

Response Leader
(Exploring God’s Grace: 3-6 year olds)
(Responding in Gratitude: 1st-3rd grades)

Purpose: After the Bible Story is heard, wondering questions explored, and reflection is over, it is essential to provide a variety of activities so children can explore more deeply the meaning for their life of faith and integrate God’s transformational message into their hearts. Using the activities in the “Responding in Gratitude” section helps children express their gratitude to God. Providing children with choice of activity through “centers” makes this more transformational.

Each person “claims” the Bible story in a different way. Look over the list of different “**learning intelligences.**” (See *Information on styles of learning.*) It is important to offer children a **choice** each week. **Choice** is empowering in the response section of the session.

Our curriculum gives us examples of how to provide a variety of ways to respond with gratitude to the Scripture; please be aware that the response section of the session does not have to produce a take-home item – it **does not** have to be a craft. It is important to remember that when crafts are used in this section, it is the job of the Response Leader to explain how the craft relates to the session.

Other ideas for choices in how to make the session “come alive” include:

- Create additional wondering questions (see resource below) for children to ponder then write about – such as “what do you suppose Peter was thinking when Jesus asked him to let down his nets for a catch? “What do you suppose Jesus meant by. . .?” “How do you suppose you would feel if Peter and Jesus asked. . .?” “How do you suppose Peter felt after he denied Jesus three times?”
- Ask them to draw how they would feel if they were (for example) Peter after he denied Jesus three times.
- Make an acrostic using the letter in the word (for example) “forgive” : f is for friends do this
- Write a letter to Jesus if you were (for example) Peter and had denied Jesus three times.

There are many ways to make the story relevant and create meaning in the lives of our children. The important thing to remember is to think about each child in your group and try to think about what issues they are dealing with in their lives. Also remember that children of different ages have different capabilities. For example, a kindergartner may only be able to leave the group with a three or four word sentence about the meaning of the session – “I am a part of God’s family.” An older child may be able to grasp more complex ideas and relate them to his or her life.

**Ten Guidelines for Practicing the Art
Of Asking Questions**

(adapted from “Teaching Today’s Teachers to Teach, by Donald Griggs)

1. *Ask questions that are more open than closed.*
Questions with only one right answer or that imply a “yes” or “no” response are more closed. These questions are more a test of memory than an inquiry into the subject matter. When

tempted to ask a closed question, make a statement instead; then, ask open, analytical questions.

2. *Ask only one question at a time*

Often when we do not prepare our questions in advance, we find ourselves asking a series of questions, trying to come up with the best one. More than one question at a time is confusing to the participants.

3. *Present questions to the whole group*

Instead of putting one person "on the spot" by directing the question to that person, offer the question to the whole group. By being aware of the readiness of individuals to respond, you invite responses by eye contact, a nod of the head, or a gesture of the hand. When one student is called by name, she or he is the only one invited to think, the others are "off the hook." By asking a question of the whole group, everyone is expected to think, everyone is "on the spot."

4. *Provide feedback after a participant responds*

The discussion leader can reinforce participants and facilitate further discussion by providing verbal and nonverbal feedback so that the participant will know the leader has heard and received his or her contribution. A nod of the head, a smile, a "thank you," or a brief comment are ways to provide feedback to someone who has responded to a question.

5. *Follow up with probing questions*

Probing questions are those that follow up after an initial question and response. They lead to further inquiry and exploration in depth of a subject. Probing questions also provide a degree of reinforcement and feedback. Probing questions can begin with, "Say a little more about...." "What are some other examples of" "How does that compare with" or "Who has something else to add to"

6. *After asking a question, be silent*

The best next step after asking a good question is to be silent. If the question is clearly stated and if the participants have sufficient background with which to answer, then they need some time to think. Ten seconds is not too much time, but it seems like an eternity to an anxious teacher. The burden of the silence should be upon the participants, not upon the leader. Practicing the art of asking questions means practicing being silent after asking a question.

7. *Use an inquiry style rather than in interrogation style*

Inquiry says to the participants, "I'm interested in what you think and say." Interrogation puts persons on the defensive and inhibits their ability to think and express themselves creatively. "Why did you say that?" is a way to put the participants on the defensive because they feel like they are being interrogated. Often it is more a matter of tone of voice and nonverbal expression than the words we use. Try "Help us understand what you are thinking, can you say more?"

8. *Encourage participants to ask their own questions*

Questions are not just the property of the leader and teacher; questions can be asked and used effectively by the participants as well. Often the participants can be better guided in their exploration of a subject by the questions they ask rather than those of the teacher.

9. *Avoid repeating the responses of the participants*

There are 2 reasons for repeating responses; one is to reinforce the answer and the other is to state it loud enough for other can hear. Many teachers have a habit of repeating what students have said and it becomes annoying.

10. *Accept responses as if they were gifts.*

When a participant ventures to answer a question, there is some risk involved. This is especially true with responses to analytical and personalized questions. Leaders need to accept what persons offer even though it may not be exactly what they might have expected. Leaders need not agree with everything that is said in order to be accepting of the responses.