

# **A Workshop to Help Parents Find and Use Children's Books as Part of Their Children's Growth in Faith**

**Designed by Jim Collins, Union-PSCE at Charlotte, Fall 2009**

- **Background considerations**
  - **Learners**
    - Parents of elementary age children who have or might have a desire to learn more about how to use picture books in developing a faith dialogue with their children.
  - **Setting**
    - Saturday morning in a good-size classroom in a church
  - **Time frame**
    - 3 hours (for examples, 9:00 am – noon) with two breaks
  
- **Focus**
  - **Subject matter**
    - The subject matter for this particular workshop will be picture books that focus on the general theme of “community” but care will be taken to teach the process of reading and engaging the themes in children’s books, rather than simply the subject matter. The goal of the workshop is to equip parents with the skills and insight that will enable them to choose books for their children that do more than delight the senses of the child, and at the same time, draw the parents and child into dialogue that will further faith development.
  
  - **Main idea**
    - Each of the three mini-sessions in the retreat will introduce the parents to two different books, to give them a better idea of the breadth of material available to them. Each session will open with a devotional using one of the books.
    - In the first teaching session, the instructor will teach the process of reviewing books. The second session will allow for guided practice and the third session will allow the parents to develop their own review for the book and then practice with their own child.

- **Learning goals**
  - The main goal of the workshop is to help parents become aware of the breadth and quality of children’s books available today.
  - The second goal is to begin to develop the skills and insight that will enable the parent to both choose good books and then use them creatively to engage their children in the deeper meaning that can exist in many children’s books today. These is not a class aimed at developing educators, but at helping parents further develop the ability to enter deeper dialogue with their children.
  
- **Space, set up, and materials needed**
  - **Environment**
    - The initial classroom will be set up with normal size round tables and chairs
    - The final session will be held in a room designed for children with smaller tables and chairs that will be more familiar for the children and help bring the parents into the moment of the child.
  
  - **Materials, resources and equipment**
    - Computer with PowerPoint 2007, projector and screen
    - Paper, pens, markers
    - Book review form (copy attached)
    - Copies of the following books to be used in the working sessions: (Copies will be used and discarded at the conclusion of the workshop. If possible, Black Forest Books will be on hand with copies for sale)
      - *How Full is your Bucket* by Tom Rath & Mary Reckmeyer
      - *A Visitor for Bear* by Bonny Becker
      - *The Three Questions* by Jon J. Muth
    - Images from the following books for the devotionals:
      - *Pete’s Angel* by Hunter D. Darden
      - *The Empty Pot* by Demi
      - *God’s Dream* by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton Abrams

- **Step-by-step plan for teaching**
  - **Session 1 – teach the process (40 minutes)**
    - Opening devotional using *The Empty Pot* (10 minutes)
      - The goal of the devotional, other than to bring the learners into the experience of using children’s literature, is to help the learners begin to understand that children gain as much from the illustrations as they do the words and to help the adults focus on the illustrations and begin to get them beyond just reading the book to their children. The leader will spend time pointing out the illustrations and allowing a minute or so at each page for the learner to focus on the illustration.
      - At the conclusion of the book, the leader will engage the group in a short discussion of their thoughts on the illustrations and the story and attempt to quantify their experience in order to guide the next sessions.
    - **Teaching session (30 minutes) using *How Full is your Bucket***
      - The book review form will be introduced at this session and a brief discussion held about each section of the form.
      - At that point, the group will read the book together from front to back
      - Next, the group will review the summary developed by the leader to determine what might be added or taken away. The goal of this discussion is to help the learners develop the ability to summarize the book which will enable them to better explain the overall concept to their child.
      - Next, the group will look at the scripture identified by the leader and discuss alternate passages that can be used.
      - Next, the group will discuss the theological application identified by the leader and again, discuss any changes the group senses from reading the book.
      - Finally, the group will review the faith-talk questions and have a general discussion focused on the outcome desired by the learner which will allow them to discover what issues they might want to discuss with their child. Again, this is not aimed at anything other than enhancing the relationship between the parent and child.
  - **10 minute break**

- **Session 2 – learn the process (40 minutes)**
  - Opening devotional using *Pete’s Angel* (10 minutes)
    - For this devotional, the words of the story will be left off the initial scanned image and the learners will be asked to think for a few minutes about what the picture might be saying. Then the image with the words will be shown which will give them a chance to get a different perspective of the book and illustrations. The learners will be encouraged to see what the images say to them prior to reading the words.
    - Again, at the conclusion of the book, the leader will engage the group in a discussion and ask the learners to think about the message the story brings to them and how they might engage that with their children.
  - **Teaching session (30 minutes) using *A Visitor for Bear***
    - In the first session of the class the group will read the book on their own and take 15 minutes to write down their thoughts on the summary, scripture, theology and faith-talk question sections of the form.
    - Once they have completed their work, the leader will lead a discussion on each subsequent topic and develop a consensual form all the learners agree with
  
- **15 minute break**
  
- **Session 3 – do the process (75 minutes)**
  - **Opening devotional using *God’s Dream* (15 minutes)**
    - For this devotional, the words of the story will be left off the scanned images all together. The students will tell the story based only on what they see in the images and the title of the book. The leader will keep the general focus of the story intact but allow the learners to experience what they see in the images, as perhaps what they think their children might see as the story were read to them.
    - Once the story is completed the students will go through the book with the words to have a more complete appreciation for the intent of the author.
  - Teaching session (60 minutes) using *The Three Questions*
    - This session will be self-taught. Each learner will be given a copy of the book and take 20 minutes to read the book and develop the book review form. The leader will

be available for consultation, but the goal of the session is for the parent to have the time to do the work on their own.

- Once the parents are satisfied they have developed the direction they want to take with the book, they will read the story to their child and engage in the conversation as outlined. (15 minutes)
- At the conclusion of the session the group will get back together and discuss the experience. The children will be encouraged to discuss their feelings about the book and the process and the parents will be encouraged to listen to the experiences of the children to enhance their own process.