’s office (study God’s Word, take God seriously).
- c. Baptistry (talk about baptism).
- d. Opposite restrooms (respect for the opposite sex, honor God).
- e. The roof (God sees us differently).
- f. Janitor’s room or closet (the “stink” of sin / God’s cleansing through Jesus).
- g. The basement (the “dark side” of human nature, our hidden “old” self and sin).
- h. The garbage dumpster (the “stink” of sin that comes with one choice at a time).
- i. The audio/visual control room (let the Lord have control of your life).
- j. The kitchen (God takes care of our needs, He provides for us).



3. “Field trips” to local sites (during church time)

Field trips require parent permission and emergency forms, but they are a great way to stir the children’s interest in the lesson!

- a. **NOTE:** Make sure you have signed parent permission slips and emergency release forms with you when you leave campus.
- b. Make sure you have communicated with the parents and your supervising pastor regarding the details of your trip (when you’ll leave, where you’re going, when you’ll return).
- c. Make sure you have given the cell phone numbers of those who will be with the children to the parents and your supervising pastor.
- d. It is always better to rent a bus, rather than use carpools (for safety and insurance reasons).
- e. Make sure you have enough team members to assist you on the trip.
- f. A nearby river to talk about Jesus’ baptism.
- g. An open field with weeds to talk about the Parable of the Sower.
- h. An abandoned, old building (don’t go in) to talk about how our lives can fall apart without Jesus.
- i. A police station (results of bad choices, honor God with your choices and enjoy life).
- j. A nursery (God’s creation is beautiful, God is amazing, He’s created all of this for us!).
- k. A power plant (use God’s available power through the Holy Spirit).
- l. A dump (Paul’s reference to a dump regarding his accomplishments compared to knowing Jesus).



4. “S.W.A.T. Team” development (Students With A Testimony) witnessing on their school campuses

Challenge the children to be a light to their friends at school! Let them sense the power of evangelism or “missionary work” right on their school campus.

- a. Children may be nominated to be a part of this elite team.
- b. Children may earn their position on the team because of witnessing.
- c. All children may be on the team but earn badges with witnessing.
- d. Children are trained in basic conversation evangelism, lifestyle evangelism, etc.
- e. The elders or senior pastor are invited to encourage the students.
- f. Stories are shared in class and on social networking sites (carefully edited and monitored).



5. Gardening/landscaping ideas

Creating a garden on the church campus or caring for existing planters is an excellent way to “get their hands in the lesson.”

- Care for/clean garden areas (Parable of Sower; weeds / stones in their lives, etc.).
- Plant new plants (let God’s Word grow richly in your life, water it, feed it, protect it).
- Pick up trash (remove “sin” from your life (Heb. 12), keep your life pure).
- Replace bark (fellowship with other Christians helps us retain God’s Word and keep out weeds).
- Clean / sweep walkways (let the Holy Spirit “clean” you from temptations).
- Paint benches (become a new person in Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17)).



6. Children’s baptisms

Whether you have a small room, or a large room, having a “personalized” baptism will be an experience they will never forget!

- NOTE:** Discuss this with elders and senior pastor beforehand.
- Communicate with the parents (invite them to participate in all areas).
- Prepare the children through lessons leading up to baptism day.
- Encourage parents to prepare children at home (using printed help we provide).
- Purchase an inflatable pool from Wal-Mart.
- Fill with warm water (from nearby water heater?).
- Invite elders and pastors to attend.
- Use the entire session for the event.
- Worship together (with church worship leaders?).
- Provide towels for those who don’t bring them.
- If appropriate (based on your church procedures), print certificates to give to the children.
- Let parents and grandparents take pictures.
- Those children who aren’t baptized will watch and enjoy.
- Discuss “follow-up” process with parents (in accordance with your church process) – give them printed guidelines or ideas.
- Pray, worship, celebrate, dismiss!



7. Children’s communion

Hold a communion service in the room for the children. This makes this meaningful experience unforgettable!

- NOTE:** Discuss this with elders and senior pastor beforehand.
- Communicate with the parents (invite them to participate in the event).
- Prepare the children through lessons leading up to communion day.
- Encourage parents to prepare children at home (using printed help we provide).
- Invite elders and pastors to attend.
- Worship together (with church worship leaders?).
- Ask for elders or deacons to assist with passing out the elements (if this isn’t possible, use your children’s ministry team members).
- Have the children who will participate sit with their parents if the parents are there.
- Based on how much time you have, you may or may not use the entire session for communion.
- Discuss the possibility of enjoying communion whenever the adults also have communion in the main session.



8. Roleplaying

Children love to pretend and to use their imagination. Let them!

- Roleplay the Bible story.
- Roleplay what others might have said or done “behind the scenes” in the Bible story.
- Roleplay “real life” situations, and let the children discuss how to deal with it.
- Roleplay situations in which one child is witnessing to another, let all discuss afterward.
- Roleplay situations at school, and how to react to them.

9. “Fasting”

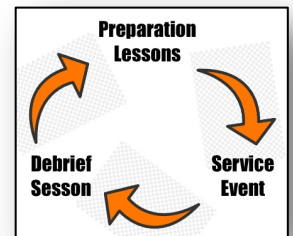
Fasting is usually connected with not eating food. Here are some ways to challenge the children to “fast” and to deepen their relationship with Jesus.

- Challenge the children to “fast” from sweets and discuss next week.
- Challenge the children to “fast” from electronics (without hurting schoolwork) and discuss next week.
- Challenge the children to “fast” from social media or TV and discuss next week.
- Challenge the children to “fast” from video / computer games and discuss next week.
- Challenge the children to “fast” from music and discuss next week.
- Challenge the children to “fast” from belittling others and discuss next week.

10. “Teach, serve, debrief” cycle of lessons

Educators and ministers all agree that personal application enhances learning. Creating environments that challenge the children to serve others is an excellent “tool” to use!

- Communicate with the parents about the entire process, invite them to participate.
- Prepare the children for an upcoming service project (teach them about the situation, the needs of the people, what to expect, and their own personal reactions) – 2 or 3 lessons.
- Challenge the children to “teach” their parents the lessons that they experienced in preparation for the upcoming service project.
- Conduct the service project (may be during regular service times, or not) – ideally parents drive their own children to and from the project (if not, carefully organize carpools or rent a bus).
- Spend 1 session “debriefing” after the service project (what did you experience, what did you learn, how did you grow spiritually, etc.).
- Prepare for the next service project with the same cycle.



11. “Simple acts of kindness” experiences

This world is becoming more and more “harsh” and angry. Challenging the children to be kind is a powerful thing!

- Communicate with the parents beforehand (goals, possibilities, options).
- Prepare the children beforehand (be aware of needs, etc.).
- Give suggestions (helping others at school, picking up things others drop, holding doors open for others, encouraging others who are discouraged or frightened, thanking teachers after class, complimenting others instead of belittling them, doing chores at home without being told, etc.).
- Giving something needed to a homeless person.
- Returning shopping carts to the collection area instead of leaving them in the lot.



12. The use of “ceremony”

Children aren’t too young to be inspired by a sense of “ceremony.”

- a. Lower the lights in the room.
- b. Light candles.
- c. Play worshipful/contemplative music.
- d. Show beautiful images of creation.
- e. Read Psalms out loud to them.
- f. Let the children sit and contemplate.
- g. Direct their thoughts and prayers with suggestions.
- h. “Debrief” with them afterward (what did they feel, what did they think about, etc.).



Ideas For Family Activities

1. **In-class baptisms** (see description above – “Learning Experiences” #6)

2. **In-class communion** (see description above – “Learning Experiences” #7)

3. Homeless backpack preparation and distribution

Rather than be “bothered” by people who are homeless, give the families a way to engage them and to show God’s love to them.

- a. Communicate with the parents ahead of the project (goals, challenges, etc.).
- b. Prepare the children by helping them understand the challenge of homelessness (bring in a guest with experience?).
- c. Prepare the children by helping them understand the needs and fears of homeless people.
- d. Prepare the children by letting them discover or suggest scriptures that deal with the needs and fears of homeless people.
- e. Distribute a list of items to include in the back packs (families purchase or collect these items).
- f. Seek donations of back packs from local stores (as many as you need for 1 per child).
- g. If you can’t get donated back packs, consider buying them for the children (so families don’t have to).
- h. If you can’t get donations, or don’t have the money to purchase the back packs, advertise the project to the whole church and seek donations from the church.
- i. Send a backpack home with each child – challenge the family to fill it with suggested items.
- j. On a specific day, families bring filled back packs to church. Families drive to local park where homeless congregate and distribute back packs.
- k. “Debrief” with children (and parents?) next week (what did you experience, feel, learn, etc.).

