

Using the Computer For Children's Bible Classes

The computer has opened up a new world for Bible class teachers. No longer are we completely dependent on a purchased workbook series, often poorly done and unrewarding to look at compared to the other books most children are exposed to; but we can plan and create our own "workbooks," class materials, take-home papers, coloring pages and games.

Pictures and clip art can be purchased as software, downloaded from the Internet, or scanned from a book or magazine. Image editing and illustration programs let us create our own pictures and clip art or adapt existing pictures. Publishing programs let us combine pictures and text into an attractive lesson or pamphlet, custom made for the needs of our students. Memory verses, attendance stickers, and game pieces can be made to carry out the theme of the quarter's lessons.

Some of the materials that can be created for classroom use are:

The Lesson

This may include a story in language suitable for the age of the class, questions to answer, a picture or two to illustrate the story, an appropriate puzzle or picture to color, the memory verse or another assignment for the next week, and perhaps a "reminder" picture to illustrate the memory verse.

Full-Sized Pictures

Children learn better if they can see a picture. A good picture, to be used while the teacher is telling the story, can add a lot of background information that may help the child better able to grasp the meaning of the lesson. Placing a picture from each lesson on the bulletin board will help review past lessons.



"Hands-on" Bible Characters

Using Logos Bible Draw or Broderbund's Click Art Christian Graphics, make clip art people to represent the characters in the lesson. Four or five, seven-inch tall characters can be printed horizontally on a sheet of paper or card stock. Laminate the printed paper, then cut out the characters. Add a piece of a magnet to the back if desired. Let the children use these characters to retell the story. The characters could also be scanned from a children's Bible or from flannel board sets.

Take-Home Papers, Homework

Let the students and the parents know what is expected of them by sending home "assignments" appropriate to the age of the student. Make sure the parents know if they are expected to read the lesson to the child or to help the child learn his memory verse, find answers to questions, or complete an exercise.

In-class Activities, Coloring Pictures

Young children need to do more than to sit quietly in a class and listen to the teacher. An attractive, well-chosen puzzle, coloring picture or other activity can reinforce the lesson (but should be more than just "busy work.")

The Prodigal Son

LEVIN 15:1-32

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had a son. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me share of the estate.' So he divided up property between them.

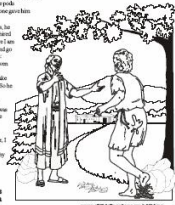
"Not long after that the younger son gathered all he had and set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, he was in a desperate state and began to beg for work. He went and joined himself to a farmer in that country, who sent him to feed his hogs. He longed for a morsel of food, but he was given only husks to eat.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have bread to eat, and I am perishing with hunger! I will go and beg for work from my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Send me back to your servants.' So he got up and went to his father.

"The son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. He ran to his son, threw his arms around his neck and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

The father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fatted calf and kill it. Let us have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.



Attendance Charts

More than just a way to count the number of times a child has been in class, an attendance chart can be a growing review of the material that has been covered and a way for a child and his parents to see the progress being made. An attendance chart can be a collection of stickers representing memory verses learned, a map of the twelve tribes of Israel, pictures of the twelve apostles, etc.

Game Pieces

Customize familiar games with game boards and pieces designed for a particular series of lessons.

Using Pre-Made Supplies

Some of the supplies available in office supply stores than can be used in creative ways are:

Business Cards

Inkjet (or laser) Business Card Stock can be purchased in quantities of 30 perforated sheets of ten cards each. Many software programs such as Microsoft Works and Microsoft Publisher have programs that allow you to print business cards. The programs are set up to make all the cards alike, but in Microsoft Publisher, it is not difficult to make a template so that one can design a page of ten different cards. These cards can be used for:

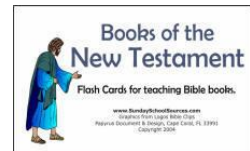
Memory verses

- Give each child a card with the memory verse on one side and a picture on the other. For younger children, the picture acts as an aid in remembering.
- For older children, put one word on each card, pass them out in class and let the children put them in order.
- Print the memory verse in large letters on a full sheet, tear the cards apart and let the children put it together like a jig-saw puzzle. Print a sheet for each child and see who can complete his first.



Books of the Bible

- Put one book of the Bible on each card. Laminate them before cutting, if desired.
- For younger children, use a clip art program to put a different picture on each card. Make a set for each child.
- Add a business card sized magnet (available in office supply stores) to the back of each card-some white marking boards will hold magnets, otherwise use a cookie sheet. Let a child practice putting the books of the Old or New Testament in order.



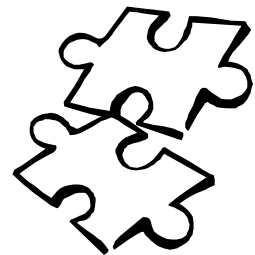
Game Pieces

Make a game of "Concentration" using the pictures you have used for the memory verses. The child who chooses two matching pictures must say the memory verse before keeping the pictures.

Magnets

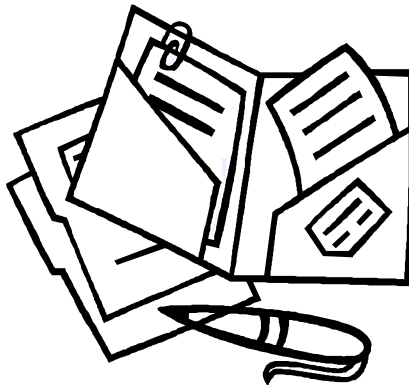
Jig-saw puzzles

- Scan a picture & print it, or print a clip-art picture appropriate to the lesson, page size on the business card stock. Tear it into the separate cards, back them with magnets, and use as a jig-saw puzzle. Make a different one for each child, if desired & have them put it together and tell the story.
- Several companies make magnet backed sheets of paper (8 ½ x 11) that are flexible enough to go through an inkjet printer. Colorful pictures scanned from children's Bibles may be printed on these magnetic sheets, laminated on the printed side, if desired, and cut into pieces for youngsters to reassemble on a cookie sheet.



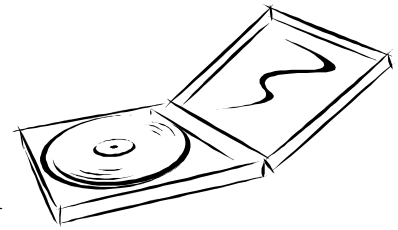
Stickers

Mailing labels come in all shapes and sizes. I find the most useful to be sheets of the 2"x4" mailing labels and the 3"x3" diskette labels. Clip art can be sized to fit on these labels and either cut to shape or used as is for attendance charts, to complete pictures, for matching exercises, or other classroom activities. I also make colorful name tags at the beginning of each quarter for the students to put on their notebooks and attendance charts.



Clip Art

The best clip-art program I have found is by Logos. It is called **Bible Clips** and has pictures that can be used in any size, figures and objects that can be combined into new pictures, and can be used in full color for complete pictures or for flannel board figures, or in black and white for pictures to color. It comes with a graphics program and the clip art is vector art, that can be resized without loss of quality. (The files come in the proprietary .GED format as well as exporting to .WMF and .CDR formats.) I find I use it a lot. It comes with a manual which shows all the figures and objects available.



Broderbund's Click Art Christian Graphics is a very extensive, 2-CD set of clip art intended for Bible classes and church publications of all kinds. I find the most useful pictures for my purposes are those illustrating Bible stories (unfortunately only about one-fifth of the total number of pictures,) but they do have good pictures of children, families, animals, etc., which are also useful for some lessons. Many of the individual line drawings can be combined into a single picture in order to illustrate a particular story or concept. The images are .WMF file types which can be scaled in size without loss of quality. This program also comes with a WMF image editor and an image browser. (This program is no longer available direct from Broderbund, but you may find it on E-bay or overstock shelves.)

Softkey's Religious Clip Art is an inexpensive clip art program of simple pictures to add interest to a lesson or page of questions. One advantage of this program is the album-if you find suitable clip art from another source, or the Internet, the pictures can be copied into this album and categorized. Make your own clip art by scanning a picture (from a children's Bible story book, for example) and enlarging it to page size, or reducing it to fit onto a business card.

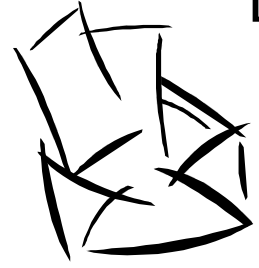
Copyrights

As you download pictures or scan pictures or text for use in your class, remember that the artists, authors, or publishers hold the copyrights to these items. It is our responsibility to find out to what extent we can use their work in the materials we make for our classes. Most providers allow you to use a picture for your own personal use, which would cover most instances of classroom use. (Although they may place a limit on the number of pieces of clip art from a collection you can use in one publication, or the number of copies you can make.) Many will not allow you to sell the art, or anything made using the art. The most liberal (such as Logos Bible Clips) will allow you to use it in any way you want with the exception of including it in a collection of clip art to sell. Some Internet sources such as Jupiter Images (<http://www.jupiterimages.com>) allow you to use the clip art you get from their site only as long as you are a subscriber. Read the copyright information provided with the software or on the website. If in doubt, write or email the publisher/artist/author. Get an answer in writing.



Miscellaneous

- Use a program such as Microsoft Publisher or Announcements by Parsons Technology to make greeting cards to send to students who are absent or having a birthday.
- At the beginning of each quarter, send an invitation to the students who will be in the class. These could be made of paper folded in fourths, of special greeting card stock or of regular card stock (white or color) cut in fourths and sent as post cards.
- Make attendance charts that follow the lesson.
- Make or copy a basic scene that can be enhanced by purchased stickers.
- Make a black & white scene or map that can be completed by adding colored shapes or figures.
- Sheets of stick-on address labels in sizes from 1/2" x 1-3/4" to 8-1/2" x 11" may be used to make stick-on titles, pictures, or descriptions. Pictures can be printed on larger labels and cut out for applying to the basic scene.
- Use stickers that repeat the pictures on the memory verse cards and let the student apply an appropriate sticker every time he/she memorizes a verse.



A List of Useful Products

The Basics:

- A Bible. Never start developing a lesson without reading the appropriate scripture in the Bible. For copying excerpts from the Bible, copy and paste from an on-line Bible such as Bible Gateway at <http://Bible.gospelcom.net/>
- A computer
- A color inkjet or laser printer
- A scanner
- Storage Media (zip disks, CD-RW, etc.) You will want to save your materials on disk for re-use. The equipment doesn't have to be the latest and greatest or the most expensive, but should be adequate for the job you are trying to do without getting you so frustrated that you lose interest.



Nice to Have:

- Laminating Machine with the appropriate lamination pouches, or peel and stick lamination paper (similar to contact paper, but stiffer.)
- Paper Trimmer. If you purchase a roller blade type of paper cutter, you can purchase blades for it that create decorative edges.
- Hole Punch
- Decorative Scissors



Books:

- One or more children's Bibles with colorful, historically accurate pictures (purchased for the pictures.)
- A children's Bible story book with simplified stories-one that covers the historical events of the Bible, at least from Genesis to Esther, and Matthew to Acts. (purchased for the stories.)
- Coloring Books with biblical themes, dollar stores often are great sources for these
- Other children's books of individual Bible stories (Avon, the make-up company, sometimes has some excellent materials in this category.)
- A Bible atlas



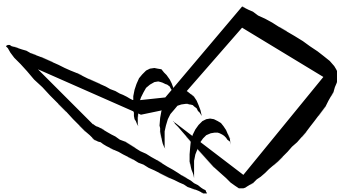
Software:

- Logos Bible Clips <http://www.logos.com/> This comes with the Arts and Letters vector graphics program.
- An image viewing program such as ACDSee <http://www.acdsystems.com> or Irfanview <http://www.irfanview.com> that will allow you to view clip art on any disk without installing the proprietary viewing program that comes with the clip art.
- An Image editing program that will open and work with both vector and bitmap images. I use Ulead's PhotoImpact <http://www.ulead.com/pi/runme.htm>. PaintShopPro <http://www.paintshoppro.com> is also good. Both are reasonably priced.
- Adobe's PhotoShop <http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshop/> is an excellent program, but is primarily focused on bitmap images and is more expensive..
- Adobe Illustrator <http://www.adobe.com/products/illustrator> or Corel Draw <http://www.coreldraw.com> allow you to open or create scaleable vector images. These are more expensive programs.
- Other Religious Clip Art Software, as you come across it.
- Microsoft Publisher <http://office.microsoft.com>, Adobe PageMaker <http://www.adobe.com/products/pagemaker/> or other page layout software.
- PowerPoint <http://office.microsoft.com/> or other presentation software if you have access to an overhead projector or a classroom computer.

Supplies:

Most of these supplies are available at office supply stores or web sites such as Office Depot, Office Max, or Staples.

- Inkjet paper, heavy enough so there is little see-through when printed on both sides. Coated paper allows colors to show up better, but is more expensive.
- Card Stock, white
- Colored card stock or construction paper
- Inkjet Business Cards
- Self sticking mailing labels, 2" x 4", 10 per page (these use the same templates as the business cards, but different sizes are available for different uses, if desired.) 3" x 3" diskette labels (nine per sheet) are also a good size for many uses.
- Overhead Projector Inkjet Transparencies if you have access to a projector. I also use these when I want a cut-out of a complex object. I print the item on a transparency, and then I don't have to cut all the edges - I just round the edges and you can see through them.
- Magnets (adhesive backed Magnetic Business Cards or 8 ½ x 11 sheets that can be printed with an inkjet printer.)
- Look for other supplies that can be used in innovative ways, like printable Door Hangers (as in the "Do Not Disturb" signs on hotel doors.) Some paper bags can go through some printers (for making each child a place for his or her "stuff," for example.) Or put a colorful label on a plain bag. (For my own use, I like freezer bags from the grocery store in place of file folders for keeping all the little pieces of a lesson together.)
 - Transparent static cling window decals can be printed with an inkjet printer. (Office Depot)
 - Notebooks or binders.
 - Iron-On Transfer Paper



Yes, some of these materials are expensive; but these are only ideas to give you a starting point. Children are accustomed to bright, cheerful, good quality reading materials and games at home and school and will reflect the importance we assign to their Bible class materials.

Fay Phillips

Presented April 23, 2005 by Kim Dailey

Sunday School Sources.Com