

Arts and Crafts in Christian Ministry

(This section contains information from a seminar for Christian ministry workers in a church setting which I presented based on a compilation of my Aunt Gloria's tips and mine. It is included for your interest as you may find some helpful tips in it for your family or if you are also involved in teaching arts and crafts with children at church.)

Why Do Arts and Crafts?

Beyond the reasons of "It's fun" and "It fills in time"...

1. To teach practical skills.
2. To develop fine and gross motor skills (e.g. co-ordination, grasping, rotating, etc.)
3. To reinforce a topic of study visually to help remember what was learned (e.g. posters).
4. Helps them "show and tell" what they did in your program – it makes it easier for a child to answer "What did you learn about today?"
5. It can remind of a scriptural truth if it has a Bible verse on it and is displayed around home or given as a gift to others
6. Allows time for conversation about the topic between "teacher" and children while working on projects (builds relationships).
7. Teaches the lesson in a hands-on way that is more memorable or understandable for some children (younger ones as well as some who are kinesthetic learners).
8. Creativity (within Biblical limits) is encouraged and taught from a Christian perspective. (If we do not teach what is good music or good art, who will? If we do not encourage creativity, will a child grow to understand that they can use artistic skills for His glory?)
9. Skills may be useful later on in life.

Biblical Principles:

What did craft-talented people do and what can our children (and us) learn from their examples? What are some guidelines for using crafts? (Exodus 31:1-11, 32:4, 35:20-36:7, 25:1-9, Proverbs 22:29, 27:2, Isaiah 44:9-18, Jer. 10:9-15, 18:1-4, 2 Chronicles 2:13, Acts 16:14, Genesis 4:20-21, Deut. 5:8, 16:21-22, 7:26, 1 Kings 7:13-45, Colossians 3:17)

- God gives abilities to people for craft work.
- People choose to use their abilities for His glory or not.
- There are limits to creative expression ("art" is not neutral). (e.g. No idols.)
- Excellence, gaining experience with skills, doing our best, not mediocrity for whatever we do because it is the Lord we are serving.
- Honour God (not ourselves). Arts/crafts are not to be an outlet for a proud heart.

What were children to learn from parents, godly adults, and seeing things around them? (Deut. 6: 4-9, Psalm 78:1-7, 145:4-7, 107:1)

To trust in God and give thanks to Him because He is good!

Isaiah 55:10-12a

“For as the rain comes down and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth. It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper for which I sent it. For you shall go out with joy and be led out with peace...”

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

The promise is that God’s Word will accomplish His purpose. When it is appropriate, you may wish to put a Bible verse on art items, especially on those projects made in a ministry setting and which relate to a Bible lesson. To do this you could print with a pen or a marker, use a computer label, or tie on a tag.

1. Make something children can use or display or give away to someone they love. Think: Would I want to see this in my home?
2. Try to avoid:
 - a. items that are likely to be recycled (i.e. too many papers or non-useful knick knacks).
 - b. crafts that have no connection or meaning to your lesson.
 - c. items that present a safety hazard (e.g. avoid sharp things and toxic glues and paints).
 - d. just “busywork”
 - e. choosing projects where the teacher has to do the majority of the handwork. Help is fine and occasionally some parts may need to be done by an adult (i.e. spray painting) but this should not be a regular habit.
 - f. messy crafts without the protection of some kind of apron. Markers, paints, inks/dyes, fine glitter, and some types of glue can be difficult to wash out of clothing (or get out of vehicle seats if the child happens to get it on their clothes or if the project is not dry.)
3. Places for supplies: check in grocery stores, hardware stores, or fabric stores, as well as craft stores if needed.

Ideas for Some Types of Crafts to Make

Paper Crafts

Colour: with crayons, pencil crayons, markers, paints, etc.

- enlarge colouring page, add verse, paint
- “stained glass” – colour with crayons or pencil crayons, then rub vegetable oil on with paper towel and let it dry.
- no-prep crayon relief (colour heavy colours, then heavy black crayon, then scratch out verse and picture with wood splinter).

Line (depends on age group):

Is the line of the picture thick (or thin) enough?

Are there too many (or too few) lines on the page?

Size of print appropriate? (Beginner readers can be 16 pt).

Shape: Could there be a different shape for the craft (rather than always a rectangle)?

- paper plate
- cut out and glue parts on paper strips
- bookmarks
- folding – vertical or horizontal
- rolled
- 3-D slotted

Texture: Is there texture I can add to the craft by using different types of paper or other materials?

- sugar sprinkled on glue (on white or on coloured picture)
- cinnamon sprinkled on glue (after colouring picture)
- “natural” grass, twigs, sand, pressed flowers
- fabric scrap (representative of clothing), cotton balls (clouds, sheep, snow), feathers, coloured cellophane, artificial fruit and flowers

Movement: Is there any moveable parts that can help retell the story?

- paper bag puppets
- string pulls
- split pins (teeter-totter or spin circles)
- fold-ups (i.e. storm and calm, empty/full net of fish)

Items Useful for Play/Fun

- toys
- “tools” to retell story (pretend to be teacher)
- books
- food
- musical instruments
- dress-up items

Items Useful for a Household

- light (candles)

- light switch cover
- tableware (dishes, napkins, rings, trivet)
- magnets
- book ends
- paper pads
- plant/garden items
- jar mixes (cookies...)

Decorate Containers

- frozen juice can
- hang-up pockets for paper or special things – can be made from folded cardboard or felt sewn on a clothes hanger, etc.
- jar vases (glue on coloured eggshells, split peas, or catalog prints)
- clay pots (add buttons, fabric, paint...)
- memory verse box (glue on dry pasta, dry, then spray metallic paint)
- baskets (paper, woven, wooden fruit, berry...)
- magazine/S.S. paper/book holder (greeting cards on old cereal box, thin glue to cover)
- toolboxes
- wallet (leather or paper)
- seed packets
- gift bags
- binders, pencils, etc.

Home Decor

- calendar
- fabric paint writing verse on wood or paper/frame
- plaster plaques
- chunk of wood with wire hanging (optional: clothespins)
- ceramic tile (felt letters, card picture)
- banners with dowelling
- miniature posters (wallpaper border, stand up frame)
- paint on rocks
- poster with verse (paper mounted on coloured paper)
- string art

Some "Bible Thoughts" and other phrases that can be put on crafts:

<p>God provides. Pray always. Give thanks to God. Jesus loves me. God keeps His promises. Obey your parents in the Lord. Jesus lives. Jesus never fails. God made the _____. Trust God Trust in the Lord Praise the LORD! Guard your heart. Guard your tongue. Seek the Lord Thank God Love God Be Kind Be Helpful Be Thankful Be Wise Be Gentle Be Honest God is with me. Remember your Creator Sing to the Lord God made everything Christ is coming soon Boast not In everything gives thanks</p>	<p>God takes care of us Great is the LORD Welcome Friends Make a joyful noise unto the Lord God cares for me God is faithful. God is good. Rejoice in the LORD</p> <p>O Worship the King Our God is the Awesome God Isn't the Love of Jesus Something Wonderful? Count Your Blessings</p> <p>Or Birth Information (child's name, date, weight, etc. or meaning of name) Or Marriage Information (names, date, place, "joined in love", etc.) Or Family Information (full names of parents and children) Or a favourite Bible verse Or a couple of lines from a favourite song</p>
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