



### **Children - Are They Really Listening?**

By Beula Postlewait, Nazarene Educators Worldwide Communications Representative

I have been a public-school teacher and a Sunday school teacher. I have learned that a child's lack of attention does not always mean he or she is not listening.

Recently, in my Sunday school class, a four-year-old boy was playing with a set of family figurines. When it was time to put away the toys and come to the Bible story circle, he brought one of the figurines with him. He seemed totally distracted by the toy during the Bible story time. Yet, later, when I asked questions about the story events, he could answer every question. Did his inattention frustrate me? Yes, it did. Did this discourage me? Yes, it did. Did I learn something from this incident? Yes, I did.

Later, as I thought about this, I recalled a similar incident that happened in one of my preschool classes at church many years ago. It was Palm Sunday. Before class, I had taken bulletin board paper and made a pathway on our classroom floor. We had made palm branches from green construction paper and dowel rods. I gave the children simple Bible costumes they could put on and take off easily. We had a "homemade" donkey that one child would ride on (as Jesus) while the other children lined the path and waved their palm branches and shouted, "Hosanna!"

I noticed one boy fidgeting with his costume while we were getting ready for the "parade." I thought he might have been feeling uncomfortable, so I asked if he was OK with the costume. He said it was OK. Yet he continued to fidget. I thought he was being uncooperative until I saw him take off the costume and lay it on the path. He had heard the part of the story about the people taking off their cloaks and laying them in the pathway for Jesus. At that moment, I really wanted to cry. I realized he was living the story and, in his own way, paying homage to Jesus.

It is amazing what our children teach us:

Children can learn in many different environments.

Children can learn even when they are not 100% tuned in to the teacher.

Children can internalize concepts, especially when we allow them to actively demonstrate what they learned.

COVID-19 has made life miserable for many teachers. Although we are grateful for technology and the opportunity to reach students at home through ZOOM and other programs, teachers and students usually miss the personal interaction. Students miss seeing their friends. Teachers miss seeing their co-workers. Parents may question their ability to take on the role of “teacher” if they struggled in school or just don’t have the “temperament” or patience to help the children.

In March 2020, many of us thought the pandemic would last only a short time. Little did we know that a year later we would still be struggling to find the best way to educate all students. When students fail to show up for the scheduled ZOOMS and/or fail to complete assignments, teachers can become frustrated and discouraged. I wish I could say that this pandemic will end soon, and everything will return to the way it was previously.

Only God knows what will happen, and God is our source of strength and help while we continue to work. Despite the many challenges we have faced in the past one year, I still believe that teaching is a spiritual gift from God.