



**Discover!**  
Finding Faith in Life

# 5 ACTION STEPS TO TEACH AND REACH CHILDREN <sup>AND THEIR PARENTS!!</sup>



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## FAITH FORMATION REQUIRES EFFECTIVE TEACHING.

The Greeks had a word for “teaching” which is still used in professional circles today, and that word is pedagogy. The literal meaning of pedagogy is simply “teaching children.” The elements of pedagogy include the theory and practice of education, the methods and practices of teaching, and how these practices influence learning.

What kind of effective pedagogy will help the children in your parish to learn and live their faith joyfully and lovingly? This article suggests five action steps of such an effective pedagogy in nurturing faith in your parish faith formation curriculum. So let’s dive in!

## TIP 7 OFFER KIDS OPPORTUNITIES TO RESPOND TO THE WORD OF GOD AT THEIR LEVEL!

Living the faith is a response to the Word of God that is living and active. (See Hebrews 4:12.) It is a “call and response” activity. God calls, we respond. We participate in the Mass and in the sacraments. We discover ways to live our faith in life through parish groups or activities, according to age and ability.

Effective pedagogy in faith formation offers opportunities for children to respond to the Word of God at their level through playing games, working puzzles, acting out Scripture passages, and discussing Scripture. In other words, active learning!



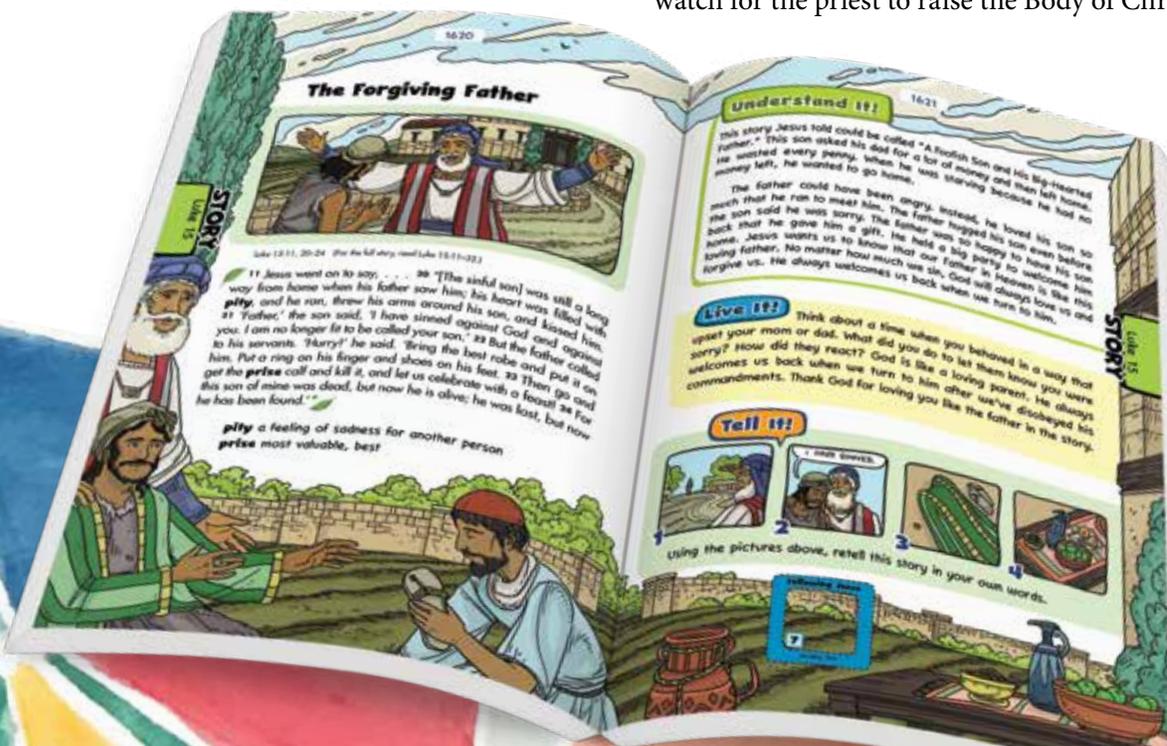
# TIP 2 GUIDE CHILDREN THROUGH THE LITURGY AND THE CHURCH YEAR!

"A SOLID PEDAGOGY  
HELPS CHILDREN  
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THE LITURGY.

EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGY  
IS ALSO HONEST."

The Church Year provides an outline and a guide to finding faith in life. Effective pedagogy helps children discover the Church Year as the Church moves together through the life of Christ. Guiding children through Advent and Christmas is a joy. Allowing them a glimpse of the suffering and death of Christ reminds them that his life was not all roses, and ours won't be either. But then—the living hope of Easter heals our sorrow, and we rejoice in Saint Paul's message, "You have been raised to life with Christ...Your real life is Christ and when he appears, then you too will appear with him and share his glory!"(Colossians 3:1, 4).

*A solid pedagogy helps children to understand the liturgy. Effective pedagogy is also honest. Assure the children that they are not expected to understand each word of the Sunday liturgy. Point children to what they can understand.* First graders can listen for the word "Jesus" in the Mass and in the homily, listen for the words "This is my body" and "This is my blood," or watch for the priest to raise the Body of Christ.



## TIP 3 MODEL PRAYER FOR THE LEARNERS!

*In its essence, prayer is communication with God.* It is important to expose children to different types of prayer, different modes of communicating with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Effective pedagogy models all kinds of prayer: memorized prayer, spontaneous prayer, quiet prayer, guided prayer, singing prayer, and dancing prayer.**

Following the custom established by Saint John Baptist de La Salle, patron of teachers, you might like to make up your own short prayer to have the children pray at the halfway mark of a lesson: “Jesus, live in our hearts forever! Saint [the patron of your school or parish], pray for us.” You might even appoint a designated bell-ringer to ring a bell for this short prayer time!

## TIP 4 GIVE KIDS OPPORTUNITY TO RECOGNIZE AND USE THEIR GIFTS AND TALENTS!

We each have God-given gifts: free will, reason, conscience, and creativity. **Effective pedagogy gives children opportunities to use these gifts according to their stage of development. Do we give children the opportunity to use their free will by offering choices when possible? Do we help children reason through hypothetical situations and thus develop critical thinking skills?** Do we help children to judge right and wrong in both real and hypothetical situations? Do we develop creativity in children through opportunities to draw, construct, act out, imagine, pretend?

**Effective pedagogy observes what children do and offers positive, honest, and insightful feedback.** “Jack, you draw very well. You are good at it” gives Jack an insight into his own particular talent. “Good reading!” is all that may be needed to help a quiet bookworm out of his or her shell. Effective pedagogy gives children a chance to discover their talents by offering a variety of experiences in which those talents can develop and shine. Remind the children that each one of us has God-given gifts to use and share!

TIP 5

# SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE THE FAITH FORMATION THAT HAPPENS AT HOME!

"EFFECTIVE  
PEDAGOGY  
TREATS PARENTS  
AS PARTNERS  
WHO WANT THE  
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CHILDREN."

As the saying goes, "Children learn what they live." Effective pedagogy supports and encourages the faith formation that happens at home. **Effective pedagogy communicates with parents in every way possible:** by e-mail, text, or social media, if that is convenient, by sending notes or newsletters home, by sending home a page of upcoming events, by sending a "prayer review" home occasionally (printing out the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, the Angel of God prayer) for parents to include in family prayer.

Effective pedagogy treats parents as partners who want the best for their children. **Encourage parents to use the at-home activities provided by your faith formation program.** Help parents to discover Catholic web sites and other helpful venues, web sites or stores where Catholic medals, good children's prayer books, and other Catholic faith materials can be purchased.

**Effective pedagogy means being a catechist not only to the child in front of you but to the entire family.** Effective pedagogy means sowing the seed, finding faith in life, confident in knowing that "It is God who matters, because he makes the plant grow" (1 Corinthians 3:7).

*Note: The Scripture quotes in the above article are from The Catholic Children's Bible (Good News Translation).*

**HAVE YOU TALKED TO YOUR MINISTRY CARE TEAM RECENTLY?**

They are ready to help you create a wonderful learning environment where children (and their parents!) will discover the beauty of the Church's teachings, fall in love with Jesus and the Bible, and transform a learned faith into a lived faith!

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