

Sunday School Children in Crisis

by Ann Gustafson Frake



"Are you safe right now?" asks the 911 operator.

Finding a safe place in this world can be difficult. Whether we are talking about physical, mental, or spiritual safety, children are the most vulnerable members of our communities.

A child in crisis is feeling a tremendous loss. It may be the loss of a stable, protective home and family through divorce, abuse, or neglect. It may be the loss of innocence and self-respect. You may see a child who no longer trusts the promises of adults or lacks the basic necessities of food and hygiene. A child in crisis has lost the ability to see his next step. He has lost a guiding light.

The good news is that you have a perfect Light.

If you could give every child living through a hurricane or tornado a flashlight that would never fail, you would win a Nobel Peace prize. And the great part is, you can do just that.

"The LORD is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1).

Here are some concrete steps to take that will enable you to share God's light.

1. Do not ignore children who show signs of behavioral, emotional, and psychological problems.
2. Write down the history and events leading to the crisis or a potential crisis. Pray with the child.
3. Plan in advance. Learn about the causes, consequences, resources, and appropriate responses to a

crisis or the potential crisis you might be facing.

This will include education on the mandatory reporting of child abuse. It always involves getting the information to the pastor.

4. Develop a crisis intervention plan

and review it with a qualified medical or mental health professional, the pastor, and pastoral staff.

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

If you do not have a crisis plan in place, develop one. If you have a plan, review and update your plan. Although every Sunday school's needs and circumstances are different, this checklist provides general guidance that can be adapted as appropriate.

- Develop procedures for communicating with staff, students, families, and the media.
- Establish procedures to account for students during a crisis. Who will take the child outside of the classroom? Who is the most appropriate person to talk to the child?
- Determine if a crisis is occurring.
- Identify the type of crisis that is occurring and determine the appropriate response. (Have community support contacts on file with handout sheets of agencies and telephone numbers available to all staff.)
- Alert your Sunday school superintendent and staff.
- Establish what information needs to be communicated to staff, students, families, and the community, including law enforcement officials if appropriate.
- Strive to return to Sunday school class routine as quickly as possible.
- Identify what follow-up interventions are available to students, staff, and first responders.
- Conduct debriefings and pray with staff and first responders.
- Allocate appropriate time for recovery.
- Capture "lessons learned" and incorporate them into revisions and trainings.

Children experience a variety of reactions and feelings in response to a crisis and need special attention to meet their needs. Be aware that after a problem, children are most afraid that:

- The event will happen again.
- Someone will be injured or killed.
- They will be separated from the family.
- They will be left alone.

The school-age child (5-11) is able to understand permanent changes or losses. Fears and anxieties predominate in this age group. Imaginary fears that seem unrelated to the crisis may appear. Some children, however, become preoccupied with the details of the event and want to talk about it continuously.

continued on page 2



continued from page 1

This can get in the way of other healing activities.

Typical responses:

- Thumb sucking
- Irritability
- Whining
- Clinging
- Aggressive behavior at home or school
- Competition with younger siblings for parental attention
- Withdrawal from peers
- Loss of interest and poor concentration in class
- Regressive behavior
- Headaches or other physical complaints
- Depression
- Fears about weather and safety

Helpful Hints:

- Provide verbal reassurance and physical comforting
 - Use patient and comforting tones
 - Teach comforting routines: Sunday school songs, quoting simple Scripture fragments, "The Lord is my helper" (Hebrews 13:6), bedtime rhyming prayers, looking at Bible story books
 - Group participation in non-competitive Sunday school activities (assign partners/buddies), Scripture memorization, making posters to review the lesson, Bible re-enactments, learning about a Bible character's daily life, hands on projects
 - Discussions with adults and peers. Do not be afraid to answer, "I don't know, but I can find out."
 - Relaxed expectations (temporarily)
 - Opportunities for structure with success built in—no failures. Review the prayer sandwich.
 - Group activities geared toward the resumption of normal class routines
 - Involvement with same age group activity, especially group prayer. I like making a circle, everyone's arms along each other's shoulders, tightly linked.
 - Reassure the child frequently that God is putting

His arms around them, too.

- Hug and hold the hand of your student. Pray with the child. Pray with confidence.



Resources



By Joni Owens

Several Web sites offer helps for dealing with tragedies. Some of these sites are not Christian based; research at your own discretion and with prayer.

www.family.org/lifechallenges/A000001330.cfm
www.nctsn.com/nctsn/nav.do?pid=hom_main
allkidsgrieve.org/home.html
specialchildren.about.com/od/inthecommunity/a/tragedy.htm
www.leaderresources.org/downloads/free_downloads/talking_to_kids_and_teens_about_violence.pdf
aacap.org/page.wv?name=Helping+Children+After+a+Disaster§ion=Facts+for+Families
www.ala.org/ala/alsc/alscresources/dealingwithtrag/websites/dealing.htm

Books

Several books are available through Amazon.com, although most are not written from the Christian's perspective.

How to Help Children through a Parent's Serious Illness

Kathleen McCue

Because Someone I Love Has Cancer (activity book)

American Cancer Society

The following items are available from the Pentecostal Publishing House at www.pentecostalpublishing.com.

My Heart Is Sad

Connie Owens

UPC 17608 \$5.99

The Art of Helping

Lauren Briggs

UPC 16999 \$14.99

With a Palm and a Willow

Rex Johnson

UPC 18581 \$15.95

Time to Perform

Involve the children in a musical and see how many parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, neighbors, and schoolteachers come to watch them perform! Make plans now for your Christmas and Easter musicals.

Costuming the Christmas and Easter Play

With Ideas for Other Biblical Dramas

by Alice M. Staehli

Rather than force the audience to use its imagination, this book offers designs and tips for costumes of every type (Egyptian, Assyrian) and era (Old and New Testament). It is destined to turn your next drama into a hit. Other chapters focus on successful storage of costumes, props, and hints for the director.

ISBN: 0916260097

Price: \$12.95

Dramas That Fit

*Dramas for Holidays, Youth Programs,
and Evangelistic Outreach*

by Barbara Westberg

Barbara Westberg offers fresh takes for Easter, Mother's Day, Pentecost Sunday, Christmas, and even for a building program promotion! With tips on tailoring the dramas to your church building (be it mega or mite-sized), production tips for each script, quick synopses, and instructions on how to use the CD, this is an essential resource. (The accompanying CD includes PowerPoint slide for one play and background slides for several others and a text file for printing each script.) Perfect for your dream of ministering through drama!

UPC 19514

Price: \$18.99

Joyful Hands III: Easter (07) (DVD)

by Sandra Baker

Baker offers lessons on how to sign specific songs for Easter. Song List: The Unchanging Story * Man of Sorrows * Does He Still Feel the Nails * Touching Him * I've Come to Serve * The Hammer * At the Foot of the Cross * Come Unto Me Ye Who Are Weary

UPC 21170

Price: \$20.00

Easter Programs for the Church (2006)

by Standard Publishing

All new material! These short, simple dramas, set in biblical times and contemporary settings, work for everyone from small children to adults because none of them requires elaborate staging, costuming or direction. Includes Mother's Day and Father's Day material. Reproducible!

UPC 17953

Price: \$7.99

Contact Pentecostal Publishing House customer service to order additional items (such as books, accompaniment CDs, etc.) for the following musicals.

Down by the Creek Bank Musical Kit

25th Anniversary Edition

It's a timeless, classic work—for kids of all ages!

Your kids will have even more fun than you did twenty-five years ago and you'll find yourself singing right along with these fun, easy-to-learn songs in a matter of minutes.

Down by the Creek Bank is exactly what the title suggests—a musical experience into the world of children, in their setting, sung by children for children. The musical can be used as is, or your children can write their own script.

UPC 22114 Preview Pack CD

\$10.00

Christmas Around the World

This is a 20-minute easy-to-perform celebration of the birth of Jesus as seen through the eyes of children from many different countries. Simple narration and familiar carols in unique musical settings make Christmas Around the World the perfect presentation for your children to share the wonder and excitement of the Savior's birth.

Can be pulled together easily with limited set and resources, or you can go all out and be as elaborate as your time and budget will allow!

UPC 11780 Preview Pack CD

\$10.00

A King Is Coming to Town

Come along to the little town of Rumor Mill, USA, where this morning the whole town seems to have gathered in the town square. What sparked all the excitement? A sign, posted anonymously, declaring "A King Is Coming yo Town!" Just who this King is, no one seems to know. Is it King Tut, King Kong, or the King of rock 'n roll? Drew and Ellie have the answer, as they want to tell the real story of Christmas.

Easy to perform this 40-minute musical!

UPC 11779 Preview Pack CD

\$10.00

It All Happened in the Country

Daniel and Chelsea, some "city kids," find themselves stranded with Luther and Cora May, some "country kids," just before Christmas. You can only imagine the sparks! This "country" music-filled production is loaded with exciting staging, costuming and performance ideas your kids will love! Plenty of fun characters, including roles for all ages.

UPC 13447 Preview Pack CD

\$10.00

It All Happened in the City

Uncle Yule, Ma, the country cousins and the city cousins are all back together again for another unforgettable combination of great fun and powerful music—all focusing on the timeless story of Jesus' crucifixion, death and glorious resurrection. Written and arranged by Dennis and Nan Allen, *It All Happened in the City* presents God's great forever story in such a way that your kids will embrace for a lifetime!

UPC 14599 Preview Pack CD

\$10.00

The Tale of Three Trees

The Tale of Three Trees brings to life the traditional story of some trees with a dream and a God with a plan. In this 35-minute musical, follow the adventures of Annabelle, who dreams of holding great treasure, Bud, who longs to become a mighty ship, and Gabrielle, who just wants to stay in the forest and point people toward God. Through the eyes of Woody the woodcutter, Stump, who is rooted in puns, and Woodsworth, the tree of knowledge, we are reminded that even when we can't see the forest for the trees, there is no prayer that is too small for God.

UPC 13446 Preview Pack CD

\$10.00

www.pentecostalpublishing.com

314-336-1818

www.upci.org/wap

Seasonal Ideas

By Linda Short



Summer Cupcakes

Frost cupcakes with light blue frosting. Place a gummy ring (or any other candy that looks like an inner tube) in the center. Stand a Teddy Graham in the center of the ring so he appears to be floating in water. Enjoy!!

Ice Cream in a Bag

(by Sherri Osborn)

1 Tbsp sugar
1/2 cup half-n-half
1/4 tsp vanilla
1/2 cup rock salt
Ice
1 pint size Ziploc bag
1 gallon size Ziploc bag

Combine the sugar, half-n-half, and vanilla in the pint size Ziploc bag and seal tightly. Combine the ice and rock salt in the large Ziploc bag. Place the small bag inside of the larger bag and seal. Shake the bag until the mixture turns into ice cream! This will take about 5 minutes. (You may want to wear gloves.) Add sprinkles, candy, nuts, or fruit and enjoy!

Watermelon Tambourines

2 paper plates per student
red/green/black crayons
dried beans
hot glue or stapler
Optional: Sunflower seeds

The students color the edge of the paper plate green (rind), the inner section red, and draw black seeds in the red portion. (*Optional:* Glue on sunflower seeds for 3-D effect.)

Place a handful of dried beans in the center of the plates and staple or hot glue edges securely.

Make a juicy, joyful noise unto the Lord!!

Ice Cream Reward

As an optional attendance, memory work, or other special project chart use one of the following.

Ice Cream Cone

From brown construction paper cut one ice cream cone for each student. As each weekly goal is met, add a construction paper scoop of ice cream to the cone. At the end of the contest/project, serve ice cream cones as a reward.

Banana Splits

From construction paper cut a banana split boat for each student. As goals are met, add three construction paper scoops of ice cream: strawberry, pineapple and chocolate syrup; cherries, and brown construction paper confetti for nuts. At the end of the contest/project, serve banana splits.

(*Challenge Option:* Students get a real banana split made according to the one they earned on paper.)

***Be aware of any food or nut allergies.**

Soaking up the Sunshine

Get your students ready for fun in the summer sun by creating foam visors to shade their faces. Precut foam visors can be found in most hobby stores and craft departments. Select bright neon colors and several styles of peel-n-stick letters. Purchase peel-n-stick beads and other decorations to further embellish the visor. Let students "write" the phrase "Soaking up the Sunshine" across the visor with the letters and decorate the rest of the visor as they wish.



The Word Aflame staff is here to serve you. If you have questions, dilemmas, or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact us. We will listen and do our best to help you. You may reach us Monday through Friday, 8-4:30 CST at 314-837-7300, or via e-mail at wap@upci.org.

