

Teaching & Training the Next Generation

Planting seeds that last a lifetime!



How do you teach children without using duck tape or verbal threats and having the most lasting impact?

Today, the reality is that our families are all going in different directions. For over 30 years I have been writing family children's songs and working with children. Though our society and the times have changed a lot, children's needs are still the same. Yet our world has never been so busy with so many distractions to keep children from hearing the truth of the gospel message.

Children need to know the love of Christ as it impacts them for the rest of their lives. Planting seeds early, will insure that children make right choices and decisions that lead them to a lifetime of following Christ.

Recently I, Mary Rice Hopkins have teamed up with Darcie Maze who makes and designs puppets. I have made this decision as a result of seeing the profound impact of combining music and puppetry as a teaching tool. It is no coincidence that Jesus himself used many different teaching tools to make the most lasting impression.

If we use Jesus, the best teacher of all, as a role model, we realize that his teaching was done on many different levels. He used many ways of teaching to bring clarity and to teach one point. He created an "awe" factor that got people thinking and talking.

Ultimately, we want to pass on what we do to all the kids who are listening and mimicking us on every level.

Recently we did a concert on the Island of Kauai where a mom came back to us the next day to tell us the impact that our concert had on her daughter. She told us of how her daughter, after hearing and watching our illustration, went home to repeat the same object lesson to her own father. She repeated it over and over as she showed her father what she had learned. We stood in amazement as the mother told us with tears streaming down her cheeks what our illustration meant to her daughter. The lesson, using a piece of paper, taught how Jesus would help through a tough time. And this little girl's best friend had just moved away. Basically, we were just being tools in His hands to do what Jesus had already taught us to do. We need to not merely give people fish from the stream but teach people HOW to fish and be fisher's of men and children. Teaching as Jesus' taught so that children want to DO what we DO is vital part of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, as we teach children, we need to find many different ways to illustrate one point in our lessons. For instance, if you're teaching about joy, you would find many different ways to do this. You could sing a song about joy, find an object lesson about joy, do a Bible story about joy, use food to illustrate joy, show a video clip of your favorite movie about joy, a Scripture a game that has to do with joy. When the children leave that day, they would have no doubt that their lesson would be about "the joy of the Lord is their strength" and that their strength is found in Jesus' joy.



Mary Rice Hopkins & Darcie Maze

JESUS USED FOOD TO TEACH.

Using all five senses is the best way to teach our children. Think about why Jesus might have used the bread and the wine to illustrate the most powerful part of the gospel message. When he broke the bread at the last supper he said, "When you do this, do it in remembrance of me." So Darcie and I pass out marshmallows and we make power points with each sense to make a point. For instance, smell the marshmaellow, and it is sweet. It reminds us to have sweet and encouraging words one to another, building up the body of Christ

JESUS USED HIS SURROUNDINGS

as object lessons. Jesus told the story of the fig tree about bearing fruit to make an illustration. He used the fish to tell his disciples to be fishers of men.

JESUS USED STORIES. He taught in parables. Everybody loves a good story. We sing the parables with the PowerPoint behind us. He told of being a lost sheep in the "Farmer and the Sheep" or of the yeast in the bread in "Lord I Knead You."

JESUS USED CHARACTERS to teach. He used Old Testament characters to talk about how they taught. We use puppet characters (www.puppetswithaheart.com) to teach a lesson and we follow it with a song (www.maryricehopkins.com).

TODAY'S TOYS MADE INTO OBJECT LESSONS CAN MAKE A PROFOUND IMPACT and impression upon a child. Toy box illustrations by Karl Bastian provides excellent resources to educators. (www.kidology.com)

There are many more ways in which Jesus taught that will have a lasting impact. You can go to our web site or come to one of our concerts or teacher training to find out how to use tools to teach and train the next generation. ♦

