CHRISTIAN PRACTICES WITH CHILDREN  
Session 2: How Children Think

Resources

Audience  
This class is designed for parents of children ages 3-11.

Setting  
Sunday afternoon Lunch and Learn Series

Time Frame  
Approximately 1 hour class, 12:15 – 1:30

Environment  
Fellowship Hall, round tables, chairs, dry erase board, CD player, DVD player and TV.

Leader Preparation  
Bring copies of invitational liturgy, laptop, butcher-block paper, and markers.

Study Focus  
Encountering the Way Children Think

Invitation

One:  Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children...

Many: We will recite them to our children.
One: and talk about them when you are at home...
Many: We will talk about them when we are at home.
One: and when you are away...
Many: We will talk about them when we are away.
One: when you lie down...
Many: We will talk about them when we lie down.
One: and when you rise...
Many: We will talk about them when we rise.
One: Bind them as a sign on your hand...
Many: We will bind them as a sign on our hand.
One: fix them as an emblem on your forehead,
Many: We will fix them as an emblem on our forehead.
One: and write them on the doorposts of your house...
Many: We will write them on the doorposts of our homes.
One: and on your gates.
Many: We will write them on our gates.
All: When our children ask us in time to come, we will say...

1 Adapted from Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20 (NRSV).
Prayer

O God, you have created us in your image. In your image you have created us, male and female, blonde haired and grey haired, black and white, brown and beige and pink, blue eyed and brown eyed, grey eyed and green eyed, tall and short, round and lean, thinkers and greeters, lovers and laughers, planters and reapers, teachers and fathers, mothers and loners, painters and singers, dancers and dawdlers, followers and leaders. And so we thank you for all the beauty and bounty for which you have given us. For unto us children are born, and unto us tiny lives are shared, their nurture and care rest upon our shoulders. God grant to us the wit and peace, the daring and strength, the patience and grace to pray with and pray for our children, to share with and care for our children, to guide and enjoy our children, to teach and to listen to our children. AMEN

Introduction

In a few minutes we are going to share funny family stories. Let me tell you my story and you be thinking about your stories.

About sixteen years ago, when my son was four, our kitten died. That night as he prepared for bed, I attempted to comfort Cameron by telling him that while yes the kitten was indeed dead, she would live on in our hearts; to which he cried, “Get it out!”

In a related case of “kid misspeak,” a first-grade teacher presented each child in her classroom the 1st half of a well-known Proverb and asked them to come up with the remainder of the Proverb. Listen to the following examples of “Kid Talk.”

Don't change horses until they stop running.
Strike while the bug is close.
It's always darkest before Daylight Savings Time.
Never underestimate the power of termites.
You can lead a horse to water, but...how?
Don't bite the hand that looks dirty.
A miss is as good as a Mr.
You can't teach an old dog new math.
Where there is smoke there's pollution.
Happy the bride who gets all the presents.
Laugh and the whole world laughs with you; cry and you have to blow your nose.
Children should be seen and not spanked or grounded.
You get out of something only what you see in the picture on the box.

Take 15 minutes, turn to the person to your left, and tell one of your funny family stories.

We laugh because the answers seem to us to be so literal. And that is just the point: children are concrete thinkers. Children do not, because they cannot, use abstract reasoning. From birth to around age six, children need to see, taste, feel, smell, or hear
something in order for it to be real, though around four they are beginning to use symbols to represent known objects. For example, children around age four can and will easily use a towel for a batman or superman cape, or a stick as a sword, or a broom as a dance partner.

Today our focus will be on exploring children’s cognitive development. Over the next few weeks, we will be applying our understanding of children’s cognitive and psychosocial development to prayer, healing, worship, and Bible study with children. These acts (prayer, healing, worship, and Bible study) are a nice introduction into Christian practices.

Encountering Thought

We are going to watch two very short (4 minute) videos: *Piaget’s Developmental Theory: An Overview* and *Growing Minds: Cognitive Development in Early Childhood*. Both films are narrated by David Elkind, PhD, Professor Emeritus and department chairman of the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development at Tufts University. In the first film Elkind will give an overview of Piaget’s theory of stage development. Pay particular attention to the stage called preoperational thought. In the second film Dr. Elkind will demonstrate cognitive development as it relates to reasoning, perception, and language, drawing from the work of two developmental theorists, Vygotsky and Piaget.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lEam9lpa6TQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lEam9lpa6TQ)

**Responding Out Of**

After the first film ask:
What was Piaget’s overarching question concerning education?
How might Piaget’s overarching question concern Christian education?
What did you hear about the preoperational stage of cognitive development?
What were some of the characteristics you noticed in the preoperational stage of development?
What implications might this understanding have on practicing prayer, healing, worship, and Bible study?

Encountering Thought

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ivl7x_8XX0w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ivl7x_8XX0w)

**Responding Out Of**

After the second film ask:
What us role does the environment play on young minds?
Considering the areas of reasoning, perception, and language, what would an appropriate area in which to practice prayer, healing, worship, and Bible study look like? sound like? feel like? taste like? smell like?

This series of lessons was prepared by Union-PSCE student Kim Lee, MACE, Fall 2009.