



# Head Knowledge vs. Heart Change



“But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5, New American Standard Bible).

• What could happen in the lives of your students if those three objectives were built into their lives?

• How do you know if you’ve met these goals?

## ▼ Training Session

As teachers, we want to make sure our lessons aren’t just filling heads, but are changing hearts. You’re teaching for life transformation. So at the end of a lesson, how do you know your students’ lives have been transformed?

It’s not an easy question—but it’s an important one!

It’s tempting to look at head knowledge and evaluate what kids *know*. The first thing we teachers like to test is memorization. After all, if kids can memorize a Bible verse or concept, they’ve surely learned *something*—right?

Well, that depends.

If a child’s memorized a Bible verse to get a reward but hours later doesn’t remember the verse, then no, that’s not true learning.

If a child’s perfectly memorized the words of a Bible verse but can’t actually tell you what the verse means, then no, that’s not our goal either.

If a child’s memorized a verse about serving others, and then the child helps a friend pick up his or her toys, then yes, that’s true learning—that’s life transformation!

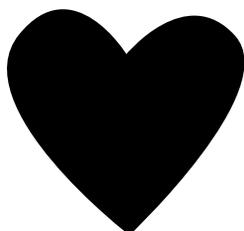
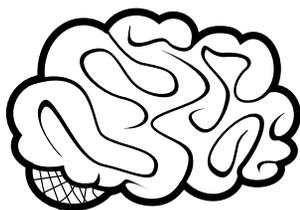
Our goal is for kids to be living examples of God’s Word—not just recordings of God’s Word!

Instead of evaluating whether or not kids know a Bible verse, gauge what it means to them. Instead of asking kids to recite the Ten Commandments, see if they can give an example of one of them.

When evaluating kids’ learning, try these ideas for looking at the heart, not the head.

- **Have kids rewrite a memory verse in their own words.** And when they recite it, accept the paraphrase as correct.
- **Let kids create a visual.** Have kids act out, write about, or draw what the memory verse or Bible point looks like when it’s put to work in their lives.
- **At the end of each lesson, have kids summarize in a single phrase what they learned.** Have kids write the phrase on index cards or whisper it to you as they leave.
- **Make a note each week of how you’ve seen a child grow.** It may be a way a preschooler shared a toy he’s never shared before. Or you might see a fourth-grader start talking to her friends about Jesus more.

Sometimes gauges like these seem less concrete than Bible memorization and recitation, but these provide more than a peek into kids’ brains. They’re a glimpse into their hearts! And, ultimately, which is more important?





**Take this training deeper as you think over these questions:**

- What's the difference between memorization and learning?
- How can you make sure kids *understand* what they're learning?
- Why is it so easy to focus on head knowledge rather than heart change?

▼ Journal

*What is it that I want kids to learn from this week's lesson?  
How can they apply that to their lives?*

**God, I want to see life transformation in my students' lives. I want them to learn how to live for you and through you. Help me find ways to catch a glimpse inside each child's heart. Thank you. In Jesus' name, amen.**

## ▼ Application

Create a Heart Monitor for your kids. Get two paper plates. Use a pen to divide both plates into four pie slices. Label the four slices on one plate the following: (1) in one ear, out the other, (2) memorization only, (3) knows the basics, and (4) true understanding!

Cut one slice out of the other plate. Use a brass fastener to attach the cut plate to the labeled plate so it covers all but one slice.

Decorate your Heart Monitor with...well, hearts! Use it to gauge your kids' learning each week. Adjust your lessons to reach for true heart transformation.