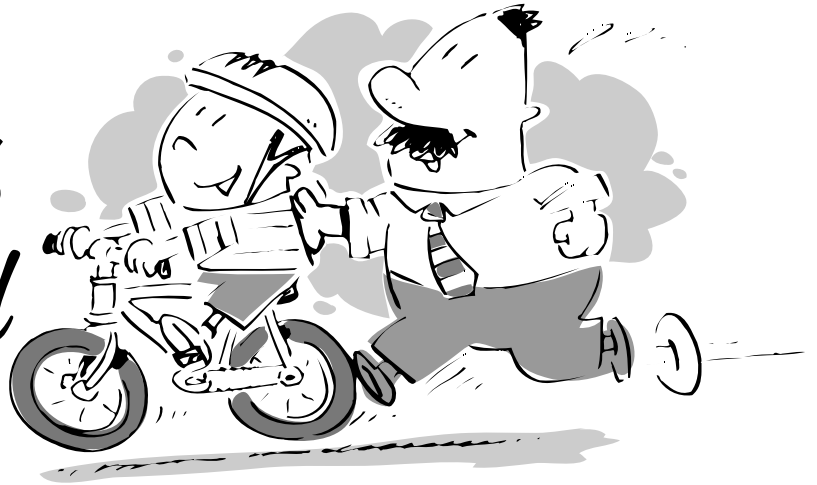


The Eyes of a Child



Think It Over



Children are not little adults, yet we somehow arrange our classrooms to reflect our adult preferences.

Picture your classroom right now. Does it focus on children and their needs? Does it focus on teachers and their needs?



You know the phrase “It’s like riding a bike.” For most adults, riding a bike is not a problem. For a child who has just taken off the training wheels, riding a bike is terrifying!

What was riding a bike like when you did it for the first time? Do you remember how much you wanted to ride? But by the time you sat on the bicycle, desire gave way to fear! Chances are an adult in your life tried to accommodate your age, size, and ability to improve your chances of success.

An adult put you on a small bike so that if you fell, you wouldn’t fall far; held you long enough for you to catch your balance; stood behind you so you could see where you were going. An adult picked you up after you fell, and an adult encouraged you to try again!

Your success was due, in large part, to a big person’s persistence and patience to adapt his or her training to your capacity to learn. The opposite, unfortunately, is also true. An impatient, do-what-I-say, or demanding authoritarian who insists on an adult bike might produce results. However, rather than fostering joy in riding, the overbearing instructor creates bad memories and a lifelong avoidance of bicycle riding.

We are often blinded in our own efforts to teach because we see through adult eyes and adult experiences. We sometimes try to impose our own childhood experiences on the children in our classroom. Identifying with children helps us to communicate with them. When you come to teach a passage of Scripture, you often are retelling a story that is so familiar to you that it’s like riding a bike. You could probably teach it without even looking up the passage in the Bible. But what is it like for a child hearing it for the first time?

We can only be heard and our learners will only understand if the level of instruction fits with their capacity. To be child-centered is as simple as speaking to a child at his or her eye level, talking in a voice that is calm and reassuring, creating space that encourages discovery and choices, or simply putting graphics and pictures at a child’s eye level. What are some other ways to make your classroom child-centered? ■

When I was your age, I had to walk to school with snow up to my thighs!





Keep Up

Growing up in a house full of four brothers and sisters, we were always in competition with one another. One day, before my mother came home from work, we decided to have a contest to see which one of us was the best artist. We drew our pictures, and I was sure that when mom came home, she would choose my

drawing. My mother, a single parent, took our bait. She took all five of the drawings and went into the next room to “grade” them. Seated on a couch, we couldn’t wait for her verdict. “Today we will award the prizes for the best drawings,” my mother began. “In the three-year-old division, Priscilla receives an A+. In the five-year-old division...”



Sometimes it is difficult for us to be child-centered because we forget what it was like to learn something new or see something for the first time. Try

driving to work using a different route from that which you normally drive. What did you like about this new route? What didn’t you like?

Shop at a new grocery store each time you need food this week. What did it feel like when you were looking for products you needed? Did you ask for help or try to figure it out on your own?

TIC... TIC... TIC... **It's time for a CHANGE**

God is showing me that I need to stop being childish when I...

God, please help me to be more childlike as I...

SCRIPTURES to Study

** Commit it to MEMORY*

“And he said: ‘I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.’ ”

—Matthew 18:3

- In what way do you need to become more like a little child?
- How do you need to change you classroom environment or teaching style to be more child-friendly?



“All grown-ups were once children—although few of them remember it.”

**—Antoine de Saint Exupéry,
The Little Prince**