



Loving Discipline for Preschoolers

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Jesus commissioned us to make disciples. Look at the words *disciple* and *discipline*. Only two letters are different, and both words come from the same root word that means "pupil." Using loving discipline is an important part of making disciples.

Loving discipline teaches children what to do as well as what not to do. "Langley has the red crayon. Choose another color to use for now. Langley, please let Samuel use the red crayon next."

Loving discipline teaches biblical self-control. By consistently enforcing biblically sound rules, we help children make them a part of their everyday lives.

Loving discipline is based on relationship. Jesus loves children all the time, even when they wiggle, sob, or bite. Romans tells us that while we were lost in sin, Christ died for us. Children who feel loved by Jesus and by teachers will find it easier to obey and learn self-control.

Plan to use two kinds of **loving discipline** in your class: *preventive discipline* and *responsive discipline*.

Samples of Preventive Discipline

- ♥ Arrange the room and plan lessons to **prevent** as much misbehavior as possible.

- ♥ During *lesson planning*, decide how and when to use learning activities in order to motivate students to cooperate and succeed at church.

- ♥ Create a few simple, positive, reasonable rules: use words to settle problems; keep play dough at the table; learn to share with others at church.

- ♥ Praise good behavior. Your praise will help children know what pleases you and will motivate them to repeat that kind of behavior.

- ♥ Don't expect young children to sit still for long. Plan a variety



- of brief child-centered activities for each lesson. Plan times when children can choose how they learn as well as times when they can learn by being actively involved.

- ♥ Plan interesting transitions from one activity to the next, such as creating a song to call children for group activities.

- ♥ Treat children the way you

want them to treat one another. Be a good example of how to live by the "Golden Rule."

Samples of Responsive Discipline

- ♥ Use responsive discipline tactics after a child misbehaves.

- ♥ After a child misbehaves, move to the child, bend to his eye level, use his name to get his attention, and speak in a soft but firm voice.

- ♥ When a child breaks a rule, repeat the rule to him. If the child still will not cooperate, offer the choice of his changing behavior or sitting in the thinking chair.

- ♥ After a child misbehaves, not only explain what he did wrong, but also suggest a better way to behave.

- ♥ If a child won't come for a group activity, explain that during some parts of the lesson he may choose what he wants to do, but now it is the teacher's turn to choose. Tell children who don't come that they must come or sit in the thinking chair. Place this chair where the child can watch your teaching and think about cooperating next time.

- ♥ Stop children from hurting others. Explain that you won't let anyone hurt them, and you won't let them hurt anyone either.

Loving discipline will help children learn to live like Jesus.

Questions For Further Study—

1. What are the two kinds of discipline to include in each lesson?
 - 1)
 - 2)

2. List three preventive discipline strategies that you think would work with your students.
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)

3. List three responsive discipline strategies that you think would work with your students.
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)

4. What should you explain to a child when you stop him from hurting another child?



This article was taken from a reproducible early childhood mentoring packet called *Help for New Teachers*, by Sharon Ellard, Early Childhood Consultant in the Sunday School Field Ministries Department. Each page of the resource addresses one commonly asked early childhood question. The complete resource is available from the Gospel Publishing House, order number 02-0706. Call 1-800-641-4310.