

# CHILDREN'S LEADER

SPRING 2003

A NEWSLETTER FOR THOSE WHO LEAD CHILDREN IN THE CONGREGATION.

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## Growing Bodies, Developing Brains

We've all seen it happen, whether it's in the foyer at church or a crowded supermarket or airport. A teenager drops something—accidentally, perhaps—and causes a disturbance. Often, an adult's reaction is quick and scathing: "What's wrong with you? I told you to be careful! Why didn't you listen? Why did you do that?"

Brain function specialist Arlene Taylor describes two such experiences in an article in a recent *Adventist Review*. She points out that a lot of adults assume teenagers' brains mature at the same time as their bodies. However, the brain doesn't complete portions of its development until a person reaches their twenties.

When confronted with questions such as "Why did you do that?" people react differently depending on their age. Those over age 21 are more likely to access the cerebrum, or thinking portion of the brain, with its logical and rational functions. But younger people tend to access the emotional brain, or limbic system (pain/pleasure center) instead. Their reaction will be emotional. Trying to reason with an adolescent who is operating on an emotional overload only makes both parties angry. Without conscious, rational thought, they are likely to become defensive and are actually unable to articulate a sensible response to that "Why?" question.

Adults can effectively handle an embarrassing incident with a child or teen by using a soft-spoken, non-interrogative approach: 1) Identify the problem, 2) Give instructions about following up on the consequences of the offending action, 3) Explain the need to think ahead about possible negative results to such actions, and 4) Offer to help come up with a better choice. Handle the situation without yelling, demeaning, or shaming.

"Many adults agonize over WHY questions about their own behaviors," Taylor states. "How much more those under 21 whose brains are 'still in the oven,' so to speak. How easy it is to shame others, especially young people, for things that we ourselves find difficult to accomplish."

~adapted from the *Adventist Review*  
(full article available at [www.adventistreview.com](http://www.adventistreview.com))

## God's Call: to Happiness—or to Holiness?

Our 3,000-member church tried an innovation last year—the adult Sabbath School divided into eight classes, five of which were brand new. They still meet in the main sanctuary.

I enjoy my adult class, so I didn't volunteer when a kindergarten leader recently shared her need for pianists. But then I read Ephesians 1:4: "Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes" (New Living Translation).

Paul is not just trying to boost my self-esteem when he says, "even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us." Otherwise he would have stopped there. But he adds that God chose us to be holy—set aside for a sacred purpose, for God to use.

In the book of Leviticus, when items were set aside for God's use, they were first purified, then consecrated. The purification

was in the form of washing or passing through fire. After leading the people to destroy the Midianites, Moses instructed the people to wash clothing and other objects, but metal objects were passed through fire (Numbers 31:21-23).

Once I prayed for patience; God gave me children. They brought me lots of happiness—a fact I almost overlooked during their teenage years. Now I see those years as my own experience of passing through the fire. It didn't make me perfect, but it taught me to trust God.

What I'm discovering is this: It isn't about my happiness so much as about something much deeper and lasting—my holiness.

Along similar lines, it occurs to me that when God invites us to work for children, it isn't only for what we might teach them.

~Noelene Johnson



## Remember Madras?

The Summer 2002 issue of the *Children's Leader* featured a note about the Madras, Oregon primary class, and their participation in the Papua New Guinea GraceLink project. This project offers churches the opportunity to raise funds to purchase hand-crank powered tape recorders to spread the Sabbath School messages among families where even parents may be illiterate.

Following her group's original contribution last year, teacher Linda Chancellor

reports that the young people in her class felt so good about giving that they have continued to raise money.

From giving sacrificially of their own funds to collecting coins and donations from church members, the Madras primary class has now contributed the cost of several tape recorders.

For more information about this project, or to contribute, contact NAD Children's Ministries (address on page 1).

## News & Notes

### Coming Events

#### ◆ *Growing a Family of Grace*

**Convention:** Mark it on your calendar--**October 16-19, Portland, OR.** This convention will include tracks not just for Children's and Family Ministries, but also for Adult Ministries, Adventist Community Services, Youth and Adventurer Ministries. Details online at <http://adventistleadership-conventions.com>.

### Open Hearts, Open Hands

The Children's Sabbath 2004 materials are now available online. Download your free program guide from <http://childmin.com>, or call *AdventSource* to order (800-328-0525; \$2 shipping charge).

### Vacation Bible School Reporting

Whether you're using SCUBA or another Vacation Bible School program, you can still stand up and be counted. Please let us know how it went! Share your comments by completing the online VBS report available at <http://childmin.com>, and save the step of reporting to your local conference.

### Correction

A recent e-mail provided an incorrect link for the ACMA Resource Exchange. The correct link is <http://acma-online.org/members/RE>. The Resource Exchange is accessible to ACMA members only.

### kidsbibleinfo.com

Now kids can find Bible answers to their everyday questions online! New from the creators of <http://bibleinfo.com>, this site includes lessons, stories, games, and Bible study topics, with more fun stuff to come.

## Real-Time Faith Earliteen Curriculum

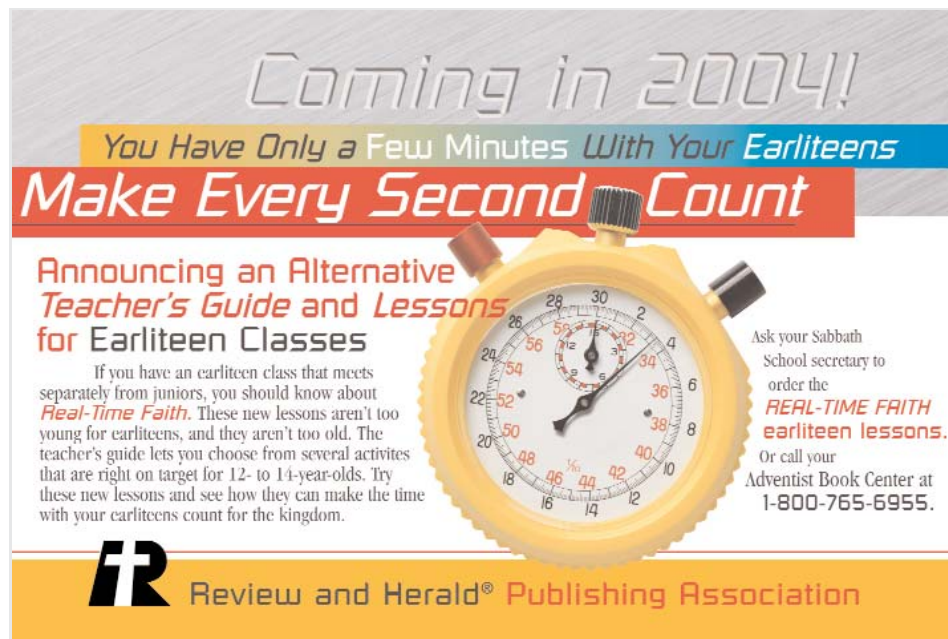
*Real-Time Faith*, a curriculum developed just for seventh- and eighth-graders, will be available for earliteen Sabbath Schools beginning with the first quarter of 2004. These alternative lessons and teacher guides target the issues that are significant in the lives of 12- to 14-year-olds.

*Real-Time Faith* lessons aren't too young for earliteens, and they aren't too old. Now nobody needs to feel like they're falling through the crack between junior and youth level materials.

Should your church order *Real-Time Faith* lessons? If the earliteens in your church meet separately, in their own Sabbath School division, yes. If they meet with the youth, probably

not. If they meet with the juniors, no. Why not? Because the entire Sabbath School—both lesson and program—needs to be focused on one set of objectives, one central idea. If you use two different sets of materials within the same class, you run the risk that kids will not really learn from either.

If your church has a separate earliteen class and you haven't already ordered the *Real-Time Faith* lessons, check with your church clerk or call the number below to place your order. Watch for more information coming soon to <http://RealTimeFaith.adventist.org>. This site will also provide additional resources for teachers, and a forum for kids to discuss concepts and scenarios from each lesson.



Coming in 2004!

You Have Only a Few Minutes With Your Earliteens

**Make Every Second Count**

**Announcing an Alternative Teacher's Guide and Lessons for Earliteen Classes**

If you have an earliteen class that meets separately from juniors, you should know about *Real-Time Faith*. These new lessons aren't too young for earliteens, and they aren't too old. The teacher's guide lets you choose from several activities that are right on target for 12- to 14-year-olds. Try these new lessons and see how they can make the time with your earliteens count for the kingdom.

Ask your Sabbath School secretary to order the **REAL-TIME FAITH earliteen lessons**. Or call your Adventist Book Center at 1-800-765-6955.

**TR** Review and Herald® Publishing Association

## Nature Links

Nature provides a very real link between children and their Creator. A child's curiosity perks up outside, where a variety of new experiences await.

Carleton Swafford, professor of outdoor education at Southern Adventist University, offers these suggestions to help young naturalists sharpen their powers of observation.

**Look-Alike Walk.** Ahead of time, take a walk around the churchyard or parking lot, gathering at least one leaf for each member of your class. Try for as many varieties as possible, including weeds and even indoor plants from the church foyer if necessary.

Give each young person a different kind of leaf before leading them out to retrace your route. Ask the kids to look for plants that their leaves may have come from. When someone finds a match for their leaf, they call, "Match!" and the group determines together if the match is correct.

**Toothpick Trackers.** You need four different colors of toothpicks (50 of each color). Ahead of class, select an area that includes path, lawn, and bare soil or mulched area. Mix all the toothpicks together and toss them throughout the chosen area on all surfaces without trying to hide them.

## Health Matters for Kids

The General Conference Health Department has introduced a new acronym to inspire (or remind) us about the principles for a healthy lifestyle.

Most people would agree that feeling fit and free of sickness is a blessing worth celebrating. As a role model for kids, are you ready for fitness CELEBRATIONS?

**Choices**—The choices we make now impact our future.

**Exercise**—Half an hour of vigorous exercise daily keeps us energized.

**Liquids**—Water keeps the body clean and germ free, inside and out.

**Environment**—Clean air, water, and soil are important for good health.

**Belief**—Belief in God and family values promotes harmony among people.

**Rest**—We work best when we get enough sleep each night, and rest one day in seven.

**Air**—The body needs oxygen that comes from deep breathing and fresh air.

**Temperance**—Keep good things in balance, avoid harmful chemicals.

**Integrity**—Being absolutely honest and up-to-date with God promotes mental health.

**Optimism**—Look on the bright side; it helps us stay sane!

**Nutrition**—Learn to enjoy heart-smart foods and reap the benefits of fitness and good health.

**Stewardship**—We are not our own; God wants us to take care of our minds and bodies for Him.

When the class comes outdoors, challenge them to find as many toothpicks as they can in three or four minutes. When the time is up, count how many of each color were found.

You'll find that one of the colors was easier to see; more of these toothpicks are likely to have been found. Discuss the role color plays as birds or animals forage for food. When we're searching for spiritual food in the Bible, what makes some promises stand out for us to find?

For more great outdoor activities see *Sharing Nature With Children*, by Joseph Cornell (Dawn Publications).



# What Churches can Learn from Preschool TV Shows

Popular shows such as *Blue's Clues* and *Sesame Street* didn't just develop out of somebody's artistic direction. The creators of both shows studied ways to hold a child's attention and teach preschoolers painlessly. If researchers found that children did not remember what a segment was meant to teach, the segment was improved or scrapped altogether.

What can we learn from these shows about teaching children at church?

- ◆ Preschool children listen more intently when puppets speak. When a person interacts with a puppet (or someone in costume), give the puppet the really important lines—including the lesson's message.
- ◆ Kids pay attention to children's voices. So when dressing or acting like a child, also change your voice to sound like a child. Small children laugh at deep bass voices,

Children pay attention better and remember concepts longer when they are taught with humor.

especially bass singing voices.

- ◆ Children enjoy rhythm, but focus on rhyme. Teach with songs and verse, and emphasize important words by rhyming with them at the end of a line.
- ◆ Humor can promote learning. Children pay attention better and remember concepts longer when they are taught with humor. Keep in mind that for preschoolers, humor depends on actions—not double meanings or plays on words.

Children notice and remember dramatic moments. Use your most exciting voice to teach the most important idea.

- ◆ Changing images can extend a child's attention span. Show pictures or other objects as you teach; change them often. Teach the same point with a variety of activities: interactive short stories, a Bible

learning activity, a craft, a snack, a song—all about the one point you are teaching.

- ◆ Kids notice and remember what's new. Show your class a new object or trick when telling a Bible story.
- ◆ Teach to the positive, not the negative. Before you talk to the children about Satan, ask yourself what you want them to remember from the lesson. If you want them to remember Jesus, talk about Jesus.
- ◆ Asking a question involves children in the learning process. Searching for hidden questions on *Blue's Clues* makes sure everyone knows the question. Pausing long enough after asking a question prompts preschoolers to speak their answer and wait for feedback.

## Puppet Ministry Starters

Since young children pay more attention to puppets than to people in a learning situation, puppets can be a valuable tool for ministry. Puppets can help reach children who may otherwise not hear of Jesus. Kids can use puppets to add variety to their singing and to spice up their service and outreach activities.

Dale & Liz VonSeggen's new edition of *Puppet Ministry Made Easy* (Group), offer tips for starting a puppet ministry—and some philosophical guidelines as well. They caution that puppets are not real; they don't have a heart. Thus we should not show a puppet accepting Jesus, though it may assume the role of a Christian. And in keeping with a ministry of grace, puppets do not model negative behavior or misuse humor.

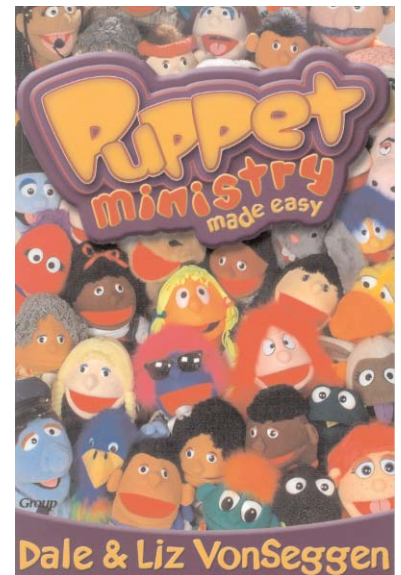
A puppet ministry can build up God's kingdom and teach spiritual truths in a powerful way. Maximize your ministry's impact by working toward the following goals:

- ▶ Good quality puppets that will not fall apart with (see <http://onewaystreet.com>)
- ▶ An adequate, portable puppet stage
- ▶ Training by experienced puppeteers
- ▶ Sufficient practice before each performance

- ▶ Leadership that provides ministry opportunities and positive feedback.

*Puppet Ministry Made Easy* gives all the nuts-and-bolts information you'll need for starting a puppet ministry.

For more hands-on instruction, attend a puppet ministry seminar at a Children's Ministries convention sponsored by the North American Division or your local conference.



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