TEACHING CHILDREN TO LIVE GOD'S WAY

I. What Does It Mean to Live God's Way?

A. God's Way Is Both Belief and Behavior

Belief

- Children need to understand who God is—His attributes and characteristics.

  Howard Hendricks said, "According to your concept of God, you will live and work."

  We need to make sure that in our Good News Clubs and other children's ministries that as we teach, we apply the Bible lesson and other activities in the club to the life of the child.

- They need to understand what God expects of His children (His commandments and other instructions from Scripture to live His way).

Behavior

Definition from AI on Google: "Christian behavior or conduct is the outward expression of a believer's inner faith, defined by biblical principles like love, holiness, obedience and humility, reflecting Jesus's example in all actions, speech, and attitudes, with the goal of glorifying God and influencing the world positively. It's a lifestyle…"

- Jesus calls us to **do**, not just hear**:** James 1:22 – *"Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves…"*

- We need to be teaching children God's ways in everyday life:
  Deuteronomy 6:4-9 – "*Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your heart. Impress them upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and then you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on yoo9ur foreheads. Write them on your doorposts of your houses and on your gates."*

B. Elementary Years Are Formative

- Children are learning habits, responses, and values.
- There are several forces trying to mold our children.
  - **Culture**
  - **Peer Pressure**
  - **The School Environment**

II. Loving God: Learning about who He is—His attributes and characteristics.

A. Loving God Above All

Matthew 22:37 – *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart…"*

Children should learn that God is:

- Loving—He loves with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3)
- Trustworthy—they can put their complete confidence in God and His promises.
- Worthy of obedience—He wants the very best for His children as they follow His rules.

  Proverbs 1:7 says, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."*

- We need to teach children to "fear," to have a wonder-filled reverence for God. As they grow up with reverence for God, they will reverence what He has made, starting with others. Reverence for God will carry over into attitudes and practices of everyday living.

Practical Teaching Ideas:

- Teach children to establish a daily quiet time with God through prayer and Bible reading. This will deepen their relationship with their Heavenly Father.

  Provide Quiet Time sheets and challenge children to use them during the week. Teach them to pray in their own words and to use their Bible. We can teach about prayer in our GNCs as we begin our club and during a designated prayer time.

  (Daily Quiet Time books can be purchased through CEF Press. There are six books and each covers two months of devotionals for one year).

- Emphasize that we want to obey God because we want to please Him as our Heavenly Father.
- Have the children memorize Scriptures about God (His attributes and characteristics). It guides our lives (Psalm 119:105). The GNC memory verse time is important, so the Word of God is instilled in the child's heart.
- Teach attributes of God during the Bible lesson.
- Use worship songs to reinforce truths about God and the way He wants us to live.

B. Obeying God's Instructions

If the child loves God, he will want to obey Him. They need to learn that God's rules are for their good.

Obedience and respect for parents and those in authority need to be instilled into the child early in life. They should learn to do what they are asked immediately and with a Christ-like attitude.

Practical Teaching Ideas:

- Instill Scripture in the child's heart and life:
  John 14:15 – *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."*

  1 John 5:3 – *"This is love for God: to obey his commands."*

  Proverbs 1:8 *"Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching."*

  Ephesians 6:1-3— *"Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother'—which is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."*
- Choose Bible lessons about characters who obeyed God: Noah, Joshua, and Daniel, etc.

Key Teaching Point: Obedience is not perfection—it is choosing God's way.

III. Loving Others: How God's Way Shapes Relationships

A. Showing Kindness and Compassion

Children should learn to notice and respond to others' needs, treating others with love and respect.

Ephesians 4:32 – *"Be kind and compassionate to one another..."*

Practical Teaching Ideas:

- Use Bible lessons and Scripture memory.
    - Luke 10:33–34 – The Good Samaritan
    - 2 Samuel 9:1-13 David shows kindness to Mephibosheth.
    - Ruth 2:1-4:22 Boaz shows kindness to Ruth.
- Role-play kindness scenarios (See examples).
- Celebrate acts of kindness you observe.
- Teach children to include others.

B. Respecting Parents, Teachers, and Authority

Respect is foundational for a godly life. It means honoring others by showing them courtesy and concern by respecting their views and desires. It means treating my own things and the things of others with care.

Practical Teaching Ideas:

- Memorize and discuss Scripture passages such as Ephesians 6:1–3 – (Obeying parents) and Romans 13:1 (Respecting authority)
- Role-play scenarios.
- Be a role model for your children.

Key Teaching Point:
Respecting authority is part of honoring God.

C. Forgiving Others

Children need help learning to forgive when hurt. Teach them that forgiveness is letting go of my anger and my desire to punish someone who has wronged me.

Practical Teaching Ideas:

- Teach Colossians 3:13—Forgive as the Lord forgave you.
- Teach that we must forgive repeatedly (Matthew 18:21-22).
- Teach Bible lessons that reinforce forgiveness such as Joseph forgives his brothers, David spares Saul, Jesus on the cross, etc.
- Teach that forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling.
- Use simple phrases: "I forgive you" / "I'm sorry".
- Reinforce reconciliation, not revenge.
- Teach children to pray and ask God for help to forgive the person who caused the hurt. (Even adults have challenges with forgiving others.) God gives victory!

IV. Living with Integrity: Choosing What Is Right

A. Being Honest

Honesty means being truthful in all I say and do. Honesty builds trust and reflects God's character. Children need to learn about this conduct from a young age to establish a reputation for being a person of integrity.

Scripture: There are many Scriptures that emphasize telling the truth versus being deceitful or lying.

- Ephesians 4:25 – Put away lying: Speak truth to one another.
- Proverbs 12:22 – God delights in truthful people.
- Numbers 23:19—God is Truth
- Proverbs 6:16—God hates seven things; one of them is a lying tongue.

Teaching Tip:
Praise honesty—even when it's hard.

B. Self-Control and Wise Choices

Children need help managing emotions and actions. They need to know how to control their tongue.

Scripture:

- Proverbs 4:24—"Put away …a deceitful mouth and put devious speech far from you."

- Proverbs 25:28—"Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control." (Self-control protects us)
- I Thessalonians 5:11—"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up…"
- Colossians 4:6—"Let our speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person."

Practical Teaching Ideas:

- Help children develop a positive vocabulary, full of words that bless others.
- Teach children not to take God's name in vain and to not use swear words which might be acceptable by those who don't know Jesus but are not acceptable for us to use as Christians.
- Teach pause-and-pray moments. (When you're upset or angry, stop and pray or walk away).
- Help children name emotions.
- Practice calm responses (Role plays can be significant teaching tools).

V. Living a Life of Purity

A. Guard Your Heart

Teach children that what we let into our minds and hearts matters—through what we watch, listen to, and think about.

Scripture:

- Proverbs 4:23—" Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

Practical Teaching Ideas:

- Teach children that "Your heart is like a treasure box. You choose what goes inside".
- Before doing anything you're not sure about ask: *"Would this make Jesus happy?"* or *What would Jesus do?*
- Encourage choosing TV shows, music, and games that are kind and respectful.

B. Choose Clean Words

Pure speech means words that are kind, respectful, and not crude or hurtful. Swearing or taking God's name in a negative way (as a swear word) is not appropriate for a Christian. Words can build people up or knock them down.

Scripture:

- Ephesians *4:29* "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths…"

Practical Teaching Ideas:

- Think before speaking: *Is it kind? Is it true? Is it helpful?*
- Practice replacing unkind words with encouraging ones.
- Discuss words that a Christian shouldn't use.

C. Respect Your Body

Our bodies belong to God and should be treated with respect.

Scripture:

- 1 Corinthians 6:19— "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit."

Practical Teaching Ideas:

- Emphasize that God the Holy Spirit lives in you so you want to keep yourself pure.
- Teach children "God made your body special, so you need to take good care of it."
- Encourage modesty in dress and personal boundaries.
- Teach that it's okay to say "no" and tell a trusted adult if something feels wrong or if someone touches you inappropriately.

D. Choose Good, Godly Friends

Teach children that friends influence our choices—for good or for bad. Good friends help you make good choices.

Scripture:

- Proverbs 13:20—"He who walks with the wise will become wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm".
- John 15:14—"You are my friends if you do what I command." (Jesus)

Practical Teaching Ideas:

- Help children develop a profile of a true friend. (As children get a clear picture of friendship, they will be able to discern the difference between a friend and acquaintance).
- Teach them to pray and ask God to lead them to other kids who are kind, honest, and helpful who could be their friends.
- Talk about peer pressure and how to respond. Help children to be courageous about standing up for what is right. (Daniel is a great example)

E. Run from What Isn't Pure

Teach children that sometimes the best choice is to walk away or get help.

Scripture:

- Psalm 34:14— "Turn away from evil and do good…"

Practical Teaching Ideas:

- Teach children to remove themselves from situations that feel uncomfortable. "If something feels wrong, it's okay to leave."
- Challenge them to identify safe adults they can talk to.

F. Ask God for Help

God helps us make pure choices when we ask Him. God loves helping His children.

Scripture:

- Psalm 51:10—"Create in me a pure heart, O God."

Practical Teaching Ideas:

- Encourage short prayers like: *"God, help me choose what's right."*
- Reinforce that God forgives and helps us start fresh.

Teaching Children to Live God's Way is About:

- Relationships, not rules
- Formation, not performance
- Faith lived out daily

"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." — Matthew 5:16

Visit U-NITE TV, one of CEF's digital ministries for children. It provides short stories to teach Christian conduct, Bible stories, missionary stories, songs and other valuable teachings. For example, some of the titles include

- When Enemies become Friends
- Standing Strong
- Mephibosheth: God's Heart of Kindness

Visit *CEF Press* for visualized Bible lessons, songs, and a host of other resources to help your children learn to live God's way!

Role Plays for Teaching Kindness

Role Play # 1: "The Left-Out Kid"

Goal To help children recognize exclusion and practice choosing kindness and inclusion.

Scripture Connection

Ephesians 4:32 – "Be kind and compassionate to one another…"
Luke 6:31 – "Do to others as you would have them do to you."

Setup—Explain: "Sometimes people are left out on purpose or by accident. God wants us to notice and choose kindness."

Roles (3 children) Child A: Wants to play a game**; Child B & C:** Already playing

Scenario Child A approaches while B and C are playing.

First Round (Unkind Response):

- Child A: "Can I play with you?"
- Child B: "No, we're full."
- Child C: (Turns away or ignores)
- Child A: Looks sad and walks away

Pause the role play

Ask the group: How do you think Child A feels? Was that kind?

Second Round (Kind Response): Replay the scene with a new ending:

- Child B: "Sure! We can make room."
- Child C: "Yeah! You can be on my team."

Debrief Questions

- What changed the second time?
- How did kindness affect everyone?
- When can we do this in real life?

Key Teaching Point

Kindness notices others and makes room for them.

Role Play #2: "Words That Help or Hurt"

Goal: To teach children that kindness includes the words we choose.

Scripture Connection

Proverbs 16:24 – "Kind words are like honey…"
Ephesians 4:29 – Words should build others up.

Setup—Explain "Our words can make people feel better—or worse. Let's see how kindness sounds."

Roles (2–3 children) Child A: Makes a mistake (drops something, answers wrong)

Child B: Responds**; Child C (optional):** Encourager

Scenario: Child A drops a stack of books or gives a wrong answer.

First Round (Unkind Words): Child B: "That was dumb." Child A: Looks embarrassed or sad

Pause and ask: How did those words feel? Did they help?

Second Round (Kind Words): Replay with kind speech: Child B: "It's okay. Everyone makes mistakes." Child C: "I can help you pick them up."

Debrief Questions

- Which words were kinder?
- How can our words show God's love?

Key Teaching Point: Kindness uses words that help, not hurt.

Tips for Success with Role Plays

- Keep scenes **short** (1–2 minutes)
- Coach children quietly if needed
- Let kids suggest kind responses
- Always connect back to Scripture
- End with prayer asking God to help them be kind