

PRACTICAL
POINTERS FOR
URBAN MINISTRY

HOW DO I Teach them?

John Blake

The most difficult question teachers of city kids face today is, “How can I make the greatest difference in their lives?” If you minister to children influenced by subcultures in urban America, we’re here to answer the tough questions!

MEETING REAL NEEDS

No matter how you say it, kids are in pain. There are so many needs but you may only have a short time each week with your group. You have to maximize your time. How? You can adjust tried and true methods as well as incorporating new ones. I’m going to give you several effective ideas currently

being used in urban ministry around America. But start by asking, “Do I use a NEEDS approach in my ministry?”

- Notice the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the child, his family and community.
- Embrace the teaching examples of Jesus.
- Equip the child and family to live for Christ within their community.
- Develop a long-term relationship with them.
- Serve them by meeting their needs without making the recipients dependent on you.

A few years ago a high-school football coach in a Chicago community started a Bible study for teens in a weight room. He saw tremendous results when he practiced the *needs* approach to ministry. Today, aspects of life are amazingly different for the families and businesses in Lawndale.

ADJUST YOUR TEACHING

When you minister with the *needs* approach your focus will be on the message and the child. Modify your teaching methods according to the suggestions below. Adapting isn’t always easy—you’ll have to pray, study and prepare more than ever. But you’ll be energized as you see kids putting God’s Word into action.

Shorten or compress your Bible lesson. Build a series of mini-lessons that reinforce a truth over a period of weeks, directing kids to live for Christ.

Enough Is Enough, a teaching series following this design, was used with city kids attending the weekly Extra Good News program in inner-city North Carolina. Short but memorable lessons each week challenged kids to seek God on behalf of their neighborhoods plagued with drugs, violence and hatred.

One mini-lesson included an oversized mousetrap and a story about a mouse who refused to obey. Through it kids saw an illustration of what sin was doing to their families. Alecia and Serena responded together every week by joining hands and kneeling in prayer, crying out to God for His help.

Present the doctrines of God, man and Christ in all teaching segments. Teach an attribute of God each week. Give special emphasis to the main teaching and salvation throughout the class hour—lesson, songs, games—rather than in one segment. You’ll find the kids will retain more of what you teach.

Alecia and Serena responded to the series on prayer with conviction and confidence because they were also being taught that God is holy and faithful. He hates sin but will always give good answers when we pray.

Emphasize focus statements to connect the teaching activities. Throughout the *Enough Is Enough* series, a “Word Up” focus statement tied all the teaching activities together.

Each week in unison with other kids Alecia and Serena repeated a different phrase like “God answers prayer,” “Come close, stay close” and “Trust God no matter what happens.” The girls took these words and their commitment beyond the Bible club. Their moms and teachers at school often remarked, “These girls say they have come close, gonna stay close and that God will change their neighborhood.”

Did you get some answers about making a difference? Now the ball is in your court. What will you do? Hey—don’t just stand there! Take it and score. It will make a huge difference to city kids. Don’t quit now. There’s more good stuff to come—on the inside!

cef

