

Teaching Christianity to Early Childhood Ages

The bible goes back to over 2,000 years ago when God sent His one and only Son Jesus to live human like man and died for humanity to save us from the punishment of our sins. Jesus laid down His life for us and grasping who God is and what He did is something important that should be taught. An organization that informs and focus on these values of Christianity is Wee Can Know; an organization that focuses on teaching children about the importance of Christ and who He is.

Wee Can Know is an organization founded in 2004 that “provides Christian education to children in preschool, kindergarten, and elementary schools in the community.” Ways that they provide these services to kids are by “telling His story, teaching little ones, and training leaders.” Educating Christianity at early childhood ages is significant because it benefits them to gain useful skills now that will carry them throughout life. “They are learning sounds at 3 months in the womb, as a child grows, they’re learning words... First, they are hearing sounds they don’t know until they see a picture and attach it to those sounds,” says Mr. Phil Smith, when asked “How can kids be taught so early?” In Kyle Snow research titled, “Learning Begins at Birth,” it pointed out that “The science is, from the time a child is born, he or she is learning every waking moment...And between birth to age 5, a child learns at a speed unmatched the rest of his or her life.” Showing kids repetition, imagery, sounds, and their five senses helps them to develop learning skills.

Wee Can Know provides bible clubs in after-school programs, child development centers, and community centers. They provide free educational resources for children through bible clubs in after-school programs, child development centers, and community centers to strengthen their Christian faith. One way to sign up is through a workshop promotion, their

Facebook page, or at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary campus fair. “The children are three years and up, but we also teach babies! Babies at preschool love for us to come and sing Christian songs for them. If a child can learn the simple song, *Jesus Loves Me This I Know*, they will remember it for life,” says Debbie. I asked one of the other members how many children do they teach a day and her response was “It varies, first, we train with volunteers that instruct children in Good New Clubs and preschools, community centers. We also help with mass distributions of Christian resources.” Presently, the Smiths teach a Good News Club® at Arabi Elementary with 20 children enrolled; also, a preschool chapel at Gethsemane preschool with 30 children enrolled. “We train volunteers for Good News Clubs, presently there are eight Good News Clubs in the Greater New Orleans area. We are working with Child Evangelism Fellowship® to open another one on Belle Chase military base,” explained Debbie. After this response, I still wondered how the services they provide help the kids and Gloriadean (a volunteer that is so sweet) stated, “Last ministry year, the Smiths personally impacted 109 children on a weekly basis and distributed 3,051 Christian resources for children with a Christian presentation. This excludes the Christians they train that go out and inform children worldwide and also in the weekly Good News Clubs.” Gloriadean has volunteered with Wee Can Know since their early years, she has contributed to many of the plans and projects they’ve produced and spends time helping to prepare various projects.

Christian doctrine helps children to be more confident in their identity through Christ, how to treat others, and being able to express themselves,” says Mrs. Debbie Smith. I asked Mr. and Mrs. Smith why did they choose to instruct children about God? Mrs. Smith response was “As a little girl I grew up in a family that brought me to church and revered God, but at home nobody prayed before meals or at bedtime, and there was no bible.” Mrs. Smith stated that “It

was like God was this big secret and I always wondered why nobody talked about Him!” She went on to give her backstory on how she was when she was a child. She said, “I got in trouble as a teenager, I actually ran away with my boyfriend to New Orleans.” “I was fifteen and lived in Mobile, my dad tried getting a restraining order against the boy, and when I went to go testify, I wouldn’t talk,” as she, her husband, and friends all shook their heads in disbelief. “So the judge threw me in a detention home until I would talk; and while I was there these Christians came and really shared the love of God.” “They gave me a bible and took secular music and put it to Christian songs, and that was a turning point in my life.”

Asking Mr. Smith, the same question he answered saying, “when I was a child I wasn’t counseled properly; my pastor asked me did I want to be baptized and saved and I said yes!” “When I got baptized nobody ever taught me what it meant to be saved—so that is why my motivation to aid them to understand because if you teach them, they’ll learn.” Showing them vocabulary and concepts are other methods that Wee Can Know uses to guide the children to knowing who God is and to understand that He is real and alive. Phil Smith added that “what we do, so children can understand, is put the vocabulary and concepts in the context of the family.”

In Dr. Jennifer Sturgeon research “Building the Foundation: “The Benefits of Integrating Faith-Based Routines in Early Childhood Education” she pointed out that “Research has shown that a child’s spiritual foundation and view of the world is developed within their first six years of life (Gillian, 2007). When children hear consistent messages about Christianity at home, at church, and at school, it solidifies their understanding of God, and they can practice His teachings in a variety of settings. Early childhood educators help to share these messages and model behaviors for young children in their care.” “Preschool Children’s ability to absorb and learn are amazing. At birth they are born with an enormous amount of brain cells. If a child is

exposed to multiple languages at an early age they can easily absorb and become multi-lingual. At a certain age, studies show if they don't utilize those brain cells, they are lost. We use music, finger-playing, rhymes, and the five- senses to help little ones learn. Children begin to learn and categorize various sounds in the last 3 months of the womb! I honestly believe my son learned *the Lord's Prayer* in my womb! When I tried to teach him at 4 years, he knew it after one try," says Debbie Smith.

A typical day in Wee Can Know consists of training teachers, preparing them to instruct the kids, gathering the children together and singing the "Gospel Fuzzy Song." My days vary a lot from day to day. "Today I have worked on our donor newsletter. Tomorrow we will be preparing for the after-school Good News Club, communicating to volunteers, conducting the Good News Club, and communicating with parents. Thursday starts with a conference call prayer meeting, correspondence, planning, preparing for a zoom workshop on Saturday, organizing. Friday, we lead a preschool chapel, meetings, and continued preparation and promotion for the zoom workshop. For my volunteers, most are retired and donate their time for a project or a meeting. They help us as they are able and as needed."

In the interview I conducted with Debbie, I questioned how has teaching Christian principles impacted children and Mrs. Debbie responded "Leaders in preschools will ask us to come and teach because they observe how learning Christian principles makes a difference in the children's behavior in classroom. One older child was having trouble getting into fights at school each day. He said learning about Christ helped him to stay out of trouble in school. When children learn about Christ, they want their friends to learn about him too. Children learn to make better choices. "One little boy was always pouting and wanting his way. He eventually learned to except things in life and be grateful. Children are fearful and knowing they have One

to turn to with their fears gives them peace and comfort. Children learn they can bring their anxieties to the Lord in prayer (Debbie).” These are the services they provide to be impactful and encouraging to the children. The children are always happy to learn about Christianity ready to sing songs, hear stories, and make bead bracelets.

Wee Can Know provides many projects that involves the kids to help learn and experience sharing the gospel. They donated resources to ministries in Italy and work at parades, passing out John 3:16 doubloons and Gospel bracelets. In the Old Testament, Psalm 78: 5-8 which summarizes that generations now will teach their children about God and the next generation will teach their children. Debbie included that “this scripture is what drives them to continue teaching and doing what God has called them to do.”

I chose this organization because growing up I was raised in church but did not understand what church or who God really was. I used to look back on my life and where I came from and wished that I knew who God was at a younger age that would lead me to having a better relationship with Him now. Although, I was not able to experience who God really is and have that relationship then, now I have the opportunity to help kids at younger ages get to know who God is and help them to create a relationship.

Wee Can Know has brought me closer to wanting to know more about what they do and the people behind the scenes making everything work. Seeing how members and volunteers enjoy and have the compassion to teach kids about God, and the kids enjoying every moment of it showed me a great organization making a difference in children’s lives.

Work Cited Pages:

Building the Foundation: The Benefits of Integrating Faith-Based Routines in Early Childhood

Education

By Dr. Jennifer Sturgeon

Master of Education Instructor; Early Childhood Consultant

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LEARNING BEGINS AT BIRTH

Parental involvement is a critical element of high-quality early care and education.

Kyle Snow, Ph.D.

Director of the Center for Applied Research

National Association for the Education of Young Children

<https://weecanknow.com/>

<https://www.givenola.org/>

Interviewers: Debbie Smith, Phil Smith, Gloriadean