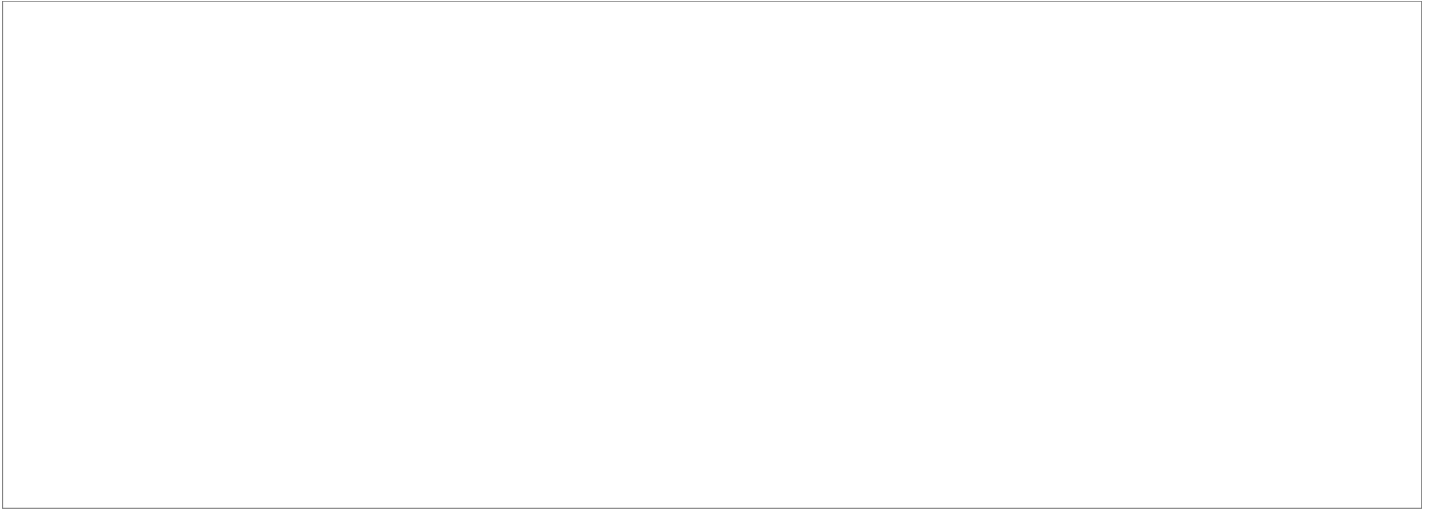


**THE SECRET OF**  
**EFFECTIVE CHAPEL**

**By Sharon Sarles**



## THE SECRET OF EFFECTIVE CHAPEL

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Here is the chapel curriculum I promised you. Please don't despise the report owing to its brevity. It IS chock full of help. You want lots of ideas in a short span of time, right? Here is it.

There is a big secret about chapel: it CAN be highly effective in building your community, in forming young personalities, and thus in changing the world. That is the one big secret. I will tell you 3 "secrets" how to make it effective.

### ONE BIG INSIGHT

Chapel should be the center piece of all that we do. Normally, however, it is not. Normally chapel consists of a few Bible stories and songs, thrown together, and that's it. Forgotten. Often people are drafted who know little about children – or alternatively – know little about the church's teaching. I know you, like me, have been in children church presentations that were nothing other than folk religion, with no relation to sound doctrine or real Bible Stories. Let's don't do that in our chapel services. Let's realize that what we are communicating is of central value. How we communicate teaches as much as what we communicate. Let's put thought into both good doctrine and good presentation, and that mean age appropriate presentation. Let's make it a beautiful centerpiece for our school, just as worship is for the larger congregation.

If we do chapel sloppily, it teaches that we don't care, that chapel, and by extension our faith, is not important. It shows we do not value chapel or the Bible or what it teaches. This is not what we wish to cultivate.

We can, however, convey the opposite: Life, Truth, and Value. Without controversy, the Bible is the central witness to our life giving Lord, our primary guide, and most important teaching. So we live our lives by it, don't we? Let's demonstrate this in how we present children's chapel. We will do this by a 1) well presented chapel service, 2) and actively told Bible story and 3) integrating lessons from that story into the rest of the week.

I think by now your brain has bubbles of new idea oxygen, because what I have already said is quite different from the normal chapel. Yet, we can do this! This will change the tenor of our center. This can create a real culture that we crave. It could certainly form indelible discipleship in young lives. Let's celebrate that we have Life and Truth. If we celebrate it, we will convey it. If we convey it, we will have been effective.

## PRESENT THE CHAPEL SERVICE WELL

Presenting a good chapel service starts with planning. Planning does not mean knowing where on the shelf your Bible story books reside. It means spending some quality quiet time with the Bible passage and letting it speak to us. It means planning out songs and comments and activities that go with the story. It means writing these down. It means preparing oneself for chapel. It means showing up. It means leading a team in doing this.

## USE A REAL BIBLE

Please use a real Bible. A bible is not a Bible story book. One liberal minister I knew, intentionally called the toddlers' story books heir Bible because she indeed thought the Bible was only a story book. I, being the only other person in the room with a theology degree was the only one who caught what she was doing. Others thought she was simply over-simplification for the tots. No, she was obfuscating for everyone.

Now, I realize that you will not be reading at length from a King James Bible to your two year olds. That is not what I am suggesting. I am saying that you should read from a bound Bible for yourself in your preparation, and you should bring that book, on one like it, to the chapel service. Show the children. Be sure that they see the Bible as a bound book –regularly. Today when most people may consult their phones in service, or rely on projected verses, the children may not realize that the Bible is somehow a book, somehow more special than others, and not somehow someone's/anyone's vague ideas. Show them the Bible. Be sure they know you are reading from the Bible.

Indeed, you might hold the book, read a verse and then tell the story –just like you would if you were studying the Bible at home and then turned to explain to your young child what was going on. Tell the story.

Today, rich educated people pay more for live music; television is old hat. Yet in Sunday School and Children's Churches, increasingly we are throwing screened videos, often foolish or disconnected at the children, thinking they will be impressed. Well, maybe sometimes. But for chapel, engage in a real, live presentation, with real, live interaction. Nothing beats it. It is alive. It is real. And you use it, right?

## PLAN SONGS AND OTHER ITEMS

Plan songs, finger plays and any other activities to go with the Bible story. Don't throw things at random. You pastor doesn't do this to you, does he? I don't think so. Even churches that do not have planned liturgy plan the song set to work with the sermon. Even those churches that are 100% spontaneous expect the Spirit to move with one accord and in one voice; they rate the service by how prophetic the songs were based on if they matched with the sermon(s). Yes. So why in the world would you think that random items would be okay in children's chapel? No!

As always, plan more than you have time for in case one item doesn't go well. If you have many things, you will never run out of things to do. This is a secret all experienced early childhood educators know. Don't present nothing and let behavior get out of hand. Instead, have plenty to do, pick from the best, and have the best of times.

Please plan to allow the children to have their own direct experience of God. Didn't Jesus Himself say, "Let the little children come to me." When we give them something less than full on real, aren't we hindering them? Plan for some real direct worship time, prayer time, and praise time.

## TELL THE STORY

Get to know the story intimately. Choose the learning objective. Compose the story, using the parts that work with your theme. Practice. Practice more. Practice with more intensity. Practice until it is completely natural sounding. Be sure it is dramatic and fun.

Obviously you can not tell all of every story at any one chapel service, just like a pastor can not preach the whole Bible in one sermon. That is okay. Come back next week -- or tomorrow if possible.

But don't, don't *don't* just throw the same tired half-baked, watered down story until the children think that the only story in the whole Bible is that same drab one about animals going two by two. Yes! Bible

stories are not made in order to warehouse children until they are old enough to go do something else. Instead, these histories and parables were made to transmit the most possible to the most people over many centuries. God made them for that purpose. Unlock them!

Finally, and most importantly, integrate the Bible story lesson with the rest of the children's time. As long as chapel is isolated from the rest of the week, it is not fully real. It is compartmentalized vacation from reality, at best. It is only story and song time. If it is guidance for life, then it would be foundational and integrated into life. Plan some mention of the Bible story at least once a day. Mention guidance about ethics at the sandbox. Mention how an ark might float in science time. See a dove if you permit animals/bird in the classroom. Walk up the plank into the nave of the ship on the playground. (Maybe *your* church ceiling looks like a nave, like the shape of a navy ship. If so, you might contemplate that.) In the home-making center you might consider how Mrs. Noah felt and think about feeding all the animals everyday. Do you see? There are lots of ways to integrate the story into the other things you do. The chart included helps you do this.

You may include these short discussions with children even if you have another read-made curriculum. One day perhaps there will be a single ready-made curricula that will cover all developmental needs and cover daily chapel. Some centers rely on expert teachers to create their own lesson plans. I have included one month's in the way that I do it. I have also included

The chart offers you Bible stories and integration ideas for 32 weeks, following the plan of many church affiliated preschools: running two semesters paralleling the academic year and offering chapel once a week. Of course, I would like to see you running a full time program, year round so you could reach out to the poor and single mothers. I would also like to see you offer daily chapel service. This, however, is a beginning; it gives you the pattern for effectiveness. Churches that use the Lectionary may want to work toward using the Lectionary as their choice of Scripture. In this way, the whole family can discuss together what they are learning. Churches that value expository preaching may wish to present the Bible stories in chronological order. By contrast, most curricula, rooted in developmental appropriateness, will start with creation and Jesus' love, and select stories because of their themes. Each faith community must choose this parameter for themselves. All of us, however, will want to have chapel and have an effective chapel, and have these Bible stories become the foundation of discipleship in these children's lives. Here, I have given you a vision and a method for effective chapel.

LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE

By Sharon Sarles

TRAIT \_\_\_\_\_ Age/Level \_\_\_\_\_

LO	Used
Lesson	Materials
Activity	
Verification	

Applications	
Scripts	
Notes	



<b>Bible Story</b>		<b>Arts &amp; Craft</b>	<b>Gross Motor</b>	<b>Fine Motor</b>	<b>Play</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Science</b>
<b>1Creation 1</b>	Genesis 1:1-2:3, esp 1: 14	paint heaven and earth	dance to "The Planets"	collect pebbles, leaves	notice created things on playground	sequencing via putting pictures in order, or seven pictures on a roll	observe all
<b>2Creation 2</b>	Gen2:15-25	make clay figures, maybe outside	practice hiding and running back	sort items	Name animals	act out creation of Adam and Eve	match M & F animal pictures
<b>3Noah</b>	Gen 6:5 – 8:22	coloring pages with male and female animals, birds	Make a boat fro a cardboard carton, paint, add pairs of animals	Use Fischer Price or Noah boat for quiet play	Otheract this out on "boat" in playground	discuss family composition	observe animal or bird if possible
<b>4Abraham</b>	Gen12:1-8	maps	hike	write name	discuss how older people don't want to be knocked or jostled	discuss what being a blessing might mean	introduce archeology
<b>Story</b>	<b>Ref</b>	<b>Art</b>	<b>Gross Motor</b>	<b>Fine Motor</b>	<b>Play</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Science</b>
<b>5Joseph brags</b>	Gen 37:1-11	mural of a dream	Red Rover (12 brothers)	put coat on doll	dress up in coat of any colors	Count to 12	What are sheaves?
<b>Joseph becomes 6a slave</b>	Gen 37:18-36 & 39:1-3	Egyptian necklaces	dance like an Egyptian	count money	pretend to manage accounts	make Egyptian costumers	how drying preserves things
<b>Josephs saves 7nations</b>	Gen 41:1-49	mural of the dream	sack pick up	grain pick up	pretend chariots	God can use dreams,but not all dreams are from God	planting and preserving today
<b>Story</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Art &amp; Craft</b>	<b>Gross Motor</b>	<b>Fine Motor</b>	<b>Play</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Science</b>
<b>Joeseph forgives 8his brothers</b>	Gen 42:1-45:13	see a silver cup	kneeling, as to a king	braiding	play jail and let out of jail SUPERVISED	have a big dinner, and seat people as in story	people look different as they get older your parents were once young

9	Israel enslaved	Ex 1:8-14	make mud bricks	pile blocks to pyramids		dress up with jewels, then give them for temple	Do some work for other slaves? As today?	different kind of pyramids, mirrors
10	Exodus	Ex 12:29-39	see Passover posters, books	run away	Fold & unfold the napkin	set a table	Seder food	try matzoh
	<b>Story</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Art &amp; Craft</b>	<b>Gross Motor</b>	<b>Fine Motor</b>	<b>Play</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Science</b>
11	Ten Commandments	Ex 20:1-21	draw/write 2 tablets	climbing hills	copying Hebrew letters	try playing a well known game without rules	make rules for class	clouds
12	Joshua enters land	Joshua 1:1-10	paste foil to make sword	running together as a line	copying Hebrew letters	plan the battle	memorize Joshn1:9	notice land formation on your property
14	Caleb and his mountain	Josh 14:6-15	draw a cabin in the woods	build a block house on a hills	play Jinga	How do you act around people who are much taller than you are?	meet some 85 year olds	slide down
	Story	Ref	Art and Crafts	Gross Motor	Fine Motor	Play	Other	Science
15	Deborah leads	Judges 4:1-10, 18-22; 5:1-7	make tents by pasting fabric and toothpicks sing song from Judge 5:1-7	erect a modern tent	make palm tree with newspaper	Hold court under a palm tree	discuss women's leadership	set up a tent
16	Jesus is Born	Luke 2:1-15	everybody contributes to mural	kneeling and rising	10 little shepherd boys	make nativity set available for play	discuss what "a manger" is	If you have a pregnant mom discuss how she needs help, kindness
17	Jesus is dedicated	Luke 2:22 -40	show pix of the temple	picking up a flour sack and lifting it	diapering a doll	play family in housekeeping center		How long has it been since Jesus was a baby?
	<b>Story</b>	<b>Ref</b>	<b>Art and Crafts</b>	<b>Gross Motor</b>	<b>Fine Motor</b>	<b>Play</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Science</b>
18	Samuel serves	I Sam 31-19	make clay	racing	picking up	who can help	helping	show how cla

			lamps		peas or cotton balls with a spoon	teacher today?	parents at house	lamps work
<b>David on an errand</b>	I Sam 12:12-22		weave fabric	long walk	make a sandwich	send child with directions, as a game	notice that older brothers said bad things	cheese and bread
<b>David and Goliath</b>	I Sam 12:1-50		Color in a 9 foot Goliath	run up and down valleys	place some pebbles	do a pretend karate lesson	discuss bullying	try out some sling shots, measure how big Goliath was
<b>David laments Saul</b>	2Sam 1:17-27		make a musical instrument (rubber bands, glasses, anything)	lay big drums	play fine stringed instruments	play as an orchestra on playground	discuss use of music to relax, motivate, mourn	compare different levels of water in glasses
Story	Ref		Art and Crafts	Gross Motor	Fine Motor	Play	Other	Science
<b>David appts singers, Solomon builds temple</b>	1 Chron 22:16-19		Decorate ? With macaroni and gold paint	Dancing	finger pick a guitar	see a music group	Discuss various worship methods	talk about symmetry
<b>Elijah and prophets of Baal</b>	I Kings 17-36		make the altar with play-do	build an altar and a moat outside	make a pix of the altar, and use toothpicks for wood	everyone can have Elijah suits, be prophets	discuss that Elijah was called bad names, but he was not bad	test if wood burn with water on it
<b>Elijah on the mountain</b>	I King 19-1018		decreate a cave for the classroom	climb inside a big tunnel	do a finger play for the cave	everyone finds a private spot to listen for God	invite a story teller in	pictures of mountains, change of weather
Story	Ref		<b>Arts and Crafts</b>	<b>Gross Motor</b>	<b>Fine Motor</b>	<b>Play</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Science</b>
<b>Elisha serves Elijah</b>	2King 3:11,		paste pitcher and bowl OR color oxen pix	follow the leader	practice pouring water	Play mentor and mentee	cook a roast	why does water fall down?
<b>Elisha's ridiculers get hurt</b>	2King 2:23-25		draw parents	comb, brush hair (have each chld	part hair	compare different sets of instructions on	bring pictures and talk about	why do people look the way

Story	Ref	Arts and Crafts	Gross Motor	Fine Motor	Play	Other	Science
26 Jesus Baptized by John	Matt 3	song about going to the river	bring their own brush or comb) play in water from a hose	water-table	note variety of customs re baptism today	how to be polite diversity	they do? investigate honey
27 Jesus heals	Luke 5:17-20	view famous pictures of Jesus healing	work together to carry a friend	tie knots	bounce a ball by use of a tablecloth held by everyone	take a trip to the church's baptistry talk to someone who was healed	what is heavier?
28 Jesus multiples bread	Luke 9:11-17	make some baskets	recline and get up	make some lunches (fishstick & biscuits )	act out the story	counting the food, baskets	Introduce addition & subtraction. do this math 7-500 leave 120+? No
29 God cares	Luke 12:1-6	make birds with feathers	throw paper airplanes	compare textures	demonstrate a kite	discuss that God cares when bad things happen to us	notice sunset, sunrises, birds
30 Ten Lepers	Luke 17:11-19	collage w 10 things	jumping and yelling	sort black and white beans		take a collection for poor people	talk about cleanliness, danger of rats
31 Man healed at temple	Acts 3: 1-16	Do rubbing with coins	leaping	count coins	Follow the Leader	Do people beg today?	talk about hurt ankles
32 Dorcas	Acts 9:36-42	weave fabric	put on clothes	fasten clothes	house on playground becomes sewing room	take donations to clothes closet	make a chart about how many poor in the city

## EXAMPLE OF ONE MONTH'S LESSON PLAN

CURRICULUM PLANNING DEMONSTRATION for the month of MAY	Theme One	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 3
Bible Story  Character Value	Mother's Day	Hannah	Creation 1 – natural world	Creation 2 - people
Story (Caldecott recommended)	Are you my Mother? P. D. Eastman 1998	Have You Seen My Duckling? 1985	<i>The Sun is a Golden Earring</i> , illustrated by Bernarda Bryson; text: Natalia M. Belting (Holt)1963	<b>Extra Yarn</b> , illustrated by Jon Klassen, written by Mac Barnett (Balzer & Bray, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers) 2013
Social Skill	The idea of thank you cards	Report where you are going, so as not to worry caregivers	Work together on rainbow for class	Work together on rainbow
Language Arts	Students talk about their mothers	Students talk about their parents	Have one student describe rainbow to another	Review weather words discuss weather

Numeracy	Count how many paper flowers.	Which field has more flowers?	If we divide the flowers into 2 (or more) fields, we still have the same amount of flowers right? Let's see.	Draw four fields, have twelve flowers. Put the flowers into the fields. How many in each? If we still have 12 (or 15) flowers?
Gross Motor	Nature walk to find flowers	Japanese martial art, playing with "sword"	Play archery	Nature walk to investigate with magnifying glass
Fine Motor	Holding flowers and petals very gently	Weaving	Learn to manipulate prism and magnifying glass	Make little clouds by pulling apart cotton ball
Art or Craft	Arrange flowers	draw flowers from arranged vase	Reproduce correctly the rainbow color pattern	Make sky pictures
Life Skill	Understand the importance of parents and mentors	Considering the feelings of others	Connect science and craft or art	obeying

Science	Investigate flowers	Identify flowers, sort flower pictures from seed catalog	Investigate various fruits	Evaporation – show water in a cup evaporates (use cup warmer if necessary)
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