

Using Senses to Create Teaching Connections

Try to form a connection between a spiritual truth and something that the student will smell, taste or see outside of church. For example, if you are going to be teaching on Jesus calling the disciples who were fisherman (Matthew 4:18-22) or Jesus appearing at the Sea of Galilee after his resurrection (John 21), or Jesus feeding the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13-21), or Jesus astonishing the disciples with the catch of fish (Luke 5:8-9), or the money that came from the fish's mouth (Matthew 17:27), etc., why not get some raw fish and let the smell fill your room? Sure, it will stink...but what an impression! Smells and memories have an incredible way of connecting. How many times in your life have you caught whiff of an odor that took you back in time to something that happened when that same smell was present? Why not use smells to remind our students of what they have learned? "The next time you smell fish, just remember..." Or, the "next time you smell popcorn, remember..." Or, pour out some cheap cologne or perfume as you teach about how Mary anointed Jesus' feet (John 12:1-8) and maybe the next time they smell powerful perfume they will do more than just hold their noses.

Taste is another great way of making teaching connections. For example, "How many of you like strawberries?" Give a few away. "Me too, and I just did for you what I would want you to do for me—that's the kind of kindness God wants you to have: To treat others the way you want to be treated. So any time you see a strawberry or the next time you eat a strawberry, remember how God wants you to treat others." Then, as an added reminder, send them a postcard with a strawberry on it—maybe a hidden strawberry somewhere in the picture or a scratch-and-sniff sticker with a strawberry smell, and write something like, "What does the strawberry remind you of? Remember how we learned last week to treat others the way we want to be treated. The next time you see a strawberry, remember this lesson." Then the next week in class, you might want to have strawberry sundaes or some other strawberry treat to reinforce this again.

Sight is another great sense to use. Refer to brands and names and popular TV commercials and shows, etc., anything that the kids will see and hear outside of church to serve as lesson reminders. Go to a local store where a lot of your families shop. What items do they have at the checkout line where people stand, wait and hopefully buy something. How can you use any of these in an illustration? Perhaps they have silly string that your class could shoot at a target and talk about how being "just like Jesus" is our target in life (1 John 2:6) or how we fall short of the target of God's perfection (Romans 3:23). Or maybe they have some sour candy for a talk about having a sour attitude or some "fireballs" to talk about whether or not your kids really want that in their mouths and what do they really want and really not want in their lives. And candy bars can have a multitude of teaching applications. For example, show them a Payday candy bar and talk about Hebrews 9:27 and Romans 6:23 and how there will be a "payday" for all our sins if we don't ask Jesus to forgive us and give our lives to Him. Then, the next time your class meets, give each of them a Payday and re-discuss the connection. If it's worth remembering, it's worth repeating.