

# INTRODUCING THE GOSPEL IN ESL PROGRAMS

## (with secular curriculums)

God has sent the World to our doorstep. What a wonderful opportunity to reach “all the nations” for Him. ESL (English as a Second Language) Schools are popping up at churches all around the country in an effort to reach these precious Internationals with the Gospel of Jesus Christ in both Word and Deed.

One of the first decisions any ESL School has to make is what kind of curriculum to use: secular or Bible-based. When making this decision, please consider your goals. A Bible-based curriculum will attract mainly students that are already Christians. (Be careful to advertise this type of program as a Bible Study that teaches English rather than English classes, otherwise you could be guilty of a bait and switch.) A program using secular curriculum can be advertised as English classes and will attract a lot more students, many of them non-Christians.

So, how do we get the Gospel into the ESL Schools that are using secular curriculums?

### **1. Prayer**

Prayer is foundational, not optional.

#### A. Personal Prayer

You as the Director should always be praying for your entire ESL School on a regular basis. You should pray for all of your volunteers by name. You should pray for all of your classes and all the extra events.

#### B. Team Prayer

Your teachers are part of your team. Each week you should provide them with an updated attendance list of their specific class. Encourage them to use this list as their prayer list for the week.

#### C. Corporate Prayer

If your church has a prayer team, supply them with a specific list of praises and prayer requests each week. This can be done through e-mail (forward this same list to your teachers.)

Enlist others in your church to specifically pray for your school/students.

Each class night meet with your teachers before class and pray for the students.

“When we rely upon organization, we get what organization can do; when we rely upon education, we get what education can do; when we rely upon eloquence, we get what eloquence can do. And so on. But when we rely upon prayer, we get what God can do.” Dr. A. C. Dixon, quoted by Robert Hall Glover, *The Bible Basis of Missions*, 186

“Prayer is action. By it we step out in advance of all other results...Praying is an activity upon which all others depend. By prayer we establish a beachhead for the kingdom among peoples where it has never been before. Prayer strikes the winning blow. All other missionary efforts simply gather up the fruit of our praying.” David Bryant

## **2. Open every class with prayer**

Every single class should open with prayer. Sometimes teachers will go over homework first in order to allow time for more of the class to be there and then open with prayer. Teachers should pray out loud specifically for their class, praying that their students would learn English quickly and adapt well to life in America. Once students are comfortable with this, ask them for specific prayer requests.

A student once told their teacher that they didn't think that their God was very important to them because they never spoke his name. Always pray in the name of Jesus.

## **3. Devotions**

Devotions should be a part of your class time every week. But remember that this is only to be a small portion of your class time. If your classes are 2 hours long, your devotions should be no longer than about 10 minutes. You need to maintain the integrity of the English Class.

Devotions can be done in one of two ways:

1. Have devotions in each of your classrooms. These would be done by the teachers. This method works especially well when you have more than one language group represented in your classes. It can be done at any point during the class time. Some classes prefer to start with devotions and others do them after a snack time or at the end of class.
  - Teaching English Language Learners the Good News Scripture Alphabet

- A-B-C Devotions by Karen Gibbs (Scripture Alphabet using the NIRV Bible.)
  - For upper level students you could use devotional material such as Our Daily Bread.
2. Have devotions at big group time (snack time). This method works well when all of your students speak the same language.
- Do the devotions in the language of your students.
  - If you do not speak the language of your students, recruit others to come in to do the devotions. Perhaps you have a Pastor or staff member that speaks their language.
  - You can use the same kind of devotional material mentioned above, just make sure to keep it to an appropriate length of time.

It is a good idea to have Bibles for all of your students each evening. Perhaps have them already on their desks when they arrive for class. Use a simple English Bible, such as the NIRV (New International Readers Version – 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading level – available from the International Bible Society). Have the same Bible for all students. Give the students highlighters and have them highlight the verses.

## 4. Literature Table

Have this set up each class night in a place where all the students will pass by. Make it colorful and attractive. Make sure they know the materials are free and for them to take home. Also, set this table up at all Big Parties.

- Foreign language tracts
  - Who Is Jesus? Approximately 6 cents a piece
  - Multi-Language Media 717-738-0582 [www.multilanguage.com](http://www.multilanguage.com)
- Foreign Language Bibles
  - International Bible Society 1-800-524-1588
  - American Bible Society 1-888-242-5309
  - Multi-Language Media 717-738-0582 [www.multilanguage.com](http://www.multilanguage.com)

## 5. International Sunday School Class

Once you have your ESL School up and running well, a good next step is to have an International Sunday School Class. This would meet at the same time as your church's regular Sunday School Classes. The children of your students would attend your children's Sunday School Classes while their parents are in your class.

Advertise this to your students as an additional way for them to practice their English, but make sure that you tell them that the Bible will be your main text book.

Usually, you will have a lot fewer students in your Sunday School than in your regular classes; however, most of them will not be Christians, because your Christian students will usually already be attending a Church in their heart language.

If you have enough volunteers, break this class up into at least two groups: a high fluency group and a lower fluency group.

### Bible Based Curriculums

#### **New Tribes Missions Firm Foundations, Genesis to Revelations**

- Available in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and adult level.
- Can purchase posters, maps and pictures to use with it.
- All materials are reproducible.

#### **The Visual Bible: Matthew**

“Experience The Visual Bible’s Matthew. This powerful and entertaining film is taken word for word from the text of the New International Version translation. This multimillion-dollar production appeals to all ages, and it offers educational, spiritual and entertainment value. Filmed on location in Tunisia, Morocco and South Africa, Matthew features a cast of thousands, historically accurate costuming and award-winning directing. The film stars Emmy award-winning actor Richard Kiley as Matthew, and introduces Bruce Marchiano as Jesus.”

Special features include: Languages English and Spanish

- English sub-titles
- Search by event
- Search by chapter

There are many other ways to incorporate this video into your programs:

- Show part of it at snack time
- Higher fluency levels can use it to discuss a certain parable/story

- You can loan it to students. (Make sure you have extra copies if you loan it.)

### **The Jesus Film**

- DVD multi-language
- VHS – comes in many different languages
- Campus Crusade (Orlando, FL) 1-407-826-2000
- Window to the World: specific ESL curriculum to use with the Jesus Film  
(has reproducible lessons)

Additionally, foreign language versions are good to use when trying to convey specific content. Show the nativity portion at Christmas and the Passover through Resurrection portion at Easter in all the languages represented by your students. You can do this in your regular ESL Classes, as well as your Sunday School Class and Home Bible Studies.

### **Nest Videos**

These children's videos are about 20 to 30 minutes in length. Each has an activity book, which is introductory and beginning level. They have Old Testament, New Testament and Hero Classics.

A Nest Family Entertainment Series  
6100 Colwell Blvd  
Irving, TX 75039

### **Book of Mark**

Available through the North American Mission Board

This is a very thorough English Language Text. Using the Gospel of Mark as its text, these lessons are designed to give practice in the 4 basic language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, And Writing.

### **English in Action**

Published by DawsonMedia

- \*step-by-step training in how to use the fun-filled Total Physical Response method
- \*an exciting and practical format so students easily understand the Gospel as they learn English
- \*detailed lesson plans for more than 75 hours of teaching
- \*reproducible classroom handouts

**ESL Bible Studies** available through Multi-Language Media  
([www.multilanguage.com](http://www.multilanguage.com))

What Christians Believe  
Life of Jesus Christ  
How Christians Grow  
Gospel of John: Who is Jesus?  
Teaching of Jesus

Who is God?  
Who am I?  
Who is Jesus?  
Who is the Holy Spirit?

**Christian Books**, i.e. “The Journey” by Billy Graham or “The Purpose Driven Life” by Rick Warren.

These can be done in a simple Book Club format where students take turns reading out loud from the chapters. Stop to discuss unknown vocabulary and ask simple questions about the content.

## **6. In-Home Bible Studies**

Once your ESL School has been running for several weeks, start advertising that you will come to their homes to teach them English. Make sure that you tell them that you will be using the Bible as the main text book. Your students will end up inviting friends and relatives to this study that are not a part of your regular ESL School.

The same curriculums that were listed above for Sunday School are appropriate to use here.

## **7. In-Church Bible Studies**

If you have other ministries at your church that are offering nursery (i.e. your Divorce Recovery group offers childcare on a night other than your regular ESL Classes), you might want to consider offering a Bible Study at Church so that your students can bring their children.

Again, the curriculum listed above in the Sunday School section is appropriate.

## **8. Heart Language Bible Studies**

If you have teachers that speak one of the languages of your students, you can have them offer a Bible Study in that heart language. Even though this is not teaching English, it is accomplishing the main goal of teaching the Gospel.

## **9. In-Class Parties:**

Plan an in-class party for your entire ESL School. Have an extended break time/snack time and do it then. Make sure that your teachers know at least a couple of weeks ahead of time so that they can adjust their lesson plans for the shorter teaching time that day. Have it around a specific theme.

- Valentine, St. Patrick, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas
- Super Bowl
- Monthly Birthdays
- Baby Shower (Make sure you have extra gifts for someone you didn't know was pregnant.)

Research the Christian origin of holidays. Make sure the person speaking about the holiday is capable of speaking in "simple English". Have another person writing "main words" from the talk on an overhead. This talk should not be too long. You can hand out tracts appropriate to the holiday/event or make a handout yourself (i.e. Romans Road).

Make it special. Decorate. Play games. Have door prizes that represent how America celebrates the holiday or event. Have typical American foods for that holiday or event. Put vocabulary words related to holiday or event on an overhead. (You can recruit others outside your teaching staff to help you set up and clean up. This is a good way to expose potential future teachers to your ministry.) Have students grouped by fluency level for activities at their level.

Don't necessarily announce these to students ahead of time. They may mistakenly think that there will be no classroom instruction that night and as a result skip class.

At most have 2 of these a semester. Any more and your students will feel like they are not getting enough classroom instruction.

## 10. Out of Class Parties

This kind of party would be at a time other than your regular class time, for instance on a Saturday night. You want to advertise this several weeks in advance and encourage your students to bring their families and friends. Make sure that most of your teachers are going to be able to attend and have them bring their families too. Many times students will come just so that their family can meet their teacher or so that they can meet their teacher's family.

These can be at your church or another location. If they are not at the church, make sure that each student has a map to the location of the party.

You want to make this extra special. You can do it covered dish or have it catered. If you do it covered-dish, have someone ready with 3x5 cards to write the name of the dish on. You will need to explain covered-dish to your students. Have translation if available. Ask teachers to bring large main dishes.

You will want to have some kind of icebreaker to do while people are arriving. Expect that your students will arrive bit by bit.

You need a theme for the party. It could be a talent show or a culture night or a holiday.

- Talent Shows – have students sign up ahead of time. Be prepared to have students and friends want to perform that did not sign up.
- Easter – Resurrection Eggs (Family Life – Campus Crusade)
- Thanksgiving – Thanks for Living Box (Family Life – Campus Crusade)
- Christmas – The ADVENTures of Christmas by Lisa Whelchel

Encourage individual class presentations of jazz chants or songs or skits.

Encourage your teachers to perform – real talent or funny.

(Make sure it is humor that your students will understand.)

**ALWAYS** have a Gospel presentation. Make sure the person speaking is familiar with working with Internationals and speaks slowly/clearly/easily. Be creative. Use drama. I have even used Jimmy Wayne's country music video, "I Love You This Much" as an introduction to a Gospel message. Remember that this is not to be a complete sermon, so keep it to less than 15 minutes.

Have your literature table set up by the exit so that they can take tracts and Bibles home with them. Invite the Gideons to come and hand out Bibles to your students.

## **11. Individual Class Parties outside of School**

These parties work best if they can be in a teacher's home. This makes students feel special. If this is new to your program, you may need to model it first in your home.

Hand out invitations (with maps) for a couple of weeks ahead of time. Be clear on whether or not families are invited. You can have students meet at the church/school and car pool together or ride with teachers. Have someone at the church with extra maps for at least 30 minutes after the party start time.

Director can provide party kits with activities, information and small prizes.

Teacher should give her/his personal testimony at these parties or a small Gospel Presentation.

Even if you ask students to bring food, be prepared to feed the whole group.

## **12. Personal Relationships**

Students will return to your classes week after week for 2 main reasons.

1. Their English is improving.
2. They are developing a relationship with someone in the school.

Hopefully your students will be developing relationships with you and your teachers. All of these extra activities will help to promote the building of good relationships. Encourage your teachers to invite students (and their families) to their homes for dinner or to events or outings in the community.

When your students realize that you are doing all of this (ESL School and related activities) for free, they will be very curious about why you are doing that. All of them have come to America to improve their socioeconomic status. It makes no sense to them that you would spend time helping them when you could be earning money instead. This is a great time to explain to them why you are doing this – because Jesus loves them and you do too.

## **13. Mercy Ministry**

As your students' needs become known, your team and/or your church will hopefully be able to help them. Again this is a perfect way to share through good deeds.

Examples would be:

- Helping student to find free/low-cost health care
- Helping student with official paperwork (i.e. insurance, apt leases)
- Providing food/clothing/furniture

You need to become familiar with your community resources so that you can inform your students and you also need to approach your church government ahead of time to see what kinds of help they would be willing to offer to your students. (Never promise a student monetary help before you have final approval for that specific student.)

Never offer advice on immigration matters to your students. Help them to make an appointment with an immigration attorney or specialist. Local non-profits may offer this service. Well-intentioned people have gotten students kicked out of the country because of their ignorance.

**“Preach the Gospel everyday, and if necessary use words.”  
St Francis of Assisi**