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The Resource Page

... creative and practical ideas

Brought to you this month
by Julie Whidden Long



Teaching Baptist distinctives to children

For many Baptist churches, the days of BYPU (Baptist Young Peoples Union), Training Union and other programs dedicated to teaching Baptist heritage to children and youth are gone. In this post-denominational age, some churches have forgone the teaching of Baptist heritage altogether.

But teaching children Baptist heritage is important. Helping children discover who we are and why we are as we are is crucial for maintaining institutions with the “Baptist” name. More importantly, passing on Baptist heritage continues the ideals and practices we Baptists believe are the best ways to respect and dignify all of God’s children and to be the church, representing God in the world. So how can churches reclaim the practice of teaching children Baptist heritage?

One of the most helpful resources I have found for teaching Baptist distinctives to children is *Let’s Explore Baptist Beliefs*, published by BaptistWay Press. The student’s workbook is a slick, full-color piece that includes a session on five topics:

- God is Always in Charge (the lordship of Christ and the authority of Scripture)
- Three Gifts from God: Salvation, Security and Priesthood (soul competency and the priesthood of all believers)
- Symbols that Stand for Something Important (baptism, communion and church membership)
- We Decide How to Be a Church (local church autonomy and religious freedom)
- We Work Together to Tell the World About Jesus (missions, evangelism and



cooperation with other churches and groups)

Sessions include an explanation of the featured Baptist concept, a scriptural basis, several fun learning activities and contemporary illustrations of the theme put into practice. The accompanying leader’s guide includes in-depth background as well as a helpful guide for leading the sessions.

Finding time to add another educational topic into the already limited access your church has to its children is a challenge. This resource is flexible enough to be used in several contexts. This fall, our oldest children’s Sunday school class will use it as a five-week session. Missions or discipleship groups would also be an appropriate forum.

A couple of years ago I used the resource for a Baptist Heritage Club for our children that met once a month for 30 minutes before Sunday school. I divided some of the more “packed” sessions into two meetings and supplemented the resource with other materials (see below). Each month we would meet to introduce the concept, and then I would assign “homework” to be done before the next month’s meeting. Children completed some of the learning activities included in the session, read the story of a Baptist who had lived out that month’s distinctive, and found a way to put the idea into practice. For example, when we learned about believer’s baptism, each student interviewed an older church member about his or her baptism experience. When we studied religious liberty, we met for lunch with a

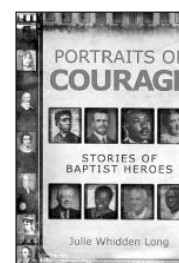


church member who had grown up as a persecuted Baptist in Puerto Rico. When the children learned about Baptist partnerships, they did Internet research about some of our church’s Baptist mission partners. They even attended church conference and had to pay attention! The class ended with a field trip to learn more about a famous Baptist at the King Center in Atlanta.



Several other resources supplemented this curriculum for our class and are helpful for teaching Baptist heritage to children:

- *We are Baptists* (Judson Press) examines 14 different Baptist distinctives.
- *Heritage Seekers* (Baptist Heritage and Studies) explores Baptist history and themes.
- *Portraits of Courage: Stories of Baptist Heroes* (Julie Whidden Long, Baptist History and Heritage Society/Mercer University Press) tells the stories of 14 Baptist men and women who have lived out the best of our Baptist ideals.



We will never have time to teach our children all we want to pass down. But being intentional about using the opportunities we have is crucial, both for the future of our children and of our churches. As we celebrate this significant 400th anniversary of Baptists, I hope your church will take the opportunity to pass along some of our family history to the next generation. **BT**

THE RESOURCE PAGE is provided by the Congregational Life office of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in partnership with *Baptists Today* and for those dedicated lay leaders working in the educational ministries of local churches. This month’s page was written by Julie Whidden Long, minister of children and families at First Baptist Church of Christ in Macon, Ga. Resource Page Archives are available at <http://www.thefellowship.info/Resources/Church-Resources/Baptists-Today-resource-page>.