

Kids Ministry Training

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Oxygen Life Church
13 Second Avenue, Walmer
Port Elizabeth, South Africa
www.oxygenlife.co.za

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01

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

*"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." **Ephesians 3:16-21***

There is no greater call and no greater privilege than advancing the Kingdom.

As followers of Jesus, we are not just passengers on a heaven-bound train, but Jesus' **friends** (**John 15:15**), God's **children** (**Galatians 3:26**), **partakers** in His divine nature (**2 Peter 1:4**), **ambassadors** (**2 Corinthians 5:20**), **servants** (**Colossians 3:23-24**), **stewards** of the mysteries of God (**1 Corinthians 4:1-2**), and **priests** (**1 Peter 2:4-5**).

Following Jesus is something that we actively participate in, and actively look for others to be brought into. So, in looking to make disciples and advance His Kingdom, we have the precious privilege of leading kids to becoming disciples of Christ.

“Our ultimate goal in kids’ ministry is to lead kids to becoming disciples of Jesus Christ.”

The importance of this mission is wrapped up in God’s heart for people, His heart for kids, and His instructions to His followers. Let’s look at some of those together...

God’s heart for kids

It’s so evident throughout the Word that **God’s heart is for people** – that they would see His worth, embrace communion with Him, accept His mercy, and be with Him forever.

And that’s exactly what His heart is for kids! In fact, in scripture He prioritises children, and uses them as an example for others to follow:

“Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the Kingdom of God.” (Mark 10:14)

“And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3)

Jesus’ disciples seemed to think that Jesus’ ministry was too important to share with children. **They thought that He wouldn’t want to waste His time worrying about children, but oh! How they had missed His heart!**

“But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the Kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.” (Mark 10:13-16)

So, **if your heart is stirred to minister to children, you’ve definitely caught the Father’s heart for them.** Let’s look at how two specific instructions from Jesus should guide us in ministering to kids:

THE GREAT COMMISSION

Jesus gave us clear instructions that define our mission on earth: *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)*

By pointing children to the Bible and its instructions for us, we are teaching them to obey Jesus’ commandments. And we can only live all of this out with the Holy Spirit – it’s Him who’s with us to the very end! All the while, we want to guide children in living out the Great Commission themselves – that they would learn how to disciple their friends and point them to Jesus!

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

When you look at the whole Bible and its instruction, it can feel like there's a lot we need to get across to the kids. That's why it's helpful to keep in mind the commandment that Jesus told the disciples to regard as the most important... *"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:36-39)*

Let's teach the kids how to follow Jesus and obey Him, while showing them what love looks like.

What discipleship looks like

We see the outworking of discipleship in kids' ministry in two primary areas: through building upon the **firm foundation of the Bible** and **facilitating Spirit-led encounters**.

We want to **anchor ourselves and the children we lead in the Word of God**. Jesus said, *"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. (Matthew 7:24 ESV)* Children need to hear that the Bible is not a fairy tale but a trustworthy record of immeasurable value and worthy of us building our lives upon!

Jesus told his disciples, *"But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have*

said to you."(John 14:26) As we build upon the Word, we want to make room to **intentionally allow for the Holy Spirit to bring revelation in kids' hearts and minds**. We need the Holy Spirit, as He ultimately breathes life on what we share.

Why is the Gospel so important?

All of history hinges on what happened at the cross. It's the 'main event' of the Bible narrative, and, as a believer, it's the 'main event' of our own lives. **The death and resurrection of Jesus not only changed the course of history, but it changes our own lives today**. And it's that power (not our own power) that transforms kids' lives.

Some people view the Gospel like an aeroplane ticket: once you're on the flight (given your life to Christ), your destination is secured and don't need the ticket anymore. But the Gospel is so much more than that.

"The Gospel is the Biblical story about God's provision of Jesus, the rescuer who reconciles people back to God." (Dembowczyk, 2017) This narrative isn't just locked into the pages of the Bible, but the narrative is continuing in our lives today. Our teaching times are such incredible opportunities to make the Bible come alive to the kids. We want children to realise their part in the Gospel narrative, and not just learn a few principles to live by.

Values of a leader

As you are released to serve and lead children, there are certain things we want you to value:

ONE... LOOKING AFTER YOUR HEART IS IMPORTANT

"A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of." (Luke 6:45)

Seek the Lord for the kids, keep pushing in to His presence, and continue to be filled by Him.

Stay connected in a community, leading an open, accountable and submitted life.

TWO... CARRY THE RESPONSIBILITY

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)

Let's carry our roles on the team responsibly. Prepare for your times when you are on, preferably with the other leaders in your age group. While certain leaders will take on a bigger responsibility in preparing the lesson, everyone involved can come prepared by looking through the lesson, reading the Bible passage, praying, and making sure they arrive on time to connect with the rest of the team.

Organise to swap out with another leader in your age group when you are unable to be there on a Sunday that you are down for, and let your overseeing leaders know when you have swapped.

THREE... IT'S ABOUT CONNECTION

"And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward." (Matthew 10:42)

As you're connecting with the children, remember that it is Jesus you're serving. Engage with the kids throughout the meeting – love them, smile, show interest in their lives, play games with them, nurture them if they are hurt.

Put away distractions for the time that you're with the kids. Forget about your phone. Leave it on silent in your pocket or bag and rather give all your attention to the kids. Apart from showing them sound values, it also means you're more alert toward safety precautions.

Support your co-leaders – stay engaged throughout the time, make sure that you fulfil your own role in the lesson and that you have arrived prepared.

Notes



LET'S RECAP

1. Why have you chosen to serve as a kids' ministry leader?

2. How has your life been impacted by the Gospel?

3. Find a scripture in the Bible that shows God's heart for kids.

4. What are you most excited about in kids' ministry?

5. What aspects of kids' ministry do you think you'll find the most and least challenging?

WHAT IT MEANS TO LEAD

Qualities of a kids' ministry leader

God places a big emphasis on the qualities of leaders in His house, and while the offices explained in the Word are separate to the office of leading kids' ministry, we would do well to follow the great examples given. Without going into too much detail about loads of character traits, here are some of the qualities and values that are important.

Firstly, a kids' ministry leader must be born again by the Spirit of God, and proclaim Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. On top of that, it's important that leaders hold to the belief that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and that we, as believers,

must come under its authority. Through holding to these core beliefs, you would be confirming that you are on board with what your local church believes, as well as the Four12 partnership of churches.

See the Four12 statement of faith here:



<https://four12global.com/about-us/what-we-believe>

QUESTION...

Are you on board with what your church believes?

Absolutely!



I'm still unsure



(If you're still unsure, rather chat to your leaders before joining the team.)

Secondly, a willingness to serve. Some might elevate the need for certain gifts and talents as more important for children's ministry, but we believe that a willingness to serve is more important than skill. When the Lord works in our lives, He stirs our hearts to serve Him and His bride. So, a natural outworking of that is to start to serve the bride in whatever way we can.

Thirdly, being humble and teachable. Jesus Himself took the stance of going low, and humbling Himself as servant of all (Philippians 2:5-8).

“Following Jesus' example, our posture as leaders is one of servanthood and humility.”

As we are leading, we need to be open to direction and correction from those overseeing us.

While there are a number of skills that really help (teaching, communication,

leading games), **we believe that skills can be taught, but character needs to be formed.** As believers, this happens as we surrender our hearts to the Lord and allow Him to change our thoughts and motives.

The Bible is clear that there are **different spiritual gifts that the Lord apportions to us** (1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12), and not all of us will be equally gifted in all areas (1 Peter 4:10). But while we are differently gifted, we can still desire for, receive and grow in gifts that we don't currently have. As you step out to serve in kids ministry, ask the Holy Spirit to highlight what gifts He wants to give you. And then earnestly ask Him to equip you in them – even step out in them and ask others to help you.

With those things in mind, we want you to consider two of the roles that everyone in kids' ministry needs to take on: **being a LEADER and being a TEAM PLAYER.**

Leading in all areas

Although there are many different roles on the kids' ministry team, everyone is essentially considered a leader. If your role on the roster is 'helper' or 'admin', you may not be taking the teaching time nor leading the team of leaders, but you are automatically a leader because kids are looking to you as an example.

Jesus spoke very sternly about those that cause others to stumble: *"If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."* (Matthew 18:6) May we not be

among those that lead others astray!

But the Bible also includes positive encouragements about setting an example to others. Paul wrote to Timothy, saying:

“Set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” (1 Timothy 4:12 ESV)

Here’s how you can lead by example in all areas of children’s ministry:

- **TEACHING:** Seek the Lord’s heart for the kids. Prepare and practise your lesson well, and then allow the Holy Spirit to move through you. Remain as engaging as possible throughout, being strategic with different attention-grabbers. If you aren’t the one teaching, sit amongst the kids to help them maintain their focus.
- **WORSHIP:** Engage in worship, welcome the Holy Spirit into the time, and follow Him as He leads. You can set an example for the kids in placing your attention on the object of our worship: Jesus Christ.

“Let every aspect of your time together with the kids be soaked in God’s presence, and look to portray His character in all your conduct.”

While worship is an act of seeking a deeper heart connection with the Lord, corporate worship (worship in groups) isn’t an individual event. We can and should be collectively placing our attention and affection on Jesus in corporate worship. Ways that you can model this to the kids is to go all out with actions while also being aware of what’s going on around you, and trying to connect with kids individually to get them engaged in worship. You might need to strategically place yourself amongst the kids to help keep certain kids focussed.

- **PRAYER:** Prayer is a vital ingredient to our times together, but remember that it will look quite different to your prayer times in your community groups. When praying with kids, keep your language appropriate for your age-groups, and keep the prayer time relatively short. Encourage them to pray what’s on their hearts popcorn-style (anyone prays any time), or ask them to go in a circle. Make a point to pray for kids that are sick or injured.
- **MINISTRY:** If you get the chance to pray with a child, take it! Preferably have guy-leaders praying with guys, and girl-leaders praying with girls, especially in the older age groups. Choose your words wisely for their level of language, and pray specific prayers over their lives. Even ask one of their friends to pray with you, and ask the Lord for guidance or a prophetic word or picture for them. The point of ministry is not to make the moment serious, but to facilitate them connecting with the Lord.

- **SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSIONS:** The trick is to start with the end in mind. Get them to do most of the talking and ask strategic questions to get them to come to the conclusion you want them to come to. Ask open-ended, directed questions (instead of yes/no questions). If you are part of a group but not the one leading the discussion, help the discussion leader by keeping the kids engaged, minimising distractions, or contributing to the conversation in ways that will support the leader.
- **GAMES:** Get stuck into games with as much energy as possible! If you are running the game, make sure you know the rules well before you explain them to the kids. If you aren't running the game, be part of the game – it's such a great way to connect with the kids and model the value of fun. Just don't win too often! :)
- **CRAFTS:** Explain the crafts well, and then help the kids as much as possible. Spread yourselves out amongst the kids to help them, and use that time to connect with them – ask them fun questions, tell them funny stories. Even if the children don't seem to need too much assistance, this is a prime opportunity to connect with them... so don't disengage.
- **REGISTRATION:** You may be asked to help out with registration. Do it with excellence and warmth. During this time, you are the connection between the church and the parents – ask them their names and welcome them if they are new. Don't assume that they know the process or why we register the kids – explain that it is for safety purposes. The way that you welcome a family can really help set a good first impression.
- **SNACK TIME:** Be fair with the kids – they will ask you for more, and then they'll ask why they can't have more. Just be firm and friendly, and make sure everyone gets snacks. Remember to be proactive with this time – try have one leader getting the snacks ready during an activity, so that you're not trying to keep the kids settled while they wait. If you notice a child spill something, help them clean it up rather than assume that someone else will do it later.
- **'FREE TIME':** There may be some times when the kids are allowed to 'roam free' (did someone say "chaos"?). Remain engaged throughout this time. Join in their made-up games, or find a more chilled group to sit and chat with. Don't disappear or spend that time on your phone, and try not to spend too much of this time around the other leaders. It may be natural to gravitate toward other leaders, but do your best to focus your energy on the kids. There is most likely also some cleaning up you can do during this time. Look for work!
- **PARENTS COLLECTING KIDS:** Again, be warm and friendly as in the registration time. Ask the parents their names and strike up a brief conversation if you can. Don't tell them how badly-behaved their child was, rather find some way to compliment the child as they leave ('What a champion!' with a huge high-five is a great go-to). The parents will love seeing that positive interaction. In terms of speaking to the parents about discipline issues – let your team

leader speak to the parents, and bring your coordinator into the conversation if necessary.

- **CLEAN UP TIME:** Make sure that your age group space is tidy and clean (vacuumed if necessary), and your supplies are washed and packed away. Check with your other co-leaders that everything is done before leaving.
- **OUTSIDE OF YOUR SCHEDULED SUNDAY MEETING:** You won't be on the roster every Sunday, but being a leader isn't confined to just the Sundays when you are on team. Your life is an example to others, and you may have some interactions with kids outside of the Sundays that you are on duty, and even outside of church meetings completely. As leaders, we remain above reproach in all areas, knowing that our lives are examples to others. We do this not because of our duty to the kids' ministry, but because we are surrendered to Jesus.

Playing in team

As leaders, one of God's greatest gifts to us is team leadership. **Believers cannot function without each other, for the sake of our own faith and for the sake of advancing the Kingdom.** That's why Paul told the church in Corinth that we are all one body – each with our own role to play in the body, but all ultimately carrying out the same purposes (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).

There are a number of different roles in a kids' ministry team. Depending on the size

of your church or congregation, you might not have as big a variety of roles, but here are some of the roles that we have found to be important:

- **THE OVERSEEING ELDER** connects primarily with the congregation coordinators to help cast vision and define strategy to take the kids and leaders forward in their faith.
- **CONGREGATION COORDINATORS** oversee the general running of the kids' ministry in their own congregation. They will stay in touch primarily with the team leaders to make sure everything is running smoothly on the ground. They are also responsible for bringing new team members on board, and handling the admin tasks that ensure that the teams get all the info they need at the right time, e.g. rosters, curriculum, notices about meetings.

“Kids' ministry is by nature a team effort, so we all need to ensure that we are looking after ourselves while making sure we are doing our part in the bigger team.”

- **TEAM COORDINATORS** help coordinate the team for a given Sunday. They would facilitate the pre-meeting prep and prayer time and do most of the up-front talking and facilitating in big group times.
- **THE ADMIN TEAM** manage and delegate the list of administrative

tasks that facilitate the leaders' prep and lesson times. They would primarily be responsible for overseeing the registration process and preparing refreshments.

- **THE SECURITY GUYS** facilitate the kids arriving and leaving – they generally only need to be available for this role at the start and end of the meetings, and be aware of general child safety during the meetings.
- **TEAM LEADERS** manage the preparation and communication for their age group leading up to the Sunday that the team is on. They could also collaborate with the other team leaders of different age groups, and it's helpful if they give feedback to the other team leaders in the same age group in order to facilitate better continuity between weeks. Team leaders will also do most of the up-front teaching in their age groups.
- **LEADERS** support the team leader in running the lessons and games, as well as in preparing for lessons.
- **HELPERS** are the people that support the leaders. They fulfil a vital role of helping to manage the class and connect with the kids, but aren't expected to do as much preparation as the leaders.
- **OCCASIONAL HELPERS** can include worship leaders, teachers, décor helpers, and curriculum planners, amongst others. They wouldn't necessarily be on the roster, but would be called on sporadically.

Expectations

Now that we've gone through some of the heart stuff and the roles on team, let's talk about practical expectations.

By being part of your kids' ministry team, your leaders will expect that you:

- Are a **committed member of your church**, having completed your church membership course.
- Are in an **active, accountable relationship with a leader** in the church, confessing sin and accepting them speaking into your life.
- **Understand the legal aspect of being a leader**, familiarising yourself with the child protection policies and procedures and completing the documentation that your leaders ask of you.
- Find out **when you are on the roster**, diarise it, prepare appropriately, and swap out with another leader when necessary.
- **Arrive early on the Sunday** that you are on team (this time would be decided on by your congregation coordinator), or message your team if you realise that you are going to be late.
- **Commit** to being on the team for an extended period, preferably until the end of a year.
- **Communicate** with your congregation coordinator if you are struggling in any areas of your role, and remaining open and accountable with them about

anything that may affect your role as a leader.

As your coordinators oversee this exciting ministry and seek the Lord to advance His Kingdom through you as leaders, **the leaders overseeing you would aim to:**

- **Equip and train you**, leading you into more of what God has for you (bearing in mind that you are first and foremost submitted and accountable to the Lord and to your community leaders).
- **Envision you** for your work in kids' ministry, getting feedback from you ongoingly and making sure that you are happy, energised and faith-filled for your ministry (bearing in mind that we all first find our strength and faith in God and cannot rely on other people to carry us if we are not faithful in seeking Him daily).
- **Support you**, making sure that you have all the information, equipment and resources you may need to do everything to the best of your ability (feel free to let us know what you need).

Kids' ministry is by nature a **TEAM EFFORT**, so we all need to ensure that we are looking after ourselves while making sure we are doing our part in the bigger team.

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Notes

LET'S RECAP

1. We believe that skills can be _____, but _____ needs to be formed
2. Looking at the spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, what spiritual gifts would you say you have?

3. "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an _____ in speech, in _____, in love, in faith, in purity." (1 Timothy 4:12 ESV)
4. The expectations given here outline your role in the team, but not your role with the kids (we'll get to that). What are some other expectations that you want clarified? List them here, then chat to your overseeing leaders about them.



In case you missed it, here's a super important video you need to watch

03

A TYPICAL MEETING TIME

What a kids' ministry time looks like

There are so many different ways to achieve the main goal of kids' ministry, so **we generally steer clear of cookie-cut meeting outlines that are the same every week.** However, there are **four key elements** that are important to include each week, even if the amount of each element varies from week to week.



WORSHIP

While we certainly can't (and wouldn't want to) manufacture feelings in the kids' hearts facilitating times where they can **enjoy, God's presence and have an opportunity to show their delight in Him** is important for any kids' ministry. The Bible is full of

instructions on worship – not just on what worship looks like, but it even commands us to worship. **Facilitating times of worship can take on many different forms,** which we'll discuss in more detail in a different section. Kids love singing and dancing, so finding some upbeat songs and creating the actions for them works really well. But what a privilege to also facilitate deeper encounters. These are often best done with someone leading worship with an instrument, and with some prompts along the way to orientate the kids.

“Worship is an inward feeling and outward action that reflects the worth of God.” (Piper 1983)



WORD

We are a Bible-based community of believers, and we don't ever want to veer away from that. **We want to always be pointing children to God and His Word**, knowing that as children encounter scripture, they are being fed ([Matthew 4:4](#)), they are receiving a lamp to walk by ([Psalm 119:105](#)), they are encountering the living, active word of God ([Hebrews 4:12](#)), and are being sanctified ([John 17:17](#)).

“We should be revering the Word and respecting each other, but it doesn't need to be boring.”

The curriculum that we use (The Gospel Project ®) takes kids through the Bible in 3 years, each week sharing a Biblical account and then explaining how that account points to Jesus. We choose to talk about these as 'accounts' and not 'stories', because 'stories' is generally associated with fictional tales.

Apart from telling the Biblical account each week, other ways to include God's word into your meeting time are:

- **Holding the Bible** while you teach, and reading a few key passages directly from the Word.
- Using creative ways to help the kids **memorise scripture**.
- Incorporating **Bible-based activities** and discussions, where the kids are finding scriptures in their Bibles and getting used to reading from the Word.

- Talking about how the kids can **apply the scripture** that they've just learnt to their lives (especially with the older kids)

... and many more!



PRAYER

Every meeting time is an **opportunity for children to encounter the living God**. Prayer shouldn't just be reserved for the leaders beforehand. Let's encourage the children to interact with their King! Welcome Him in, speak to Him, and trust that He will speak to you and the children. It's a muscle that needs to be strengthened – in us as leaders as well as in the kids. We want our children to learn that God is accessible to us, and that we can call on Him and He will answer us, and will tell us great and hidden things that we have not known ([Jeremiah 33:3](#)).



FUN AND CONNECTION

Kids learn through fun, and they open up through connection. Fun and connection are not just add-ons at the end of a lesson to fill time and get rid of their energy, but we ultimately want them to be the banner under which we do each of these other elements of kids' ministry. While the point is not to entertain the kids just to keep their attention, we also don't want them to disengage because it feels too much like school.

“Aim to build a bridge of connection through shared experiences.”

One of the best ways to incorporate fun is through running exciting games, where leaders and kids can build a **bridge of connection through shared experiences**. But the fun and connection don't need to stop as soon as the game is over. It's easy for children to get into the thinking that the teaching time is the more 'serious' time, and then want to disengage. We should be revering the Word and respecting each other, but it doesn't need to be boring.

Preparing well

In order to create an **atmosphere of excellence**, it's important that we prepare well:

PRAY

Pray for your team. Pray for the kids. Pray that the Holy Spirit will move. Enquire of Him. Ask Him what He wants to do. Posturing our hearts toward the Lord in prayer is a reminder that we cannot accomplish anything by our own strength.

READ THROUGH THE LESSON PLAN

Read through the Biblical account (from the Bible and in the curriculum document), while asking the Holy Spirit to highlight the pearl of truth that He wants the kids to leave with. Once you've found the pearl of truth, you can decide how to apply the different elements (worship, word, prayer, fun/connection) to the lesson, and decide on your activities.

// **Each Sunday will probably look a little different, and that's a good thing!"**

MAKE CONTACT WITH YOUR TEAM

During the week, contact the rest of your team to discuss all the aspects of your lesson (teaching, crafts, games). Decide who is in charge of running what. Feel free to run with your own things, as long as the main message comes across. You may have an idea for a craft or game that will bring the point across better or work better for the group you have.

GETTING SUPPLIES

You probably have a good idea of what supplies are already available to you (e.g. stationery). If there's anything unique that you need, make contact with your congregation coordinator, asking them whether they could supply it. Try get your request to them early in the week, giving them time to get what you need.

In summary, **each Sunday will probably look a little different, and that's a good thing!** Certain aspects of routine can be helpful, especially with toddlers and preschoolers. But have fun in combining the different elements of worship, the word and prayer each week – all under the banner of connection with each other and the Lord.

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LET'S RECAP

1. The four key elements of a typical kids' ministry meeting are: _____
_____, _____, and _____.

We should be _____ the Word and _____ each
other, but it doesn't need to be _____.

2. What stood out to you about this chapter? Was there anything here that
you hadn't considered before?

04

LEADING A CHILD TO CHRIST

Leading a child to Christ

God has given us the **mission of a lifetime: making disciples**. It's the ultimate privilege to be part of his eternal plan to reconcile man to Himself. And that's really the heart of making disciples: the great commission. It's leading people to the person of Christ – exclusively Christ.

We cannot be leading people to any other system, philosophy, or person but Jesus Christ. Jesus made it clear when he said *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (John 14:6)

He also said, *"Let the little children come*

to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."(Matthew 19:14)

Let's do everything we can to point children to Christ. Not just to look like Him (that would just be managing external behaviour), but to surrender to Him, have relationship with Him, be led by Him, and to grow in Him.

“It can feel quite daunting to lead a child in a response to the Gospel, but it's the main goal of our work with children.”

To become a child and friend of God, you must admit that you have sinned, believe that Jesus paid with His blood on the cross to wash away your sins, that He died to take the punishment that you deserved, and that He rose again to show His victory over death and to give us eternal life.

It's a weighty moment, but yet such a glorious one. It can feel quite daunting to lead a child in a response to the Gospel, but it's the main goal of our work with children. Until they've accepted their need for a Saviour and asked Jesus to be their Lord and Saviour, they are not in His Kingdom.

So, bearing in mind that **most of us needed someone to explain the Gospel to us and lead us in a response**, let's be ready to do the same for the kids. We want to **steer clear of having a formula** to follow, but we do want to make sure that we can guide the kids into a healthy understanding of a few key principles. It's helpful to remember these key principles, but then to **work it into conversation**. Ask them lots of questions to establish what they understand, and then help them to a point of deeper understanding.

3 Rs

When we are leading a child in response to the Gospel, we want them to **recognise, repent and receive....**

R **RECOGNISE**
They need to recognise for themselves that they are a sinner that needs to be saved – else they will have to face the punishment for their sins. They might not really understand what

they need to be saved from, so you might need to unpack that for them. If they don't have much of a concept of who God is, you could talk about what He's like and lead them to realising that He's someone they would really like to know. You might also need to talk about sin more and help them recognise in what ways they have sinned.

R **REPENT**
Once they've recognised their need for a Saviour, the next response is to repent. Kids might not understand the word 'repent', so you could say that they need to be sorry in their hearts for what they have done wrong, and then turn to Jesus. When we do this we are choosing not to continue living life the way we were without Jesus.

R **RECEIVE**
The kids then need to acknowledge that Jesus died and that He did it to take their sins upon Him. They then must receive His grace over their lives!

What they need to recognise



Now that we've looked at the rough outline of what this conversation could look like, let's look at what the key principles are that they need to recognise. We've summarised it into four main points with the acronym **GSSG** (God, sinner, saviour, grace) to remember...



Recognise the truth about GOD

Everything starts with God's greatness and glory. You were created to glorify God to make Him famous. And not just that, but He wants relationship with us!

"For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him." (Colossians 1:16)

"You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you." (Psalms 86:5)

"The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." (Exodus 34:6)



Recognise that I am a SINNER

In order to come to God, we need to understand what sin is, and that it separates us from God. We can't accept what Jesus did for us before we acknowledge that we needed Him to do it. When we recognise that we've hurt God, we can be sorry and turn from that sin.

"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

"For the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23a)

"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst." (1 Timothy 1:15)

One of the ways we can help people realise

that they've sinned against God is to use the 10 commandments (Exodus 20), and then some of the ways Jesus explained the commandments to His disciples (Matthew 22:34-40, Matthew 5). If we really look at it closely, we have all broken these laws. Even if we haven't murdered or stolen, we've all thought hateful thoughts about others, and I certainly haven't loved the Lord with "all my heart, soul mind and strength" (Matthew 22:34-40). Not only have I done things that have hurt God, my flesh continues to want things that God doesn't want. So, turning away from sin and toward God means realising and acknowledging that His ways are higher than my ways (Isaiah 55:8-9).



Recognise that I need a SAVIOUR

Tell the child that someone can save them from their sin, and His name is Jesus! Jesus died on the cross for all our sins and all we need to do is believe that he paid that price when his blood was shed on the cross.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)



Accept His GRACE

Explain to the child that you can't work for your salvation. No matter how hard you try, or how 'good' you try to be, you'll still fail at some point. That's why we need God's grace.

You can't earn His grace – it's a free gift. Ask them about gifts they've received before. Did they have to pay for their gift? Jesus died for us so that He can give us His grace as a gift, so that we

would never have to work for His favour again. Guide the child to accepting His grace over their lives so that they can live in freedom and walk with Him for the rest of their lives.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”
(Ephesians 2:8-9)

Some practical pointers


Now that we know what we need to say, let's talk through some helpful things that you could do.

1. **Find a quieter space to talk and pray with the child.** Try move away from the rest of the group, so as to avoid distractions. But bear in mind that you don't want to be alone in a room with the child (according to child protection procedures).
2. **Don't rush.** See this as a conversation, rather than a checklist of things to do and say. If you are rushing through a list of points, and if you're doing all the talking, then there's a good chance you'll lose their attention. Ultimately we want to lead them in a genuine response.
3. **Be okay to halt the process.** If you realise in the conversation that the child really isn't grasping certain key concepts about sin, it's okay to end in prayer and trust for another opportunity at a later stage to

lead them in a repentance prayer. Rather do that than force a 'result'.

4. **Encourage them to pray audibly.** Because it's their relationship with God that's being formed, first prize is that they pray to God in their own words. You could guide them in what to say if they get stuck. And if you really need to, you could lead them in a 'repeat after me' prayer.

Here's an example of how they could pray:

 Dear God. Thank You that You love me. I know I'm a sinner. I've done wrong things. Today I learned that the blood of Jesus can clean me from my sins. I believe that Jesus took the punishment for my sins on the cross. Right now, Jesus, I choose you. Please come into my life and be my Saviour and friend. Amen."

5. **Celebrate with them!** This is a big moment for them (the biggest moment of their lives) and it should be a JOYFUL one! (Luke 15:10)
6. **Encourage them to tell someone.** As the genuine excitement of new life wells up inside them, encourage them to tell their parents and 3 of their friends. One of the things that does is helps them realise that what happened is real and worth telling people about, and sparks the desire to continue sharing their testimony of salvation.

LET'S RECAP

1. In leading someone to Christ, we want them to recognise (the four main points):

the _____ about God, that I am a _____, that I need a _____, and I need to _____ His grace.

2. What aspects of the Gospel do you think are sometimes overlooked? How is this a problem?

3. When did you respond to the Gospel? How could you communicate your testimony to a child?



Here's a really helpful resource that you could refer to for more guidance:

Leading your child to Christ, by Focus on the Family:

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/leading-your-child-to-christ/>

CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Why child safety?

We live in a broken world, where sin is rife. **Although we trust that there is no abuse happening in our midst, we can't guarantee that.** We don't know the background of every child and teenager coming through our doors, and therefore also don't know what is happening in their homes and schools.

On top of our children being safe, we also want them to feel safe. **When children feel safe, they are relaxed and happy.**

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT A CHILD IS SAFE?

- That they are not the victim of harm.
- They are with people that they trust.
- That they know what is happening around them.

WHAT ARE WE WANTING THEM TO BE PROTECTED FROM?

- Injury (this is covered in our section on Action on Emergencies)
- Kidnapping
- Bullying
- Abuse (physical, emotional/verbal, sexual)

Being above reproach

Our decisions and actions send messages out to people around us, and those messages aren't always interpreted in the way that you expect or want them to be. In the sin-filled world that we live in we need to make sure that there is no hint of sin, particularly sexual sin, in our lives.

What that means practically in the kids' ministry context is making sure that none of your interactions with kids can be misinterpreted as sexual offense, either by them or by on-lookers.

Avoid being in a situation where you are alone with one child – always have another leader with you, even if it's just as a witness. This does make bathroom trips a bit more complicated, so strategise with your co-leaders to ensure that you are going in groups. That also means that it's best to have more than one leader in each age group. If your group only has one leader at the moment, speak to your congregation coordinator so that you can try add more people to the team as soon as possible.

If you need to make contact with children outside of meetings, **always include parents in the communication and avoid over-friendly language (keep it factual)**. If you are going to meet up with a child or teen outside of the official meeting time, make sure that the parents are aware and are okay with it. First prize is having this in a message with them, so that you have some

form of written record that you contacted the parents.

As a safety net, we ask that you make sure that you have **completed certain legal documents**. This ensures that we have no legal reason to prevent you from leading kids, and can also protect you should there be any claims made about your conduct.

Physical contact

Touch is an important part of connection, but it can also become destructive.

While you don't need to go to the extreme end of avoiding any form of physical touch, be aware of your conduct. Remain above reproach, by staying in full view of others and being aware of any children that are particularly clingy. It's helpful to think through **specific guidelines of what is okay and what's not okay, bearing in mind the guidelines differ based on the child's age**.

For these examples, all children aged 6 and under are grouped as preschoolers, and all children aged 7 or older are grouped as older kids.

Here are some examples of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour to consider:

	Inappropriate
All ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A hand rested on their leg while you talk to them is not okay • Rather don't play with kids' hair (if they want to play with your hair, that's okay)
Preschoolers (ages 6 or younger)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They might want to smack your bum
Older kids (ages 7 or older)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It may be tempting to want to stroke their backs • They may want to sit on your lap

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid commenting on appearances where it could be misinterpreted (e.g. a guy leader telling a girl that they look really beautiful)
	Appropriate
All ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They will most likely want to hug you – which is fine. With older kids (e.g. ages 12-13), avoid full-frontal hugs across the genders where possible – rather go for the classic side hug. • It might be helpful for you to sit with your arm around them to help them stay focused through the teaching • A reassuring hand on the back or shoulder is okay • Kids of all ages (although usually younger kids) love play wrestling. Allow them to, but just be alert when it starts to feel too much.
Preschoolers (ages 6 or younger)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They would most likely want to sit on your lap, which is okay.

If you realise that a child is giving you more physical contact than what is appropriate, look for a sensitive and early opportunity to end the physical contact. For older kids, maintain stricter boundaries and only use a reassuring hand on a shoulder, or use physical contact to prevent injury to them or someone else.

As leaders, **let's help each other out in this.** If you notice another leader's actions that might be misinterpreted by any children, parents or onlookers, gently chat to them about it or flag it with your team coordinator. You could even invite the perspective of the rest of your team by asking them how they think you're doing in this area.

On a similar note, let's be aware of any inappropriate behaviour between kids. If you notice anything worrying, speak to the child or to your team coordinator so that they can talk to the child.

Media

Media can be an effective tool, even for Kingdom purposes, but can also be damaging. As leaders, there are certain boundaries that we need to hold in order to make sure that media doesn't become damaging to any children:

- **THE USE OF PHOTOS:** It is always fun to document the fun and special moments you have in the kids' ministry times, but because you are not the legal guardian of the kids, you don't have the right to keep photos of children or post anything to social media, unless you've explicitly been given permission. So, while we wouldn't necessarily say that you can't take any photos at all, proceed with caution! If you are going to take photos, make sure that it's for the purpose of sending feedback to the parents or coordinators, or if it's for social media, make sure you have permission.

- **POSTING PHOTOS ON SOCIAL MEDIA:** In order to post any photos of minors on social media, organisations would generally ask parents to sign a media release waiver, or get another form of written permission from the parents. If you don't have this type of permission, make sure that any photos that you upload of children are those in which the children cannot be easily identified – e.g. if you're taking photos during a worship time, take the photos from behind so that you can't see the kids' faces in the picture.
- **INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN OVER SOCIAL MEDIA:** As a general rule, avoid making contact with children on social media. If they, for example, follow you on Instagram or send you a friend request on Facebook, think carefully about your decision to accept. If you know the family well, and have a good relationship with the parents, then it would generally be fine to accept the child's request. But if you don't know the family at all, consider whether accepting the request would be helpful or whether it could be misinterpreted by anyone. In the end it's for the sake of being above reproach that we consider these things, so it's for your own protection.
- **YOUR OWN USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA:** On a similar note, be aware of how you are using social media yourself. Your life is an example to others, so make sure that anything you post on social media wouldn't be misinterpreted or lead anyone into sin.
- **BE CAREFUL OF WHAT YOU'RE PUTTING ON A SCREEN:** Always

check any videos that you want to show the kids before you put it up on the screen. If you are showing a YouTube clip or something similar, just remember that the videos often have adverts and you have no control over what could come up on the screen. Try load the video beforehand and check for adverts, else find a screening platform where this won't be a problem. If you have the means to download a video beforehand, that will generally eliminate any adverts.

Policies for protecting children and leaders

The first way that we can protect the kids in our own kids' ministry is by screening the leaders as they join the team. These are the questions that we ask the community leaders of anyone wanting to join the team:

- Have they done the church members course?
- Are they an active member of your community group?
- Are they living an open and accountable life, having found victory over sinful patterns of behaviour?
- Are they in a position to serve (in terms of capacity)?
- Do you feel that this is the right season?

These questions for community leaders are the first safeguard in the process of bringing people onto team. The next phase is the documentation. Depending on the specific government requirements, your documentation policy may vary (if you're

unsure, ask a social worker or lawyer to help you).

These are the documents that we require from everyone on our team:

- An affidavit form declaring that they have no criminal record and no known reason that they should not be working with children (with a copy of their ID attached)
- A form 30, submitted to the Department of Social Development (inquiry by person to establish whether his/her name is included in Part B of the National Child Protection Register)

Many churches would require full police clearance or fingerprint clearance as a record that no one serving has a criminal record. If you're unsure of any of this, speak to your congregation coordinator.

Disclosure of sensitive information

Through your time as a kids' ministry leader, you might end up being someone that a child may confide in about sensitive information, such as **abuse, suicidal thoughts or tendencies, or other trauma (e.g. parents' divorce, witnessed something traumatic)**.

This may even be because they haven't felt confident or comfortable sharing this with anyone else. So if they open up to you about this, recognise that they are vulnerable, and treat them with warmth and compassion, but remember the weightiness of the situation and your responsibility in it. And remember that anything you do in response to a situation like this should still be in line with the principles given in the rest of this chapter

(remaining above reproach).

Here are some of the types of things a child might speak to you about:

- They might tell you that they are being abused, possibly at home, school, a relative's house.
- They might allude to abuse but not outright tell you.
- They might tell you about someone else they know that is being abused.
- They might confide in you that they have had suicidal thoughts or tendencies.
- They might tell you about someone else they know who has suicidal thoughts or tendencies.
- Or they might even tell you a scenario 'about someone else', meanwhile it's about themselves and they are afraid or ashamed of telling the whole truth.

Sometimes a child might not verbally communicate anything about abuse, but you could pick up on other signs (unexplained wounds or injuries, unexplained anxiety around certain people, etc.). While each child and situation is so different, and should be treated on a case-by-case basis, there are certain principles that can apply to all situations.

“Don't overlook or downplay the situation, even if you think this child has a history of saying things to get attention.”

We've found the acronym **TRAMS** helpful to remember in these situations:

- **T – TAKE** it seriously. Don't overlook or downplay the situation, even if you think this child has a history of saying things to get attention.
- **R – REASSURE** them that they have done the right thing in telling someone, but don't promise to keep it a secret (there are good secrets, like birthday surprises, and bad secrets, like where someone is getting hurt).
- **A – ASK** questions to clarify the facts. These should be reflecting questions, not leading questions. Rather say: "Would you like to tell me more?", instead of: "Was it Mr Smith?". If the child discloses suicidal thoughts, ask questions to try determine how close they've come to following through with anything.
- **M – MAKE** notes straight after your discussion, including dates, times, names, etc.
- **S – SEEK** help (talk to designated people and only those people, but don't try take the weight of it on yourself).

This is possibly one of the most challenging things that you could face as a leader, and many of you will never find yourselves in situations where you have to lead a child through this, but when it happens we want you to be prepared and know how to lead the child to the necessary help. If you are to ever hear of any of these situations, **the child is generally crying out for help and you could play a major role in helping them.**

“There are good secrets, like birthday surprises, and bad secrets, and bad secrets, like where someone is getting hurt.”

All these situations call for some form of counselling and guidance for the child. Speak to your leaders about who the best person would be to refer them to, and involve the parents where appropriate or necessary. But if the situation involves the parent abusing that child, the child might actually be at greater risk of harm if you speak to them directly.

Incident reporting

If there is any form of emergency, injury, or disclosure of abuse, make sure that you report it. **This isn't a preference, but a legal requirement.** The first step would be to **speak to your overseeing coordinator as soon as possible.** They will be able to advise you on the next step.

You will most likely be asked to complete an incident report form, but if you don't have the form yet, write down the details for yourself so that you don't forget them when it comes to filling in the form. The types of information you could be asked to give are:

- Your own name and contact details (as the one reporting the incident)
- Full name of the child

LET'S RECAP

1. Our decisions and _____ send _____ out to people around us, and those _____ aren't always interpreted in the way that you _____ or want them to be.

In the _____ world that we live in we need to make sure that there is no _____ of sin, particularly _____, in our lives. _____ being in a situation where you are _____ with one child.

2. If you _____ to make contact with children outside of meetings, always include _____ in the communication and avoid _____ (keep it _____).

3. As a _____, we ask that you make sure that you have completed certain legal _____.

4. If you need more information about any of this, or need to report something, who is the person in your congregation to contact?

5. Are you up-to-date with your forms?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Note: The legal forms need to be completed once a year.

TRANSFORMATIONAL TEACHING

Training and transformation

God wants us to train up our children to follow him. It's a godly principle laid out in **Proverbs 22:6**, *"Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it."* While the primary responsibility for this lies on parents, what an opportunity we have as kids' ministry leaders to advance children in their walks with the Lord.

Our ultimate goal in kids' ministry is to lead children to the knowledge of Christ and acceptance of Him as their Lord and Saviour. That's why **we want every lesson to point to Christ and not just to some helpful values to live by**. He's the One who transforms lives, and He's the One that

we want to look like, and want our kids to look like. We don't subscribe to the self-improvement gospel, **our goal is a crucified life – one transformed by the Gospel**.

So, how we view the Gospel is a really important starting point. **"The Gospel is the Biblical story about God's provision of Jesus, the rescuer who reconciles people back to God."** This narrative isn't just locked into the pages of the Bible, but the narrative is continuing in our lives today.

Our teaching times are such incredible **opportunities to make the Bible come alive to the kids**. They are opportunities for the kids to be trained in the ways of the Lord and be transformed by the power of the Gospel.

Creating an atmosphere of excellence

As we acknowledge what God is like, it generally makes us not only want to do things for Him and His Kingdom, but want to do them well. **Let's seek to create an atmosphere of excellence in our lesson times** – one that points others not to our own skill or talent, but to the King.

Kids are not easily impressed, but they do respond to excellence. Excellence attracts people and honours God. Creating “can’t-miss” lessons that are fun, dynamic, unforgettable and transformational means that we won’t lose their attention. We want kids to drag their parents and their friends to church! It doesn’t have to be perfect, but we can aim for excellence.

“Our aim is to create ‘can’t-miss lessons’ that are fun, dynamic, unforgettable and transformational.”

These guidelines are by no means exhaustive, but may they **spark** your imagination and **fuel** your creative juices as you dream big about how the Lord may want to work in the kids’ lives. We’ve used the **analogy of a rocket ship** to help you remember them.

Let’s start with what we feel are the four key points that you need to keep in mind:

- Be fuelled up
- Where are we headed?
- You won’t get there on an imaginary ship
- Land well



BE FUELLED UP

We do this for Him, we do it with Him, and ultimately we want kids to be transformed by Him. May we be **constantly fuelled by Jesus**, as we look to Him, allow Him to transform our own lives, and then seek His heart and voice for the kids. If you’re running on empty, go back to this important point, and seek quality time with God – in His presence and in His Word.

“The most effective ministry is that which comes from an overflow of what God’s doing in your own life.”



KNOW WHERE YOU’RE HEADED

What is the **one thing** that you want the kids to leave with? Build your story and lesson around that one thing – **your pearl of truth**. Yes, we know that it’s already centred around Jesus, but discerning what the main point is that we want them to walk away with is so key in helping us refine our teaching and avoiding rambling.

If you are confused about your main point, you can’t expect your audience to have any more clarity than you do.

Sometimes you might assume the main point is very clear, but spending time

prepping well is the best way to help bring clarity. Your main point could be **an aspect of God's nature**, or a way of **applying the scripture** to their lives... ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.



YOU WON'T GET THERE ON AN IMAGINARY SHIP

Children only really start processing abstract concepts around age 13 (grade 7), so for their whole time in kids' ministry, **we need to focus on making the lessons as concrete and tangible as possible**. When you do need to include more abstract concepts, start with concrete concepts first and move to the abstract – that way you're at least helping them build a framework within which they can understand the concepts.

“Help them build a framework within which they can understand the concepts.”

Many things in life are abstract (for example: addition and subtraction, a foreign language, or vocabulary). And especially so with Biblical concepts. Loving your enemies, forgiveness, and even the work of the Holy Spirit can all seem quite abstract to kids. It helps our kids so much if we start by teaching concepts in a concrete manner and build up from there.

By concrete, I mean they can see it and manipulate it with their hands. If it applies, they can use all five senses so their brains can make as many connections with it as possible, building prior knowledge and a sturdy foundation for learning.

Here's an example...

The **word for rocket ship is ABSTRACT**. There's not much a child can understand about a rocket ship without someone else describing it to them.

A **picture of a rocket ship is LESS ABSTRACT**. But it's 2D and I can't taste, touch, or hear it.

An **actual rocket ship is CONCRETE**. You probably won't have access to a real rocket ship, but a toy one could do the trick. Kids can see it and hold it, and you could even use sound effects to put them into the whole experience.

In the context of teaching the kids about a Biblical account, this would most often take on the form of acting out what happened. Make it as visual and as tangible as possible, and they'll have far more chance of remembering it.

We'll talk more about what children can grasp at different ages in our section on age level characteristics and Levels of Biblical Learning®.



LAND WELL

A rocket-ship's journey doesn't end mid-air, and neither should yours. Make sure you reach your destination before ending it, else the kids will probably land up being confused about what they actually learnt, unsure of how it applies to them, or they'll just feel awkward and unsure of what's meant to happen next. Ending the lesson well is something that is planned for. No matter how clear you are on your pearl of truth, **if you haven't planned how to end it,**

you'll lose your audience. Plan your landing before you start, rather than scrambling for a landing along the way.

Here are some ideas for how to land well:

- Remind them of the **main point** (or the acronym if you used one)
- Make the **lesson applicable** to them (how can they apply this in their own lives?)
- Give an opportunity for them to **respond**, and make the call to response clear
- End in **prayer**

Some practical ways to grow

Now that we've given some specific guidelines on how to prepare for a powerful teaching, we have a few more tips on how to take your teaching skills to the NEXT LEVEL. No matter how easy or challenging you find teaching, you'll probably want to look for ways to improve...

MEMORISE YOUR STORY

The Holy Spirit honours a prepared teacher. Will the Holy Spirit work in spite of you or will He partner with you? Memorisation brings power to teaching. There are some excellent tips on ways to help memorise your story like compartmentalise, spider diagram, bullet form list, sketch, re-write it, record it... Memorising the lesson does not mean it has to be stiff!

STRATEGISE TO KEEP THE KIDS' ATTENTION

Kids can generally only concentrate for as many minutes as their age in years (more on this when we talk about age level

characteristics). So bear that in mind when thinking of how to keep their attention.

Kids are more likely to remember how they felt than what they heard, so patience and love are key. Here are a few pointers to help you engage with the kids while teaching:

- Listen to their stories in the middle of yours (up to a point) – it lets them feel valued
- Don't wait for silence
- Whisper instead of shout
- Move around a lot
- Change the activity every 5 minutes, this doesn't mean you need 20 different activities, just rotate between five
- Come back to the story later in the lesson
- Get them involved in acting out parts **of the story with you (like pretend to climb a mountain while you are talking about it, or get them to act the emotions of the story).**

EVALUATION

We want to help each other grow. **To become a transformational teacher will require regular constructive feedback.** We're all on the same team, so be prepared to receive constructive feedback that will help you improve for next time. We won't be able to do that, though, if we let our insecurities get in the way of receiving healthy advice.

Remember that there are things you can change now and things that you can change over time. Next time, try and improve on some of the things you know needed work, but don't be too hard on yourself.

When you give feedback to a team member, remember not to be overly critical. If there were a few things that you felt needed work, find one thing that you feel is the most important to work

on, and then also look for the positives (it's the famous love sandwich – and it's famous for good reason!).

When communicating the feedback, give at least two positive aspects before the one negative aspect.

DIG DEEPER INTO THE WORD

Sometimes we'll need to teach more complex portions of scripture that we don't fully understand ourselves. For these teachings, it's a great opportunity to dig a little deeper, firstly so that you can understand the passage better, and secondly so that you can convey it well to the kids. Here are a few ways you can dig deeper (Luce, 2016)

- **Read the passage multiple times.** Sometimes we only start understanding it when we've looked it through a few times. What's especially helpful is when you do this over the space of a few days and not all at once.
- **Find out the context of the passage.** If you have a study Bible, you could use that. The Bible Project ® also have really helpful videos on YouTube that explain each book of the Bible and its context. You could also look the passage up in a commentary.
- **Look for how the passage points to Jesus.** If you're using the Gospel Project ®, meditate on the 'Christ connection' that they give, or else find the connection yourself.
- **Summarise the main points of the story.** In the context of a Biblical account, it's often helpful to look for what key events were the most parts of the story. Sometimes we can focus too much on conveying all the detail

of the account. For example, when talking about Jonah, sometimes it can be helpful for preschoolers to just know that he didn't go where God asked him to go. They don't need to hear how many different towns he went through before he obeyed .

Suggested teaching methods

There are so many creative ways to make a story interesting. Here are some ideas to spark your creativity...

- **ONE-MAN SKIT:** The person teaching becomes each of the different characters in a story and switches between them throughout.
- **PUPPET SHOW:** These work best with preschoolers. But be aware that you can quickly lose the kids' attention if you aren't careful. The best way to counteract that is to practice.
- **SKIT:** Pre-rehearse a skit using the leaders.
- **MELODRAMA:** Prepare a skit in which the audience members become the characters and the narrator instructs them as they go along.
- **OBJECT LESSON:** Use an object to tell a story and bring across a point (refer to the object throughout the teaching).
- **SCIENCE EXPERIMENT:** Use the reaction in a science experiment to bring across a point (teach while you are doing the experiment).
- **GAMES WITH A POINT:** Play a game that involves everyone and brings



LET'S RECAP

1. Can you think of a really memorable Bible-based teaching or sermon that really helped you understand a Biblical concept or account? How did the person convey the message visually?

2. Which of these teaching styles do you enjoy using the most? Why?

3. Did any ideas for creative Bible-based lessons come to mind while going through this material? Jot them down here...

4. Our _____ are such incredible opportunities to make the _____ come alive to the _____. Help them build a within which they can _____ the concepts by making the concepts as _____ as possible.



5. Kids are more likely to remember how they _____ than what they _____, so patience and _____ are key.

6. What were the four points?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

USING THE BIBLE

Let's keep the Word central

The Bible is the inspired Word of God, and it's the foundation of all of our beliefs. **Using the Word** is such a crucial part in our everyday walk with Jesus! We want to always be pointing children to God and His Word, knowing that as children encounter scripture, they are **being fed** (Matthew 4:4), they are receiving a **lamp to walk by** (Psalm 119:105), they are encountering the **living, active word of God** (Hebrews 4:12), and are being **sanctified** (John 17:17).

"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

“We want them to grow in the knowledge of the Word and be confident in reading, understanding and remembering scripture for themselves.”

We want to teach them the importance of the Word – that it is our food as Christians. And then feed them!

The main way that we keep the Word central in our kids' ministry time is by teaching the Biblical accounts from week to week. But

there's so much more for us than that. If we are leading children to being disciples of Christ, we want them to grow in the knowledge of the Word and be confident in reading, understanding and remembering scripture for themselves.

Lets' make sure that every week we are presenting scripture to the kids and helping them understand its value. Some of the ways to keep the Bible central to your meeting time are:

- **Holding the Bible** while you teach, and reading a few key passages directly from the Word.
- Using creative ways to help the kids **memorise scripture**.
- **Incorporating Bible-based activities** and discussions, where the kids are finding scriptures in their Bibles and getting used to reading from the Word.
- Talking about how the kids can **apply the scripture** that they've just learnt to their lives (especially with the older kids)

Let's look at a few ways to prepare for these...

Memory verses

It's not knowing God's Word that saves us, but living by it. However, there is great value in remembering scripture.

The Psalmist wrote: *"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."* (Psalm 119:11)

Memory verse activities can be fun for all ages, but how you do them will differ depending on the age group. You'll also need to choose shorter, simpler verses for younger kids.

While there are many ways to creatively memorise scripture, here are some ideas you could use:

- **SING IT:** You could find a song online or make up your own song to a tune they may know. This is especially fun for preschoolers, but keep the verses short and simple. You could also add actions.
- **RAP IT:** This is a great one for the older age groups. Either come up with a rap yourself, or make it a team challenge to come up with a rap.
- **ACT IT:** This can be for all ages, but it's especially effective for kids between ages 6 and 10. Speak out the verse and add actions to help you remember. You could also get the kids to help you come up with actions.
- **REMOVE ONE WORD AT A TIME:** This is a popular one. Put the whole verse on separate pieces of card and have the group read it together. Then one-by-one remove words and get them to say it again, until you've removed all the words. You could do this creatively with words on balloons, or have kids stand up front and hold the pieces of paper. Remember that this only works for kids who can read (generally from about age 7 up).
- **WORD UNSCRAMBLE:** This is a fun activity in smaller groups. Give each group the memory verse scrambled on pieces of paper. The first team to correctly unscramble the verse wins.
- **FILL IN THE BLANKS:** This would generally come later in the lesson, after you've already taught them the memory verse. Give them an activity page with the memory verse on it, but with some words missing, then having

them fill it in.

- **PASS THE BALL:** Once you've already taught the kids the memory verse and spoken through it as a group a few times, get them to stand in a circle and pass a ball around the circle. As each child gets the ball, they need to say the next word of the memory verse. You could do this with an imaginary ball, or (once they're getting really good at it) they could pass the ball across the circle instead of going in order. This works better with kids older than 8.

...and there are so many other ways! Use your imagination!

Bible-based activities

Get creative! This is such an amazing opportunity to **make the Bible come alive in a fresh and different way for the children!** The more fun and exciting things are, the more the kids will remember what they've learnt.

Bible-based activities aren't meant to be used as a way to keep children entertained, but to encourage them to pay attention to the Bible lesson, to reinforce the teaching concepts, and to help them memorise Bible verses. (Danielle's Place, 1996)

For older age groups, aim to do more activities where they need to find the answers in their Bibles themselves This builds Biblical literacy and grows their confidence in finding and reading scriptures themselves – something we want them to be doing during the week and throughout their lives!

Here are some ideas of Bible-based activities:

- **QUESTION AND ANSWER GAMES:** e.g. interview, quiz (individual or team), points for answers
- **GROUP GAMES:** e.g. charades, 20 questions, bingo
- **PRINTOUTS:** e.g. crosswords, wordsearches, matching games or codebreakers.

Ideally, once you've done an activity that helps them interact with the passage of scripture, the next step would be to facilitate a discussion to take their understanding deeper...

Leading a Bible-based discussion

We'll give some more guidelines on leading small-group discussions in the next chapter, but here are some pointers on how you could lead a Bible-based discussion (especially for older kids).

- **Read the passage yourself beforehand.** It's helpful if you have a bit of knowledge about the passage before you start.
- **You could start by getting them to pair up to read and discuss the passage.** By doing this, they all get the chance to read it for themselves, and when you pull the whole group together again, they should all have something to add to the bigger group discussion.
- **Get a competent reader in the group to read the passage out aloud.** It's a great way to involve the kids, but try

LET'S RECAP

1. We want children to grow in the _____ of the Word and be _____ in reading, _____ and remembering for themselves.
2. Did any ideas for creative Bible-based activities come to mind while going through this material? Jot them down here...

3. Try this Bible-based activity

Everyone loves a good codebreaker! Use the code to reveal a Bible verse that shows us the value of the Word (hint: this is an example of a type of Bible-based activity you could do with the kids):

CODE:

*	^	@	!	\$	%	&	#	/	<	-	\	[
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
+	:	?		.	>	;	~	§	±	=	"]
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

HIDDEN BIBLE VERSE:

”	:	~	.		±	:	.	!

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SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Why small groups?

God's heart is for connection, and He's designed us for it. So, while big group settings are valuable for teaching the Word, small group settings give better opportunity for everyone to interact with each other and with the Word.

When you lead small groups, you realise that **what you do for a few has more potential than what you do for many**. Investing into the relationships of individual lives is on God's heart. You choose to invest in the lives of a few to encourage authentic faith. Jesus led this way with his disciples, and see what impact they had on the world! This is the pattern that we follow in Four12 churches – that we would regularly come together in small groups and be built up

as we gather around Jesus and His Word. And that's what we want for our kids too!

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Set the tone

Everything we do in kids' ministry should be under the **banner of fun and connection**. So the aim of your small-group time isn't necessarily to get into a deep and sombre mood and unpack heaps of scripture. Here are a few helpful ideas on setting the tone for a discussion:

- **BEGIN WITH A GAME:** It's probably not the best idea to jump straight into discussions as you all sit down. Break the ice with a short game, or ask one or two silly questions first. It's not necessary for the game to directly relate to the study topic, but linking the two can make the lesson more seamless and immersive.
- **CREATE A RELAXED ENVIRONMENT:** Children will pay attention better when they're comfortable. Soft chairs or bean bags are a great idea. The room itself should be inviting and fun, but not too distracting. Although we want them to be comfortable, we don't want them lying down or slouching – encourage them to sit up and engage.

How to lead a small group discussion

Again, there are no formulas! There's no cookie-cut method to produce the best outcome, because people are complex, and we all learn and think in such different ways (which the Lord designed, by the way!).

Here are some pointers that we've found helpful:

- **HAVE A PLAN AND BE READY TO CHANGE IT:** If your first question really gets them going don't move on to the next question just for the sake of the agenda. Dig deeper into the areas that they connect well with. Having said that, if you can see they're more interested in an arbitrary trivial fact, try steer the conversation deeper. (Townsend, 2022)
- **LEAD THE KIDS RATHER THAN HAVE THEM LEAD YOU:** That doesn't mean that you're talking the whole time (because that wouldn't be a discussion), but it does mean that you need to steer the conversation in a certain direction.
- **SCRATCH THE SURFACE BEFORE YOU GO DEEPER:** People need time to warm up, so you need to be disciplined not to jump too far into things. After starting the conversation with an icebreaker game or silly question, ask them reflection questions that help them relate their own experiences to the scriptures. Finally, lead them toward discussing ways that they can apply what they have learnt to their own lives. (Mason, 2022)
- **SLOW DOWN, ALLOW TIME FOR THEM TO ANSWER:** You need to be okay with awkward silences. Sometimes the kids are still processing your question. If you don't get a response immediately, don't jump to giving them your answer. Allow for silence and then if you still haven't got an answer after 5-10 seconds, rephrase the question in different words. (Mason, 2022)
- **REPHRASE EFFECTIVELY:** If you wait several seconds and it seems no one understands the question, then you can rephrase it, but do so carefully. Keep the small group discussion questions open-ended. Do not answer it or change it to a "yes or no" question. Questions with one-word answers don't encourage processing. For example, if the question is, "After what you saw today, how do you feel?" Do not rephrase it to "Do you feel sad about what you saw?" (which would be

a yes or no answer). Instead, rephrase it to “What came to mind while we shared from the Bible?” This helps students transfer abstract feelings to concrete thoughts and keeps it open to a wide range of possible answers. (Townsend, 2022)

- **VALUE THEIR INSIGHTS AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO THE SAME:** Acknowledge everyone’s contribution to the conversation by saying something like: “Thanks for sharing that!” or “What I hear you saying is...” (Townsend, 2022) You can’t force it, obviously, but make a point to involve everyone in the discussion, while making sure there isn’t one person dominating the discussion. You want this to be a space where children feel safe enough to express their ideas and feelings without being shot down. It’s also a great space for children to learn that they can have different views to others, and that’s okay.
- **GENTLY GUIDE THE DISCUSSION:** Discussions can easily go off-topic because of personalities, long-winded answers, disagreements, bad theology, gossip, or unrelated tangents. Don’t be afraid to gently guide the discussion back to the topic, but without being too rigid. You could say something like “Hold that thought for a moment...” or “I’d love to hear more about that when we are done.” (Mason, 2022)
- **LISTEN:** You can only know where your kids are at and understand the direction of the conversation if you are giving full attention to the group. As the small group leader, do not plan your next question or your next

announcement while kids are sharing. Let your kids’ responses shape the movement of the discussion. For example, instead of charging forth with the discussion, you could ask a follow-up question about something they’ve said. Some examples of follow-up questions are: “What are some reasons for that?” or “Can you explain why?” (Townsend, 2022) Be a good and compassionate listener, and be ready to care for kids who express hurt, uncertainty or strong emotion related to their own journey. Avoid giving your opinion until the end of the discussion – rather allow for different responses to come through.

“Rephrase the question if you need to, but keep it open-ended. Don’t answer the question yourself or change it to a closed question. Questions with one-word answers do not promote processing.”

- **COMMUNICATE LOVE, NOT JUDGEMENT:** Your group members are not going to want to answer questions honestly if they are ridiculed or shot down for their answers. Try your best to always show love and acceptance while bearing in mind you might need to gently correct something along the way!
- **DON’T FORCE CONCLUSIONS OR ANSWERS:** Maybe you didn’t



LET'S RECAP

1. _____ we do in kids' ministry should be under the banner of _____ and _____. Begin with a _____.

Encourage _____ to speak. Remember that _____ leading the discussion.

2. How could you rephrase this question to be more open-ended: "Did you enjoy the lesson today?"

3. How could you rephrase this question if you find the kids aren't understanding or responding: "What are some ways you can choose to obey God in your life?"

FACILITATING SPIRIT-LED ENCOUNTERS

We can't do it without Him

"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:25-27)

While Jesus was with the disciples, teaching them about God's nature and about what He wanted them to do and say to bring others into the Kingdom, they would have been hanging on every word He said. So, to hear that He was leaving them would have come as a great shock.

They must have wondered how they would ever accomplish the work set out for them without having Him guiding them along the way.

But He ended up sending Someone just like Himself to teach them and guide them. And as it turns out, **living as a Christian without the Holy Spirit is as impossible as proclaiming to be a Christian without knowing Christ** – only the Holy Spirit can reveal the deeper truths of God in our hearts (1 Corinthians 2:10, 12:3).

What does that mean for kids' ministry? It means that children can only understand spiritual things when their spiritual eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit. A.W. Tozer put it like this: **"I don't want the world to define God for me. I want the Holy Spirit to reveal God to me."**

Ultimately we want every child in our church to be a child of God, and they can only be children of God if they are led by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14).

“As it turns out, living as a Christian without knowing the Holy Spirit is as impossible as proclaiming to be a Christian without knowing Christ- only the Holy Spirit can reveal the deeper truths of God in our hearts.”

Let's keep that as the focus before we look at some of the practical ways we can work with the Holy Spirit in our times together. **Let's remember Him as a person, not just a presence.** Let's remember His power and authority. And through all of that, let's remember that **He is so desiring to meet with us** and to lead the kids into more of God – even more than we are!

Practical pointers

Here are some of the practical ways that we can follow the spirit in our meetings:

PREPARE

Sometimes we can get into thinking that if we prepare well, then we are relying too much on our own strength and not

on the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit can be in our prep time, and He honours the time that we set aside to prepare. **As you prepare, ask the Holy Spirit to lead you in your prep.** Sometimes that will mean sticking to the curriculum plan more closely, and other times it'll mean veering away from the plan a little bit more.

If you aren't feeling any clear direction from Him, then go for it and prep according to the curriculum plan and be open to Him leading you differently during the meeting. The curriculum is centered around the Word of God, which is divinely inspired, and the Holy Spirit will use it as planned sometimes, or at others lead you differently.

PRAY, WELCOMING THE HOLY SPIRIT INTO YOUR MEETING

It sounds simple, but opening up the timetogether with a prayer is such a wonderful way to firstly remind the children Who we're here for, while also **inviting the Holy Spirit in.** He's a Person, so just like us, He'll enjoy coming in to the spaces where He is welcomed. **This needs to be a prayer of FAITH** – of you truly believing that He is present. The way you invite Him and welcome Him in stirs faith in the children to expect Him to speak.

INCLUDE HIM IN YOUR TALKING

The more we talk about the Holy Spirit, the less mystical He'll be to the kids. When you're praying, you could wait just a few moments in silence after praying, and remind the children that **we can expect the Lord to speak to us** through the Holy Spirit. Teach them that sometimes he speaks through an audible voice, but sometimes He'll put a picture or impression on our hearts. He often uses scripture to speak to

us – when we read the Word and something really stands out, that’s Him speaking to us. Other times we can experience the Lord through the Holy Spirit putting a warmth or joy in our hearts that wasn’t there before. Let’s demystify the Holy Spirit for the kids. But the only way we can do that is for us to **encounter Him ourselves.**

WORSHIP

We want to grow a culture of worshipping the Lord, and the best way we can do that is to facilitate times of worship together. But it can be quite easy to grow the ‘externals’ of worship without cultivating the ‘internals’ – the desire to worship. Jesus warned that the Pharisees were people who honored Him with their lips, yet their hearts were far from Him (Matthew 15:7-9). Our ultimate goal is that the children in our churches would draw near to Jesus with their hearts and with their words.

Let’s prioritise times of worship together, and invite the Holy Spirit to move in these times. But remember that children need to be led far more than we sometimes realise. We can’t expect that they’ll know how to guide their thoughts toward the Lord unless we help them. We’ll talk about that a bit more in the next section.

Children need to be orientated in the worship time. They might have just come from playing soccer outside, and that’s an opportunity for you to help them realise that God was in that moment too! Orientate them towards realising that He’s been with them the whole time, and now it’s an opportunity to give Him our full attention and worship Him in a different way.

The priority for the time of worship isn’t necessarily the length of the worship time,

or even the ‘intensity’ of the worship time. The point is that we engage with the Lord. It’s tempting to just make them ‘wait’ on the Lord, but often their minds will wander and get distracted. You could prompt them by referring back to the Bible account you’ve just taught them, and tell them to picture Jesus in that moment... What do you think He was like towards His disciples? What was His heart toward them? Now picture Him being that way toward you. What is He like?

“Ask the kids: What do you think He was like towards His disciples in that moment? What was His heart toward them? Now picture Him being that way toward you. What is He like?”

You could lead them to thank Jesus in their own words. You could even allow space for kids to share with the leaders any pictures or impressions the Holy Spirit puts in their minds.

The point is engagement. It can be tempting to want to manufacture a response, and heighten the intensity, but you’ll possibly lose the kids’ attention in the process.

Guiding them to hearing God's voice

"For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God." (Romans 8:14)

Since our ultimate goal in kids' ministry is to lead children to becoming disciples of Christ, then **we want them to learn to hear God's voice for themselves**. This happens through how we speak throughout our time with them, but one particularly valuable opportunity for this is when we get to pray with them and lead them in a heart response to the Lord. This might be with individuals or with a group of kids.

You'll realise that children need to be guided and taught how to do things that might seem a bit more obvious to adults.

For example, we might be so familiar with concepts such as 'waiting on God', 'pushing into the Lord', and 'seeing Him move', but they won't know what that means or what it looks like. We can't expect them to know what it means to hear what the Lord is saying to them, know how to give their sin to the Lord, how to think about the Lord, or how to forgive someone. Don't assume they will know what to do with their minds when you lead them in this way.

This is where it's really helpful to teach them how to apply their very active imaginations – after all, **God created those lively, creative imaginations for a purpose!** The point is not just to tell them the answers, but lead them to a point of understanding through asking leading questions. For example, you could lead them to catching the heart and application of a Bible passage **by asking them how they think God would have felt towards a certain**

character in the Biblical account. Often an aspect of God's kindness and compassion would stand out. From there you could ask them, "If that's how God felt towards him, how do you think He feels towards you?"

Using a similar approach, **you could lead them to a point of understanding how the scripture can apply to their lives.** For example, if you're reading a passage about loving your enemies, you could speak about Jesus' enemies and how He feels toward them. You could look up scriptures about how He treated those that were unkind to Him (including dying on the cross for them), and then asking what they think about how they could treat people who are unkind to them. Get them to talk through examples with you.

“Once they can realise what God has done for them, and thank Him for those things, they might be able to into their own words what they think His personality is like.”

At some times it would be really important to **help them grasp an aspect of God's nature in their own lives.** You could encourage them to think of what God has done for them. This might be tough for kids to think about on their own, so use prompts. For example, help them realise that He is the one that provides for them, even if it seems like their parents are the ones doing everything. **Once they can realise what God has done for them, and**

thank Him for those things, they might be able to put into their own words what they think His personality is like.

These are also great opportunities for kids to **picture the Lord**. Get them to close their eyes and picture: **What is does His face look like?** Is He smiling? Is He sad? What is He doing? Is He looking toward you or away from you? Is He saying something to You?

If you have an opportunity to comfort a child, this is a great chance for them to hear the Lord's voice. If they are sad about something that's happened at home or at school, **help them put their thoughts and feelings into words so that they can realise what's going on in their heads and hearts.**

“It's important to realise that we should steer clear of simply making the kids 'wait' on the Lord for an answer for themselves.”

While you would generally ask open-ended questions in other contexts, this is a time when yes/no questions can be helpful. (e.g. Does that make you sad? Did you feel hurt when...?) Then lead them in realising that Jesus is there even when they are sad. Perhaps there's some way in which they have believed a lie about the Lord. **Help them realise the truth about God**, and then show them that turning to God means taking the lie out our heads and bringing it to God, then asking Him to give us His truth in return. That moment is such a special

opportunity to **ask God what He has for them in return**. Encourage them to hold on to what God has said – that this is His voice over them.

Similarly, you may have an opportunity to lead a child in a time of repentance. The point is not necessarily for them to just say that they have done something wrong, apologise to the Lord, and then move on. Instead, **take the opportunity to lead them in realising how the Lord feels about their sin, and then understand that Jesus took the full punishment for that sin**. Once they realise that they have hurt God, but that He has paid the price, they can bring their sin before God, ask for forgiveness, and ask God what He has for them in place of them holding on to it.

Through all of these examples it's important to realise that **we should steer clear of simply making the kids 'wait' on the Lord for an answer for themselves**. Guiding them to experiencing the Lord and what He has for them is one of the very special privileges we have in this ministry. Let's not shy away from taking these opportunities in our times with the kids! He can do so much more in their hearts in a moment than what we can do through years of teaching and input.

Being filled with the Spirit

There is no junior Holy Spirit! The very same gifts that we are constantly trusting to be activated in our churches (1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12) are the same ones that we want to see formed in the kids. And since it's the Holy Spirit that



LET'S RECAP

1. List some of the other names given to the Holy Spirit in the Bible:

2. Jot down some things you could thank God for. How could you lead kids to being thankful?

3. Think of a tough situation that a child might face at school or home. Describe how could you lead them to hearing the Lord's voice for themselves in that tough situation.

10

LEADING WORSHIP



Leading kids in worship

"Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!" (Psalm 150:4-6 ESV)

Every meeting is an opportunity for children to encounter the living God, and worshipping together is an important part of this. Leading times of worship effectively will encourage the kids to join you in meaningful, heartfelt prayer and praise.

“The heart of worship is our heart, delighting in Jesus and expressing praise to him for the true things the scriptures teach us about who he is and what he has accomplished for us.” (Piper, 2015)

It involves us, but it's not about us. For us, as leaders, we've most likely already grasped this to a certain degree, but kids need to be led in this. Facilitating times of worship are therefore opportunities not just to sing fun songs about God, but to teach kids about what God's like and how we can honour Him.

“Worship is an inward feeling and outward action that reflects the worth of God.” It’s is the art of losing self in the adoration of another. We want to lead kids to seeing the worth of God and then responding in praise. If we look at it this way, your role as a worship leader is a really special and important one. Let’s look at some aspects of what your role entails...

What you need to know for leading kids in worship

L leading kids in worship is quite different to leading worship with adults. If you haven’t yet led worship with a group of adults, that would be a great place to start in order to build confidence. Ask your community leader if you can lead worship in a community meeting, and allow them to give you feedback on how it goes.

The reason that’s helpful, is because you need to realise that **kids need to be led strongly and with faith**, whereas a group of like-minded adults would enter into worship a bit more freely. With adults you could just get up and start playing, and others would join in. Although adults will often press into the Lord in worship without much prompting, people need to be led into corporate worship, and especially so with kids! So, if you’re upfront and simply worshipping God, don’t expect that the kids will follow without any prompts. **Explain the songs, prompt them along the way, and model worship to them.**

You may not feel that you are the most skilled musician, and that’s okay. That’s where **leading confidently can somewhat cover**

for lack of skill. You could ask someone to help you grow in your musical talent, but also ask them to help you grow in leading.

On the flip side, if you are quite talented musically, **this isn’t the time to show off your own talents or worry about making yourself look good.** You may not mean to glorify yourself, but pride often finds its way in undetected. See this first and foremost as an act of service.

It’s important to realise the **difference between praise and worship**, and what situations call for each. While praise still falls under the banner of worship, it is often more upbeat and expressive. **When we praise God, we exalt Him and declare His character.** In scripture, praise is usually presented as a joyful, massive movement with our bodies and dance.

Worship conveys a deeper heart response toward the Lord, as we consider who God is and what He’s like. To truly worship God, we must look away from ourselves and look to God. We must be willing to humble ourselves before God, surrender every part of our lives to His control, and adore Him for who He is, not just what He has done.

There’s a time for both. Consider the words of the songs you are singing. If it’s more of a worship song than a praise song, you will probably need to **guide the kids into a place of understanding the words and why we are singing those words to God.**

In the end, we shouldn’t be assessing how well our worship times went based on how good we feel about them. **Was God glorified in your time together? Was He pleased by your worship?** Then you’ve achieved the purpose of the time.

The role of actions

Actions help make the words of songs **more concrete to kids**. They help kids to more fully grasp what they are singing, especially for younger kids. **Praising God with movement, or rather reacting physically in response to God in praise and worship**, is reflected in the Hebrew words used in the Bible for praise. There are seven different Hebrew words for 'praise' that all have different meanings. Here are some examples of when these Hebrew words have been used:

"Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise (Hebrew: halal), in the city of our God, his holy mountain." (Psalm 48:1) "Halal" means "to be clear, to shine, to boast, show, to rave, celebrate, to be clamorously foolish."

"Oh that men would praise (Hebrew: yadah) the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psalm 107:15 KJV) "Yadah" means "the extended hand, to throw out the hand, therefore to worship with extended hand, to lift the hands."

"Those who sacrifice thank offerings (Hebrew: towdah) honour me, and to the blameless I will show my salvation." (Psalm 50:23) "Towdah" literally means, "an extension of the hand in adoration, avowal, or acceptance."

So we see throughout scripture that instructions to worship include physical movement. Let's model this to kids and lead them in this way. **Help them understand the words that they are singing by showing them how to express it with their bodies.**

Preparing to lead worship

As with any other aspect of ministry, **the best way to prepare is to be in God's presence, connecting with Him for yourself and not just for the sake of others.** That's where we start. With that in place, when there's a specific time of worship that you're leading, here's how you can prepare...

PRAY

Ask God for His heart for the kids, and allow the Holy Spirit to lead you in choosing your songs. If you're not sensing Him lead you in a particular direction, that's okay! You can't go wrong with picking songs that lift God's name up.

But above all, **ask the Lord to move during the worship time.** The point of the worship time is for the kids to encounter the living God, so ask Him to lead the time.

CAREFULLY CHOOSE YOUR SONGS

Song selection is important. You'll probably have a selection of songs that your kids will know, and while it's definitely helpful to venture out from that and teach them new songs, **first consider the songs they already know.**

When you introduce a new song, **you may need to coach them through it the first time.** Aim to include the song in multiple worship times so that the kids will have more opportunity to get used to it. Try make sure the songs you choose are **not too wordy, and make sure the words that are simple and appropriate for their age group.** Avoid using songs that contain abstract concepts, especially concepts that

you wouldn't be able to explain in the time of worship. You could also use some songs that are being used in your congregation, as the kids would probably be familiar with them. And, where possible, **look for songs that link to the lesson.** For example, if your lesson is about thankfulness, include songs of thankfulness.

Make sure that the songs you are choosing are Jesus-focused, bringing Him praise, honour and glory. There are many amazing Christian songs being written today, but not all of them are appropriate for corporate worship. Make sure that your songs are not overly focused on "me, myself and I", but rather choose songs that focus on who God is, what He has done and His goodness!

If you're looking for songs that work well with actions, **'peace like a river'** and **'stand up and shout it'** are great options. You might have also come up with actions to some others too.

For a praise-focused set, where you are exalting God's name and character, songs like **'King of my soul'**, **'How great is our God'** and **'one way'** are great options.

And if you are wanting to lead the kids into a deeper heart response time, songs like **'Great are you Lord'**, **'Open the Eyes of my Heart'** and **'We Glorify Your Name'** are great options to use.

But there are so many more! If you aren't sure, ask a worship leader in your congregation to help you.

CONSIDER THE FORMAT

Know the amount of time you have for worship but don't be too fixed on it too. Know the number of songs that you need to prep for, rather prep too many songs

than too little... you never know what The Holy Spirit might do in your time of worship.

During the meeting

Now that you've come prepared, here are some considerations for how to lead the time:

- **PARTNER UP WITH ANOTHER LEADER:** It's quite challenging to facilitate the whole time together while you're upfront leading worship. Lead in team! Have one leader facilitating the meeting time while you're leading worship. You could both take on the role of prompting the kids and leading them into a time of connection with the Lord.
- **BE AWARE OF YOUR BODY LANGUAGE:** Your body language needs to convey energy and sincerity. Even though worship is not about you, you'll still need to have enough of a stage presence to catch the kids' attention. If you don't seem excited about worship, the kids you're leading probably won't get excited either.
- **WATCH THE GROUP OF KIDS:** Keep an eye on the group as you lead them in worship and take cues from them as needed. If they are distracted or tired, rather than charge through another song at the risk of losing their attention completely, you could end on one last upbeat praise song, or end the worship time.
- **IT'S NOT ABOUT LENGTH OF WORSHIP, OR INTENSITY...** the point is that we engage with the Lord. It's tempting to just make them 'wait'

on the Lord, but often their minds will wander and get distracted. We've explained more about this in the section on facilitating Spirit-led encounters.

- **WHEN YOU GET THE CHANCE TO LEAD A MUSIC TEAM...** Leading in team is completely different than when you're leading on your own. There's too much technical detail for us to go into here, but you would need to consider the key and tempo of the songs. Make sure to practice together, and discuss how you will communicate with the team throughout the worship time. And make sure to come prepared and lead the team with faith.
- **YOU COULD ALSO LEAD WITHOUT AN INSTRUMENT:** If you want to go into a time of worship and you don't have an instrument, your voices are the most powerful instrument out there! Choose some songs (that everyone in the room is familiar with) and sing out, boldly praising His name!

A few extra tips that may help

While these skills are not essential for leading worship, they can really help you facilitate the time well. So, over time, as you grow in your gift, look to learn these skills:

- **LEARN TO TALK WHILE STRUMMING:** If you can do this, you'll be able to maintain an atmosphere of worship by strumming, while prompting the kids or praying at the same time.

- **SPEAK THE NEXT LINE OUT BEFORE YOU SING IT:** When kids don't know the words to a song, and you don't have the means to show the words on a screen, learning to speak out the next line just before you sing it can help a lot. This is also helpful when leading younger kids that can't read yet.
- **TRANSITIONING BETWEEN SONGS:** Your transitions don't need to be seamless, but it helps when you can flow smoothly from one song to the other. Start by making sure that all your songs are in the same key and rough vocal range, and over time you'll get a knack for which songs flow into each other easily, based on their rhythms.

Through all of this, let's come back to the heart of worship. Ultimately, we want to be delighting in our King together. That's what it's about! Let's grow in our gifts so that we can lead others into that more, but let's not grow in our gifts without cultivating a heart of adoration for Jesus.

Notes

LET'S RECAP

1. Every meeting is an _____ for children to the living God, and _____ together is an important part of this.
2. Kids need to be led in worship _____ and with _____. Guide the kids into a place of _____ the and why we are singing those _____ to God.
3. _____ help make the _____ of songs more concrete to the kids. Help them _____ the words that they are singing by showing them how to _____ it with their bodies. It's not about _____ of worship, or _____. The point is that we _____ with the Lord.
4. Jot down some ideas of songs that you could sing in a worship time with kids.

5. Now jot down some worship songs that might not be good to sing with Kids. Why do you say that?



6. What stood out to you about this section? Has your perspective changed on anything?

LEADING GAMES WELL

Why we play games

Does the Bible even say anything about games? Well, not exactly. But it certainly has a lot to say about joy! **If joy is a fruit of the Spirit, that means that God Himself is joyful.** Actually, He's the perfect picture of joy! While there's a deeper joy that comes from knowing our security in Jesus, there's also cheerfulness that is good medicine for our spirits ([Proverbs 17:22](#)).

“So, let's ENJOY our times together! Let's have fun together!”

Zechariah actually prophesied that in the coming holy city, *“the city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there.”* ([Zechariah 8:5](#)) Let's show people a bit of what heaven is like!

Games are a powerful way to have fun together, laugh and break the ice. They're also a great way to re-enforce Biblical truths and lessons. Games build a bridge of connection through shared experiences together.

And let's be honest, it's not only kids that enjoy games. Fun is an important aspect of church life, and we should never get into a rut of being too serious! (There's a time for everything.) Often when visitors come to church meetings, they realise that Christians can actually have fun... let's show them!

If games are planned and prepared well, they can be powerful moments during our time together with the children.

Types of games

There is a huge variety of games you can play with the kids, but here are the two main types:

- **UPFRONT GAMES** are games that involve a few people from the group doing an activity or challenge in front of everyone. An example of upfront games is “Minute To Win It” challenges. You can find tons of these online and their explanation videos are great to show and then to use the one-minute countdown video to add to the hype and feel of the game. They can be a good way to break the ice and allow the kids to laugh and get comfortable with one another. Upfront games also work well when you’ve got a large variety of ages of kids and you need to keep their attention. Some upfront games may work well with visual aids like video clips, or PowerPoint slides. They’re really useful when the weather isn’t good and you need an indoor game.
- **GROUP GAMES** really help foster bridges of connection through shared experiences. You can use group games to mix up a group for people to get to know each other better. An example of this would be sticking different animal names on kids’ backs and getting them to go around asking people questions to figure out what animal they are. Group games are also great for kids to learn team

work as they work at a common task to achieve a goal, such as building a human pyramid or tower out of marshmallows and tooth-picks.

5 tips for leading games well

Everyone will have their own styles of leading, but there are a few tips that really help...

BE EXCITED

Show excitement before and during the activity. Children will be drawn in if they can see that you are also invested in the game. As leaders, we model things to the children, and they will find it harder to be silly and have fun if the leader doesn’t break open that space for them. **Smile!** Project your voice by speaking to the furthest wall from you, and try to use hand actions and movement to emphasize what you’re saying.

CLEAR RULES

Gather the group and make sure you have everyone’s attention before explaining the rules. **Make sure you are 100% sure of the rules**, because if you aren’t sure of the rules, the kids definitely won’t be either. If you’re new to running games, practise explaining the rules to another leader, or even speak it through in front of a mirror, making sure to keep it short and simple. This can help stop you from waffling when you are in front of the kids. Be enthusiastic when you introduce the game, bearing in mind that the purpose of the game is to connect and have fun together, and the rules are there just to facilitate that.



LET'S RECAP

1. Games build a _____ of
through _____ experiences together. Children will find it
_____ to be silly and have fun if the _____ doesn't
break open that space for them.

2. Would you say church life is boring or exciting? Why?

3. Other than with games, how do you think you could make the kids' ministry time fun?

AGE-LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS

Developmental phases are important

Children are constantly going through different developmental changes. As leaders it is really helpful to **be aware of what children need at different ages, how they connect the best, and what they can understand.** We want to help you with a broad understanding of each age group and some helpful tips to connect with them.

As a general rule, a child can roughly concentrate for as many minutes as their age, for example, a 5-year-old would most likely not be able to focus on a particular activity for longer than 5 minutes... So change up the activity or the way you are presenting your teaching to accommodate their attention span.

“A child can roughly concentrate for as many minutes as their age (in years).”

Here are some more detailed guidelines per age group...

Ages 2-5

This age group is just entering the world of communication. They are starting to want to do things for themselves as they figure out the world around them. They start asking lots of why questions at this age. They enjoy stories and have creative imaginations.

Connection:

Get down on their level. Bend down or sit next to them as you interact. Give short, clear answers to their questions. Don't give more than one instruction at a time.

Teaching tips:

Change activities every five to ten minutes. Teach about Jesus and what he's like. Teach about right and wrong and forgiving others. Be careful not to use abstract concepts like being a fisher of men. Rather keep things as concrete as possible, like using large colourful pictures and objects to help communicate the Biblical account or lesson. Let the children repeat prayers after you to help guide them. They do struggle to discern between fantasy and reality so be aware of this as you prepare.

Ages 6-8

This is a busy age group and they generally love activity. Change things up every 10-15 minutes to maintain their attention. They have better coordination which allows for more ball games and use of colouring, cutting and craft-based activities. They like rules, and understand there are consequences for breaking them. Kids at this age are able to sense the bigness and love of God.

Connection:

Allow them to feel useful by getting them to help hold or fetch things with you. They view winning as important so remember to lean towards keeping games inclusive instead of knocking people out. See every child as a unique individual and get to know their personalities.

Teaching tips:

They learn better by doing than listening so get them to be part of the lesson by acting things out or being involved in the retelling of the Biblical account. Use lots of repetition, allowing them to recite, sing and respond with you. The teacher at this age plays a vital role of being consistently loving and fair. This reflects something of God's trustworthiness to the kids.

Ages 9-11

This is a lovely age group full of energy. They want to be independent and want to adventure and explore. Their reading is coming along, and so is their ability to reason. At this age they develop deeper friendships and are influenced more by them. Encourage them to choose good solid friends. They are understanding the value of teamwork, so get them to enjoy doing things together as a group.

Connection:

With them forming close friendships at this stage, make sure you're getting down on their level and learning what they enjoy and taking an interest in their lives. Try connect with the families outside of a Sunday meeting as this will do so much in showing the kids you're interested in their lives. Kids at this age love making memories together. You could go out for ice creams, take them for a bike ride or play at their house with them.

Teaching tips:

This age group tends to be the age that most children start to grasp the Gospel and make a commitment to Jesus. This is a pivotal time, so explain the way

of salvation and don't miss moments for the children to hear how you've come to know, love and serve Jesus. **APPLY the Biblical accounts to their own lives and experiences.** Encourage them to read the Bible and pray for themselves, but stay close to help them along the way.

Ages 12-14

There are lots of changes happening at this exciting stage. Their bodies are growing fast as they head into adolescence. They may often feel a bit awkward or out of place so make sure to be a real encourager. They are beginning to notice and be attracted to the opposite sex so help them with boundaries and healthy friendships. Show them practically how to use the Bible to guide you.

Connection:

At this age they enjoy competition so play games with them to connect and build memories through shared experiences. They have a deep need to feel loved and accepted so be attentive to how you speak to them and pull them in. They need to know that they really matter to you and the Lord.

Teaching tips:

This is the stage when doubts can start creepin in.. They may question parts of their belief in God. So be real with them and tell them how God has helped you with your own doubts. Explain to them that even godly people in the Bible made mistakes and weren't perfect. They need to understand God's grace. Help them discover their own abilities and gifts and then provide spaces for them to use them.

Here are some **more detailed guidelines** from Truth for Kids , that gives further guidelines for how to interact with and lead each age group...

Age 4-5	
Overall characteristic: Questioning	
Overall teaching tips: Change activities every 5 to 10 minutes	
Your role: Love them	
Characteristic	Teaching Tips
Physical	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are constantly on the move but tire easily • Start to draw recognisable pictures • Are still learning finger control - may struggle using scissors • Want to do things for themselves • Are talkative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide thick (Jumbo) crayons for art • Effort is more important than perfection - comment positively • Use action songs • Teach them rhythm by clapping • Change activity often
Mental / Emotional	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are curious and questioning - ask how and why • Interpret words and sayings literally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give short, clear answers to questions • Don't give more than one or two instructions at a time

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love repeating phrases, rhymes and songs • Have a creative imagination • Enjoy stories • Cannot think chronologically (place events in time order) • Experience emotions intensely but those can change quickly • Struggle to discern between fantasy and reality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach short Bible verses and explain what the verse means Use large, colourful pictures • Allow children to feel and handle lesson objects • Love and routine provide a sense of security • Use the child's name when you speak to him or her
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Social

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are learning to participate in small group activities • Seek adult approval • Are confident • Want to please • Dislike a change of routine / venue / people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay down a few basic rules and explain the reason for them • Acknowledge each child and notice the things he or she does • When talking with a child, stoop to his or her level Eye contact is important when answering a question • Encourage group play • Ensure that there is a familiar face (teacher) in the classroom
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Spiritual

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can learn to pray simple prayers • Understand that disobedience is sin • Are not able to make moral decisions • Believe everything they are told without question • See God as a super-parent with human features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach about God, creation, doing wrong, forgiveness, Jesus • Avoid the abstract and symbolic (e.g. fishers of men) • Allow children to pray after you (let them repeat the sentence) • Memory: use part of a verse or a phrase (e.g. God loves me)
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Age 6-8

Overall characteristic: Activity
Overall teaching tips: Vary the program every 10 to 15 minutes
Your role: Notice them

Characteristic	Teaching Tips
Physical	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have better coordination which enables them to play sport • Understand rules and the consequences of breaking them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan activities that allow for movement at regular intervals • Use activities such as writing, drawing, cutting and gluing

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to help adults • Are growing in their skills and abilities • Learn more by doing than by listening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make them feel useful (like holding something for you)
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Mental / Emotional

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are eager to learn • Learn by repetition Cannot really understand the distant past or the future • Become easily discouraged • Enjoy organised games but are poor losers • Like action stories and enjoy silly humour • Are likely to carry scars from emotional trauma into adulthood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage children to memorise verses / books of the Bible • Let them repeat stories / tell of their own related experiences • Use pictures and maps to explain time and place concepts • Avoid long or difficult tasks • Include problem solving to teach principles and application • Let children use pencils and have an eraser at hand
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Social

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a growing need for approval • See winning and being first as important • Enjoy organised games but are poor losers • Desire to have a pet - something to care for • Are increasingly influenced by what the teacher says • Develop distinct personalities (recognisable traits) • Have empathy for poor and suffering people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let children take turns to respond, recite, help and play • Promote fairness and treat each child equally • Allow them to help you with certain tasks • Take time to listen - you may be one of the few who do • See each child as unique - be aware of personality traits • Teach them to pray for the needs of others
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Spiritual

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense the greatness and the love of God • May struggle to understand the non-physical nature of God • Have great faith • Are trusting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are a role model; be trustworthy, loving and fair • Let the children look up Bible verses and read them • Use songs, games, crafts etc. related to the Bible story • Explain Bible terms such as sin, grace, salvation and worship • Encourage short-sentence prayers in the group
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Age 9-11

Overall characteristic: Energy

Overall teaching tips: Be creative in planning the lesson time

Your role: Trust them

Characteristic	Teaching Tips
Physical	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enjoy hobbies• Want to go places and do things (they love adventure)• Are more independent• Enjoy the outdoors and nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involve them in mini dramas, singing, preparing and tidying up• Movement is a natural way of dealing with growing pains• Arrange special events and outings for your group• Point out the marvels of God's creation / how special they are
Mental / Emotional	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are able to remember well and concentrate• Develop reasoning skills• Like to make lists• Like to collect things• Are creative• Read well - they may start reading novels• Are interested in facts and true stories• Tend to worry more• Are concrete thinkers (no longer fantasy, not yet abstract)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They need affirmation and encouragement - come alongside• Explain the meaning and significance of symbolism in the Bible• Ask rather than instruct them to do something• Avoid embarrassment - allow the slow and weak to succeed• Encourage a high standard (the best they can do)• Use more involved actions with songs and explain the actions• Encourage them to memorise a short passage of scripture• Relate more easily to Jesus (as a friend) than to an unseen God
Social	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place greater importance on friends and group approval• Form close friendships• Can do projects and work in a group• Have a strong sense of fairness and justice• Start taking responsibility and like to be trusted• Look to adults for role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trust them• Encourage them to help the younger ones to complete a task• Live what you teach - they can spot inconsistency• Point to Jesus as the One who is superhuman, and a friend• Encourage them to choose good friends

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become self-aware and are critical of themselves • Usually have a hero (with superhuman qualities) • Compare themselves to their peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't talk down to them • Setting boundaries for the group shows that you care
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Spiritual

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are most easily lead to Christ at this age • Relate Bible stories to their own experience • Can participate in meaningful worship • Can understand basic doctrinal principles (truths) • Want their leaders and role models to be good people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage them to read the Bible and pray (daily devotions) • Let them voice their worries and concerns; pray with them • Teach about worship and facilitate worship experiences • Apply the lesson to their everyday lives • Explain the way of salvation • Provide regular opportunities for children to accept Christ • Your role as a teacher is more than merely teaching a lesson • Let them suggest things to pray for - then pray in small groups
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Age 12-14

Overall characteristic: Change

Overall teaching tips: Challenge on all levels - lead by example

Your role: Believe in them

Characteristic	Teaching Tips
Physical	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are growing fast (disproportionally) • Have spurts of energy that are followed by fatigue • Feel awkward and are embarrassed about it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice their strengths and give them tasks they can do well • Show interest in that which interests them
Mental / Emotional	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are quick to learn - get bored with the same old 'stuff' • Have a sense of humour • Are very moody - feelings of elation, sadness and rebellion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the lesson interesting and challenging • Encourage and affirm to help build a positive self-image • Facilitate discussions to determine how and what they think

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overreact emotionally\ • Often daydream • Can follow multiple instructions and the steps of a process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children at this age need to know that they matter • Teach about choices and making good decisions
Social	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a great need to feel accepted • Are easily influenced by their peers • Can become more loyal to those at school than at home • Begin to notice and be attracted to the opposite sex • Start to look to older young people for values • Enjoy competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about appropriate / inappropriate behaviour • Be open to discuss their pressures and related feelings of guilt • Encourage a practical project to reach out to others • Teach about setting one's own boundaries
Spiritual	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask deeper spiritual questions as they gain understanding • Question previously accepted aspects of the faith • Have a general sense of guilt (conviction) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for them to use their gifts and abilities • Encourage involvement in church and youth activities • Teach them to use God's Word to guide them • Point out that even godly people in the Bible weren't perfect • Challenge them regarding their relationship with the Lord • Be in a position to mentor and guide them • Have a time when they can pray for each other (small group)

Levels of Biblical Learning ®

Another resource that we've found helpful is Lifeway's Levels of Biblical Learning®. They explain the levels at which kids can grasp different concepts at different ages. The scope of these different concepts includes: God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, the Bible, salvation, creation, church, people, family, and the world.

It's important to consider these levels when leading your age group, because **what you**

teach could just go straight over the kids' heads if it's not within the scope of what they can understand at that phase.

For example, a toddler or early preschooler wouldn't be able to grasp the concept of the Holy Spirit, but they would be able to grasp the fact that God helps me and He loves me.

Later in their preschool years you can lay the foundation that God is always with His people, and He helps His people and provides for them. On that foundation, kids aged around 7 and 8 can start to understand that there's a third person of

LET'S RECAP

1. _____ characteristics help us _____ what children need at different _____, how they _____ the best, and what they can _____.
As a general _____, a child can roughly _____ as many _____ as their age (in _____).
2. Based on the age-level characteristics, at what ages are kids most likely to...
 - accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour? _____
 - learn by repetition? _____
 - ask deeper spiritual questions? _____
 - not be able to make moral decisions? _____

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

Warmth and proactivity

If you're unsure of how best to act around kids, a **constant attitude of WARMTH and PROACTIVITY are a good place to start.** This stretches to all areas: warmth because we care for the child and we want them to know that we are on their team and proactivity because we need to be thinking ahead in all scenarios and acting in such a way that benefits the kids.

While you may feel like you're being harsh, maintaining firm boundaries is a way of staying proactive and ensuring that one child doesn't end up ruining the time for everyone. Being proactive can also help prevent injury

“The atmosphere that the kids walk into sets the tone for the whole time together.”

Practical tips

Here are a few helpful practical guidelines for connecting with kids:

CREATE A WELCOMING SPACE

The atmosphere that the kids walk into sets the tone for the whole time together. Have music playing before they walk in, and make sure that at least one of the leaders

are in the room before the kids arrive there – that way you have more control over what happens as they arrive. Make that initial time fun, with a few games that kids can get involved in as they arrive, and do something fun before roll call.

GET-TO-KNOW-YOU GAMES

These are games that help you remember each other's names, where you learn more about each other, and where new kids can feel welcome (and not embarrassed). These are especially important early in the year, and could be used to replace roll call (e.g. have one leader ticking off names while you play the game).

WELCOMING VISITORS:

First-time visitors will probably feel a little nervous being there, and the other kids might not be aware of them or geared towards making them feel welcome. Make a point of making the child feel welcome, and then look for ways to get them to connect with other kids.

MAKE A FUSS OF THEIR BIRTHDAYS:

It can be tricky to try remember everyone's birthdays, or even to have a system for remembering (because as soon as a new child joins, it becomes outdated), but it's really special to ask the group who had birthdays in the past week and whose is coming in the next week, and then sing for them or get the group to pray for them.

REMEMBER THEIR NAMES:

Let's always remember that we are dealing with individuals, and we want every child to leave feeling valued and loved. Make an effort to remember their names. It will take a while (especially if you've got a bigger group), but it is so worth it! Kids generally don't mind if you ask them a few times, but if you still forget after that, ask

one of your other leaders or strategically use an ice breaker or game that will get them to say their names again.

TAKE INTEREST IN THEIR LIVES:

Listen to what they have to say. If you really struggle in this area, prepare a few fun questions before the time that you can pull out in conversation.

For example, we like checking this list of

30 questions to ask a kid instead of "How was your day?"



<http://www.parent.co/30-questions-to-ask-your-kid-instead-of-how-was-your-day/>

(ParentCo, 2021)

BE ON THEIR LEVEL:

Children can feel intimidated if they are 'spoken down on'. As far as possible, try get your eyes to their eye-level. Crouch or sit if necessary. This is especially important when addressing discipline issues or consoling them.

ACKNOWLEDGE THINGS THEY DO:

Look for ways to encourage them and acknowledge ways that they helped.

CONSOLING CHILDREN:

One key aspect of working with children is ensuring their safety, both physically and




LET'S RECAP

1. If you're unsure of how best to _____ around kids, a _____ attitude of _____ and _____ are a good place to start. This stretches to all areas: _____ because we care for the _____ and we want them to know that we are on their _____, _____ because we need to be _____ ahead in all scenarios and acting in such a way that _____ the kids.

2. List some of the ways you could make the space more inviting for the kids:

3. Think of a game (or look one up online) that you could play to help kids get to know each other. Explain it here:



PARTNERING WITH PARENTS

Why it's important

We are not primary caregivers, nor are we the ones predominantly responsible for discipling the children in our kids' ministry. **But we are in such a privileged position to help parents raise their children in the ways of the Lord.**

The Bible is full of instructions on the importance of leading your child well, yet so often parents feel so out of their depth. You might actually find some parents bringing their kids to church to 'sort them out'. While we really disagree with this motive, **we won't turn down the opportunity to reach another family with the Gospel**, and trust that the whole family is turned around and set on fire for Jesus!

Your role as a leader isn't to tell parents how to do their jobs, but you'll have many opportunities to help parents in some ways, and they may even come to you for advice. But until such time, let's show them that we're on their side, and that we are rooting for their children to come into ALL that God has for them.

Gospel-centred parenting

Ultimately we want to help parents **recognise their role as the primary discipler in a child's life** (Magruder, 2017). We don't want them turning to the church to disciple their children... because surely the church leaders are the experts? What generally hinders

parents from taking on this responsibility themselves is that they don't feel equipped, and that's the area that we can help.

Families will only be living out the Gospel in their homes if the parents have been transformed by the Gospel themselves. So, if you recognise a family in this category, pray for them, that they would encounter the Lord, and then guide them towards getting connected into church life so that they can find out more about the Lord. This could mean that you could take the conversation further with them yourselves, or ask someone else in your congregation to connect with them. Why not ask a parent with kids of a similar age to connect with them?

“When families are transformed, the Gospel is multiplied to impact entire communities and beyond.” (Magruder, 2017)

As new families get connected into church life, they'll start to realise that parenting and healthy families are things that the church values and that God places a huge emphasis on. **You could make sure that children are included in church events** to constantly remind families that the kids are part of us and we want them around.

We also want our kids to go home and be able to talk about what they've learnt with their parents, but they often forget some of the key points. **Find ways to communicate the Bible lesson to the parents each week.**

One of the best ways to partner with parents is getting parents into your serving team.

Having them on board models something to other parents: that it's important to take ownership for their kids' faith. While at the same time being on team time constantly reinforces that truth for themselves as they get to see what their kids are learning.

While children are the focus of kids' ministry, they certainly aren't the only ones impacted by it. **When families are transformed, the Gospel is multiplied to impact entire communities and beyond.** (Magruder, 2017).

Practical tips

While some of these ways of partnering with parents that we've already discussed would be primarily driven by your congregation coordinator, here are some of the ways every leader can partner with parents:

- **PRAY FOR THE CHILDREN:** Take time in the week to pray for the kids in your age group. Think of some of the things they may have shared with you that they are worried about. Pray for their relationship with the Lord to strengthen.
- **PRAY FOR THE FAMILIES:** Ask the Lord to guide the parents in their parenting. Intercede for families that are going through difficult times, and ask the Lord to strengthen the connections within families.
- **CONNECT WITH THE PARENTS:** When the parents are dropping



LET'S RECAP

1. Ultimately we want to _____ parents _____ their role as the _____ discipler in a child's life. Families will only be living out the _____ in their homes if the _____ have been _____ by the Gospel themselves. When families are _____, the Gospel is _____ to impact entire _____ and beyond.
2. Does the idea of connecting with parents seem doable for you? Why / why not?

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DISCIPLINE

Discipline vs punishment

When we hear the word “discipline”, most of us would generally think about punishment.

But discipline is actually a really good thing, and ultimately benefits the person being disciplined. It’s something that God does, and it’s something that He commands us to do...

“Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you. Observe the commands of the Lord your God, walking in obedience to him and revering him.” (Deuteronomy 8:5-6)

“Whoever heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray.” (Proverbs 10:17)

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:11)

“But discipline is actually a really good thing, and ultimately benefits the person being disciplined.”

Discipline is for the purpose of future training, whereas punishment is for past sins. The attitude in which punishment is generally carried out is generally one of hostility, but discipline is carried out in love and concern. Punishment generally causes the child to experience fear, guilt and isolation, **but discipline should cause the child to accept the consequences of their action, and still feel secure in their relationship with their parent (or in this case leader).** (Ingram, 2006) Parents are ultimately responsible for disciplining their children, but during the kids' ministry time you (as a leader) have the delegated authority.

There should be consequences for bad behaviour, but we are never wanting to punish or ostracise kids for that bad behaviour. It can sometimes be challenging, so it's helpful to work in team and come alongside each other in this.

Boundaries

The kids' ministry environment isn't a school environment, and we want to steer clear of the kids experiencing it in that way. After all, they spend five other days of the week at school, why would they want another one? But just because we want them to enjoy themselves, it doesn't mean that there shouldn't be boundaries.

Setting boundaries as a leader is a proactive way of communicating to children what you expect of them in terms of behaviour. **It's actually a great opportunity to convey some of the heart of meeting together.** Boundaries should be broad enough to cover all circumstances, yet clear enough to know when the boundary has been

crossed. They should be communicated to the kids often, and reinforced consistently. **Reinforcing boundaries doesn't have to put a damper on the room.**

We've chosen four main boundaries that have been really helpful for us. They are not rules, but guidelines for behaviour. If you do not have any boundaries in place yet, feel free to use these:

- Yes is yes, no is no
- Respect everyone and everything
- Care for others
- Have fun!

These boundaries are generic and may not be all the boundaries needed to be put in place in your area for the kids. Once you've reinforced your general boundaries, there might be a few 'house rules' that you'll need to put in place for your specific context. These could be rules such as: 'Only leaders are allowed in the storeroom', or 'No jumping on the couches', or one of our camp favourites: 'No hairies with the fairies.' (Boys and girls mustn't pair off.)

Proactive discipline

An important way to manage discipline issues is through **proactive discipline.** This means that you reinforce boundaries as much as possible, even if you have to repeat them at the beginning of each lesson. It also means that you don't ignore bad behaviour on any scale.

Don't respond to bad behaviour with empty threats (e.g. you do that again there will be trouble!), but address the behaviour directly in relation to the boundary ('When I told you not to do that and you still did it, that showed that you disrespected me. We can't have disrespect in this classroom, so

if you continue to behave like that, I will take you back to your parents.'... and then follow through on that if the behaviour continues.)

Always remember that **tone of voice is essential** when talking to children. Try your utmost best not to raise your voice angrily at a child, but rather to speak to them with authority and in light of the boundaries that have been put in place.

“Managing discipline doesn't need to change the whole atmosphere.”

Since the **goal of discipline isn't to isolate the child, it's important to connect with the child in the process.** Pull them aside, crouch or kneel to their level, and ask them if they realised what they have done wrong. Ask them if they understand why that behaviour is a problem, and explain the consequences. If the misbehaviour is happening while you are up front teaching, ask another leader to deal with it, and, if necessary, chat to the child again soon after the teaching.

When talking to the child, **don't take what they say personally.** They might react with harsh words, and that can be a sign that they're not used to being disciplined. Kids with poor discipline are not targeting you- they need you. Don't hold a grudge and end up treating them differently to the rest of the group.

Sometimes you might make a mistake when enforcing discipline. **Apologise when you are wrong.** In a perfect world, grownups never make mistakes but we know this is not a perfect world. **Teach your kids the**

meaning of humility by admitting when you are wrong. If you reprimand a child that did not deserve it, do not brush it off. The child won't. Admit you are wrong and ask for forgiveness. (Patrick, 2010)

And through all of this, remember to **have fun!** Don't let a few kids' misbehaviour rob the entire time for everyone else. Managing discipline doesn't need to change the whole atmosphere in the room.

Logical consequences

Consequences that are related to the behaviour help the child understand that they will face certain consequences their whole lives as a result of their choices. For example, if they don't look after their things and end up losing something, they will need to pay to replace it. That's a natural consequence that everyone needs to face.

“Make sure the consequence is linked to the action.”

In the kids' ministry context, **we get to train children in realising that their behaviour yields certain results.** This is the concept of logical consequences. Here are some examples of logical consequences that you could use for bad behaviour:

- Running around during snack time when you've asked them to sit down - no snacks for them
- Repeatedly disrupting the lesson - they need to sit separate from the group for

- a while
- Not cooperating during a game - they will need to sit out for the rest of the game
- Drawing on the tables - they must help you clean it
- Throwing toys around - they don't get to play with those toys for a while
- Was disrespectful to another child or the leader - they must write a note of apology
- Repeatedly disruptive or disrespectful - leader takes them to their parents

You might find other more appropriate consequences to enforce in your context, but **make sure that the consequence is linked to the action.** It's sometimes helpful to think about these actions and consequences beforehand and write them down, especially so that the different leaders can enforce them consistently.

Types of discipline issues

While there are plenty of examples of bad behaviour, all situations can be categorised into two general types of discipline issues, and how you respond to them will depend on these.

ONGOING 'SMALLER' ACTS OF DISOBEDIENCE

(e.g. disruptions during the teaching, running around while you are trying to explain a game)

Try and **first put a measure in place that will reduce negative behaviour**, such as one of the leaders (that isn't teaching)

sitting next to the disruptive kid, or gently touching them on the shoulder while you are teaching.

If they continue to misbehave, speak into that situation by **telling the child how they are overstepping the boundaries**, reminding them that it's not pleasant for everyone if they continue to break the rules.

If this continues, you or one of the other leaders can take them out of the class and speak to them, explaining that their behaviour is unacceptable and then asking them why they did it. **Remember to have an attitude of warmth, and crouch to their level.** Sometimes these times can turn into great opportunities to speak into their lives. If they give an explanation of why they did it, tell them why it is still unacceptable and then affirm them by saying that you believe they are capable of better behaviour, and that they are a valued part of the group. Remember that they are kids, so we aren't analysing their deep-seated issues, just moderating the situation.

If the issue is between two kids (such as a fight or joint disobedience), always hear both sides of the story. Mediate the situation by explaining where one may have been misunderstood ('I don't think he intended to hurt you'), and give clear guidance on how you expect them to act in future. Again, remember that they are kids, so keep it simple and quick.

If the disobedience continues and your interventions aren't helping, you may take the child out of the class to their parents. Explain the full story to the parents. **Your role is not to tell them how they should be raising their child – they just need to know the situation.** Don't over-elaborate the negative side. We do want the child to

LET'S RECAP

1. _____ is for the purpose of future training, whereas _____ is for past sins. The attitude in which _____ is generally carried out is generally one of hostility of the parent, but _____ is carried out in love and concern. _____ generally causes the child to experience _____, guilt and isolation, but _____ should cause the child to accept the _____ of their action, and still feel _____ in their relationship with their parent (or in this case leader).

2. Can you think of any 'house rules' that you might need to enforce in your context?

3. Can you think of any other actions and logical consequences that you could apply to kids' misbehaviour?



4. Do you feel confident in enforcing discipline? Why / why not?

ACTION ON EMERGENCIES

Have a plan

No one wants to find themselves in an emergency situation. But it's important that we're ready for it if it should ever happen. Before discussing examples of emergency situations you might encounter, let's consider the important aspects of an emergency action plan: **Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery.** (D'Ambrosia 2018)

PREVENTION

The best kinds of emergencies are the ones that are safely avoided. **Consider all the risks that you or the kids might encounter, and then consider what ways you could prevent them.** Someone with a keen eye for detail could walk through

your venue and identify any possible risks. It's especially important to think of the types of things kids are intrigued by. For example, babies and toddlers are intrigued by electrical sockets, so a good start in the toddlers' area is to find all your plug points and use baby-proofing plug covers.

PREPAREDNESS

While prevention could be considered the most preferred aspect of an emergency action plan, it should not be considered the most important or the only aspect. **In the event of an emergency, it's important that leaders know what to do so that they can confidently take charge of the situation and help resolve the situation, prevent further injury, and console the children.** This includes knowing certain procedures (such as a fire drill or how to react when you've discovered an intruder) and also being trained to do First Aid. Not all leaders

need to be trained in First Aid, but there should always be a First Aider available.

RESPONSE

Because you're prepared for action, you can quickly react when an emergency arises. A quick response can make a big difference, and **it's important that the leaders are the first to respond** before more children are hurt or before the rest of the children start panicking.

RECOVERY

Even once the situation has stabilised and the crisis has passed, there is still a recovery phase to go through. **This may involve consoling or even counselling children and parents**, following up with children in hospital, following up with the police if they require more information, or finding a temporary venue if your building has become unsafe. At this point you could also consider how to prevent this type of emergency happening again, or do some training with your team to equip them better.

Types of emergencies

Now that you have an idea of an emergency action plan, let's look at some specific types of emergencies and how to respond.

The first, most important aspect of reacting to an emergency is remaining calm. The children will respond well to a level-headed leader as opposed to one running around and shouting instructions.

INJURIES

In the case of an injury, are two aspects of managing the situation:

Managing the injured child:

- Make sure that a capable leader takes control of the injured child. If you are the first to the scene, but don't feel equipped to deal with the situation, send someone to call another leader. Don't leave the child unattended.
- For more serious injuries, ensure that any potential hazards are removed and send someone to call a **qualified first aider**, and then an ambulance.
- If a child has fallen quite badly and you suspect a back or neck injury, do not move them at all. Similarly, if you suspect a broken or dislocated arm or leg, don't move them. Rather help the child remain still and calm, and allow a qualified first aider to deal with the injury.

Managing the other children:

- It is equally important to manage the rest of the children in the event of an injury.
- Once one leader has taken charge of the injured child, the other leaders should manage the rest of the kids by continuing with a game or with the planned lesson if possible.

LOST CHILD

If you can't find a child that's meant to be with your group:

- One leader should take charge of the situation while the rest of the leaders continue as normal with the rest of the group.
- Check the other age group spaces and surrounding areas.
- **Check the main church venue (the child might have gone back to their parents), as well as other parts of the venue (bathrooms, kitchen etc.)**

- Ask the congregation coordinator for help, and if necessary find any other deacons or elders who could help.
- If you are sure that you cannot find the child, call an elder and the child's parents.

SPOTTING AN INTRUDER

For child safety reasons, any kids' area should have restricted access. This is best enforced when it coincides with your registration system. For example, **you could issue access cards when parents register their kids**, and then enforce that no adult without a valid access card may enter the kids' area.

We do need to watch how strictly we enforce this, as **sometimes a visitor is simply wanting to see what the rest of your venue looks like**. If this is the case, show them around and stay with them until they leave the kids' area. If you aren't available to do this, ask another leader to do this.

If you spot an intruder that you know seems suspicious:

- **Immediately ensure that all the kids in your age group are safe.**
- If the intruder is in an area where there may be kids, ask two of the guy leaders to go find them and be present in that situation. Ask them: "Can I help you?" Their answer will generally give you an indication of how to handle the situation. They might be lost in the venue, and you could just direct them back to the main church venue with the rest of the congregation, and ask others in the congregation to keep an eye on them.
- If this proves ineffective, immediately call one or two of the elders or deacons for their help with escorting the intruders off the property. If it gets

to this point, you may need to call your security company or the police.

FIRE

If you discover a fire in the building:

- Make sure that you have at least one leader managing the children and one managing the fire. The leader managing the fire isn't necessarily responsible for fighting the fire, but for making sure that the necessary next steps are actioned.
- **If your venue has a fire alarm, sound the fire alarm. If the fire is contained, use the fire extinguisher** (preferably once the kids have been evacuated out of the room). Notify others in the building, and make sure that everyone is called to action.
- The leader managing the children must keep the kids calm, and immediately start moving them to the nearest fire escape. **If possible, grab your registration pages or devices on the way out so that you can account for every child once you're out the building.** If you have enough leaders for it, try make sure there's a leader at the back of the group, making sure that every child gets out okay.

Follow up

After the emergency, think about what you can do to help the people affected (children, families, leaders). They would have most likely experienced trauma, in which case you could offer counselling or guide them to others for counselling.

Here are some other ways that you could follow up and show support:

- **Pray for them.** Pray for their recovery,



LET'S RECAP

1. What are the four important aspects of an emergency action plan?

2. Think of your own church context. What are some of the specific ways that you can prevent emergencies?

THE GOSPEL PROJECT® CURRICULUM

Keeping the Gospel central

"And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power." (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

Our ultimate goal in kids' ministry is to lead children to the knowledge of

Christ and acceptance of Him as their Lord and Saviour. That's why we want **every** lesson to point to Christ and not just to some helpful values to live by.

He's the One who transforms lives, and He's the One that we want to look like... and want our kids to look like. We don't subscribe to the self-improvement Gospel, **our goal is a crucified life.**

**“For I resolve to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”
(1 Corinthians 2:2)**

The Gospel Project® by Lifeway is a curriculum that we feel best brings across the heart of Gospel-centred ministry. It is built around

- **CHRIST-CENTERED STUDY:** that helps kids understand that all Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, gives testimony to Jesus Christ.
- **CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY:** that shows kids that the Bible is not just a collection of stories, but one unified story—God’s story of redemption.
- **MISSIONAL APPLICATION:** that helps kids understand how the Gospel encourages and empowers us to be mission driven.
- **AGE ALIGNMENT:** that gives churches the ability to build an age-aligned discipleship experience throughout the body and equip parents to lead spiritual conversations in the home.
- **ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES:** that help kids grasp essential theological doctrines of the Christian faith.

Gospel-centred transformation

Only Jesus can change our hearts. As parents or kids’ ministry leaders, we often try to manage outward behaviour. In kids’ ministry, that sometimes means that we lean towards teaching Biblical morals rather than leading kids to Christ. It’s like trying to take the shortcut to getting the kids to look like Christ, without them even knowing Him personally.

But if we don’t deal with the root cause of bad behaviour, it’ll just keep coming back.

“Our kids don’t have a sin problem because

they’re not trying hard enough to be good. Our kids have a sin problem because they have a heart problem.” (Murchison, 2017)

Until a person is surrendered to Christ, they cannot bear the image of Christ (**1 Corinthians 15:49-58**). The ultimate goal of kids’ ministry is that every child will be transformed by the Gospel. When our lives are transformed by the Gospel, the fruit follows.

“Until a person is surrendered to Christ, they cannot bear the image of Christ.”

“A transformed heart is not just obedient, but joyfully obedient. A transformed heart shows the fruit of the Spirit. **A transformed heart wants to know God more**, and spends time reading the Bible and praying in order to do so. And in all these things, a transformed heart isn’t doing it out of obligation or out of a fear of punishment, or out of a desire for a reward on earth, but it does so out of a desire to please and worship Jesus.” (Murchison, 2017)

Gospel-centred teaching

If our goal is Gospel-centred transformation, then the **vehicle through which we accomplish this should be Gospel-centred teaching**. The Gospel Project® goes through the whole Bible in three years, but every week points out how each Biblical account forms part of the bigger narrative about Jesus. **Its purpose isn’t just to lead**

children to believing in Christ, but being transformed by Him and ultimately bring us into the narrative.

“The Bible doesn’t just give us a Gospel that is necessary to move into salvation. It describes the Gospel as being so much more than that. Everything we do, everything we understand about life flows from the Gospel in Christ.” (Murchison, 2017)

“The Gospel is the Biblical story about God’s provision of Jesus – the rescuer who reconciles people back to God.” Because it’s a Biblical story, **we know that it’s not man-made but God-given.** Talk with the kids about ‘accounts’ rather than stories to reinforce that the Bible isn’t a fairy tale.

The Gospel shows us our desperate need of salvation, and reconciles people back to God. Because it’s a story and not just a few truths to remember, it conveys God’s heart and motives in saving His people.

Let’s consider how to lead children to the Gospel – the Good News – **at every chance we have.**

The Gospel: God’s plan for us

We trust that every single week, children are encountering the Gospel and given an opportunity to respond. This was explained in more detail in the section on leading a child to Christ, but we thought it would be helpful to also include here the five points that the Gospel Project® use repeatedly to reinforce the foundational truths that outline the Gospel, and some ways they encourage you to talk about it :



GOD RULES

Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read **Genesis 1:1** from the Bible. Read **Revelation 4:11** or **Colossians 1:16-17** aloud and explain what these verses mean.



WE SINNED

Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (**Romans 3:23**) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God’s punishment of death (**Romans 6:23**).



GOD PROVIDED

Choose a child to read **John 3:16** aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It’s something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain **Ephesians 2:8-9**.



JESUS GIVES

Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God’s family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read **Romans 5:8**; **2 Corinthians 5:21**; or **1 Peter 3:18**.



WE RESPOND

Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read **Romans 10:9-10,13**. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus

LET'S RECAP

1. "Our kids don't have a _____ problem because they're not _____ hard enough to be good. Our kids have a _____ problem because they have a _____ problem." (Murchison, 2017)

2. In your own words, describe the difference between teaching the kids Biblical moralism and teaching the kids what it looks like to follow Jesus.

3. How would you define or measure success in kids' ministry based on what you've learnt?

4. How can we be clear to our kids that all we teach comes from the Bible?



5. How would you summarise the big story of the Gospel?

6. How can we teach our kids that they are sinners in desperate need of God's free gift of the Gospel in age-appropriate ways?

COORDINATORS

The ultimate goal

Let's come back again to our ultimate goal in kids' ministry: leading kids to becoming disciples of Jesus Christ. **That means that every aspect of kids' ministry should lead toward that central purpose.**

God's Kingdom is advancing, which means that more people are being added to the body. And growth is a wonderful problem to have! **It means that we need to shift and adjust to new ways of doing things to facilitate the life of God amongst His people.**

We believe that as coordinators we can facilitate this through these main facets of kids' ministry:

Facilitating Spirit-led encounters

"But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (John 14:26)

Building Christ-centred families

"Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!" (Deuteronomy 5:29)

Developing leaders to their full potential

"For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us." (Romans 12:4-6)

In this section we want to tackle more about how you can **lead your team of leaders into carrying out the vision of your kids' ministry**. This may be on the level of coordinating a team of leaders on a specific Sunday (what we would call a 'team coordinator'), or overseeing the whole kids' ministry in your congregation (a 'congregation coordinator').

The heart behind leadership

Kids' ministry is a discipleship arm of the church, where children are trained in the ways of the Lord and equipped for life in His household. We get to give children a head-start in their faith journey, so that they can take the Gospel even further than what we will be able to in our lifetimes. As the church grows, building a strong team to take it forward means that we can handle the growth in the number of kids.

“We may be entrusted with a group to lead, but we are all first and foremost being led by Jesus.”

In Exodus, when Moses was struggling to manage the many responsibilities on his plate, he was advised to appoint people to help him. *“Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.”* (Exodus 18:25 ESV) In the same way, we **look to appoint able**

men and women that will lead different size teams of leaders in the kids' ministry.

What a privilege to lead in team and see the Kingdom advance through many faithful leaders that are laying their lives down to serve. **The role of someone overseeing an area can involve a fair amount of administration, but it's more of a leadership role than an administrative role** in that you'll need to take a proactive approach to everything – taking ownership for the functioning of the team, bringing leaders on board with the direction you're headed, and being constantly aware of any gaps and how to fill them.

Through all of this, it's important to remember that it's Jesus who builds His church (Ephesians 4:11-13). **We may be entrusted with a group to lead, but we are all first and foremost being led by Jesus.** Let's look to His vision for the church, look to His example of leadership, and seek His voice and Presence for our children.

The role of a visionary

As God stirs your heart for building His bride, we know that **He wants to also equip you with the tools, gifts and vision to carry out the task.** So, while it's Him that does the building, we get to be ministers and conduits in service to the body.

If you are asked to lead a team of leaders, or even head up the whole kids' ministry team, it's important to remember that **you are still under the direction of your eldership team.** Dream big, allow the Lord to stir your heart for big things in the kids' ministry, and then make sure that those things are submitted to your elders.

As Mike Davies says, it's way easier to ride a horse that's ready to run, than to try get a mule to move. **Your elders want you to RUN.** They want you to go for it in leading. They don't want to micro-manage you and your team, but they want to get behind you in what you're doing and make sure that the kids' ministry is going forward with the rest of the body.

“By you submitting to your elders, it's not because they want to micro-manage you and your team, but because they want to get behind you in what you're doing and help you.”

In thinking about leading other leaders, there are a few things that stand out to us...

- **WE ARE NOT THE TREASUR:** Paul wrote to fellow ministers of the Gospel, saying: *“For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”* (2 Corinthians 4:5-7 ESV)

As we are entrusted with greater responsibility in God's house, **let's not forget Who the real treasure is,**

and that we are simply fragile vessels being used to lead others to His glory.

- **WE DON'T HAVE THE POWER:** We can be so passionate about people's lives changing, but forget that we aren't the ones that actually hold the power. We may have been entrusted with Jesus' authority, but it's still His authority. “The changes we long for in the hearts of our people can only happen by a sovereign work of grace.” (Piper, 2002)
- **WE DON'T NEED PROFESSIONALISM:** It can be tempting to keep finding more ways to make our kids' ministry bigger and better. But **let's keep the main thing the main thing.**

“The peace and satisfaction of our aching souls - and our hungry churches and the waiting nations - flow not from the perks of professional excellence, but from the pleasures of spiritual communion with the crucified and risen Christ.” (Piper 2002)

Servanthood

As a team coordinator **your role is mainly a serving role.** You'll often end up putting in more hours than the rest of

the team, and often there will be hours put in that won't be seen by others. And we know that this is the example that Jesus Himself gave us – **that the King of the universe didn't come to be served but to serve** (Mark 10:24).

There are a couple of practical ways this can play itself out, but one example is that when you are coordinating a Sunday meeting, you would generally be **the first to arrive and the last to leave**. Before the other leaders get there, you could be preparing the space for them, putting on music, setting up tea and coffee, and starting to connect with them as soon as they arrive.

Another way that you can serve your team is by **connecting with them** outside of Sunday times. This doesn't even necessarily mean setting up a time to meet with them, Give them a call during the week to plan with them for an upcoming Sunday, or phoning them to debrief this past Sunday are helpful ways of bringing them through into more in their leadership gift.

Communication

Most communications will come through you as the coordinator, so **good communication will be an important part of your role**. You'll need to make sure that your team receives all the information they need when they need it.

But because your role is also one of being a visionary for the team, **your communications are always great opportunities to convey heart and vision, and not just practical things**. Whenever you are communicating with your team

(e.g. sending out the weekly messages, or sending an invite to a training time), consider how you can convey some of the church's values. For example, if you're communicating about the upcoming Sunday, **convey a sense of expectancy, that it's an opportunity for kids to connect with their King, instead of sending a message that makes the leaders see only duty and 'work'**.

Routine can be good because it can help the team know when to expect certain information. For example, you might choose to send out curriculum information every Wednesday. Once the team are used to this, they'll realise that they don't need to contact you earlier than a Wednesday, because they can expect it then. Similarly, you might decide that you want to give the team at least 2-3 weeks' notice if you are calling a team meeting. You may also want to align your communication rhythms with that of your church admin team.

Giving and receiving feedback

A healthy team is one in which there are **open lines of communication**, and in which we **value each other's feedback and invite other people's perspectives**. This happens in all 'directions' across the team (i.e. we can invite the perspective of anyone on the team).

One important aspect of healthy feedback is that you **keep your congregation leader in the loop as to what's happening in the kids' ministry**, and invite their perspective and direction – especially on situations that you might need support in. We've

found it incredibly valuable to send through weekly feedback voicenotes of 2-3 minutes to the congregation leader to give a brief summary of how the kids' ministry time went (number of kids, number of visitors, what you taught on, any testimonies/highlights, and any areas that require follow up).

As the congregation coordinator, one of your roles is raising up leaders in their own role and gifting. While you won't be in every kids' ministry session with them, **ask your leaders how they feel the time went with the kids, and give them feedback on areas they could work on.** Don't forget the classic love sandwich! Including the positives of what they're doing well in – is a way to soften the blow, but also to encourage them in their work in the Kingdom.

Recruiting leaders

It's important to us that each person that serves with the kids goes through the correct procedures in being brought onto team. It can be tempting to get so excited about new leaders, that we bring them onto team too quickly and forget about the necessary checks and training. In bringing new team members on board, we want to find a healthy balance of doing it quickly and with clear communication, so that their excitement isn't quenched, **while also making sure that they are properly checked and trained.** Here's the process that we've found works:

- **Recruitment:** Whether by chatting to people directly, asking comm leaders, or putting out a call to leaders in your congregation.
- **Trial period:** Let the potential leader

join for a Sunday meeting, usually this includes having a provisional spot on the roster and them being on a temporary group to receive communications.

- **Follow ups** with community leaders (explained in more detail below)
- **Complete the leaders' forms:** (affidavit and form 30)
- **Be added** to the congregation group and roster, and receive training material

FOLLOW UPS WITH COMM LEADERS

When a potential leader shows interest in joining the team, they are usually very excited, and often a bit nervous. **Get excited with them, and then continue the discussion a bit further.** This could include asking whether they have served in kids' ministry before and finding out whose community they are part of. Mention to them that they can visit one Sunday, and that you're going to touch base with their community leaders.

Here are the questions that we ask comm leaders about each of the people that want to join team:

- Done Starting Point?
- An active member of your comm?
- Living an open and accountable life, having found victory over sinful patterns of behaviour?
- In a position to serve (in terms of capacity)?
- Do you feel that this is the right season?

LEADERS STEPPING OFF TEAM

While we generally ask that any leaders joining the team aim to commit to at least until the end of that year, circumstances can change and they may need to step down sooner. There may be multiple reasons behind it (e.g. moving city, family crisis, increased work pressure, moving onto a different serving team), there may be times when you feel that they need to push through and continue serving. Remember to be sensitive to their situation, and **come alongside them in the decision**. Encourage them to chat to their community leader if they haven't already, and then you could also touch base with the community leader to hear their thoughts. But let's be processing the decision with the leaders, and not simply removing them from the team as soon as they mention it.

Valuing leaders

While we want our leaders to first and foremost be motivated to stay on team because of their service to the Lord, **we can play a big role in how likely they are to stay on team simply by how we show our appreciation for them**. Small things can go a long way... for example, thanking them and saying 'well done' at the end of the meeting, and encouraging them with something specific that they did well in.

At the end of the year, we hold a celebration to thank our leaders and have fun with them. This is often a great opportunity to **ask the families in the congregation to thank the leaders** through writing letters and contributing food or prizes for the celebration, or being involved in the event themselves.

We generally also ask our leaders that they would prayerfully consider whether the Lord is adding them to the team the following year – we don't just take it for granted that they'll stay on team. Every year we trust for the Lord to build the team.

It's also so encouraging when the congregation leaders acknowledge the kids' ministry team every now and then in front of the congregation. That praise is certainly not what we seek in our serving, but it goes a long way for leaders to feel acknowledged and appreciated.

Overview of roles and tasks

Every kids' ministry team will look quite different, especially depending on the size of your team. Here are some of the key overseeing roles that we've found to be helpful in a team, with an overview of their responsibilities:

- **THE OVERSEEING ELDER** connects primarily with the congregation coordinators to help cast vision and define strategy to take the ministry forward.
- **CONGREGATION COORDINATORS** oversee the general running of the kids ministry in their own congregation. They will stay in touch primarily with the team leaders to make sure everything is running smoothly on the ground. They are also responsible for bringing new team members on board, and handling the admin tasks that ensure that the teams get all the info they need at the right time, e.g. rosters,

LET'S RECAP

1. What are the three main ways that we can work towards our ultimate goal in kids' ministry?

Facilitating _____

Building _____

Developing _____

2. The role of someone _____ an area of kids' ministry can involve a fair amount of _____, but it's more of a _____ role in that you'll need to take a _____ approach to everything – taking ownership for the _____ of the team, bringing leaders on board with the _____ you're headed, and being constantly aware of any _____ and how to _____ them.

3. Have you ever received constructive feedback from someone overseeing you? How did you feel when they gave you that feedback? How could you give constructive feedback to someone on team?



4. Did you have any ideas of how you could value your team of leaders in your context? Jot them down here:

ADMINISTRATING LIFE IN THE TEAM

Why it's important

Most people freak out at the mention of the word “admin”, while others get quite excited about it. But **admin is so much more than keeping a good filing system, labelling things, and colour-coding your documents.** Administration is summarised in managing and taking responsibility for the running of something, and while many people can be naturally gifted in being able to organise things well; **administration in the body is actually a gift of the Spirit that we can ask Him for!**

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. (1 Corinthians 12:27)

That means that **those with the gift of admin play a vital role in the body of**

Christ... so use the gift for the building up of the body! And look for ways to grow in using the gift. It's an opportunity to create an atmosphere of excellence, and it brings God glory!

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, encouraging them to continue operating in the gift of generosity. While it was a different gift that he was referring to, may the same be said of our administration: *“This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the Gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.” (2 Corinthians 9:12-13)*

Similarly, in the Old Testament, when the Queen of Sheba visited King Solomon (1 Kings 10), expecting to come and test him, she was overwhelmed when she saw the way Solomon administrated his house and Kingdom. Part of her reaction was in response to his wealth, but also the wisdom with which he managed it and how he led his people.

While kids' ministry is just one aspect of church life, administrating it well means that:

- **Others can function more effectively in their gifts** (e.g. in Acts 6, the apostles appointed deacons to manage certain administrative tasks so that the apostles could continue their work in preaching, shepherding, and spreading the Gospel).
- It's **easier for others to get involved**.
- We are **stewarding the people and resources** that God has entrusted us with.
- We're **ensuring safety** (e.g. making sure that an effective child protection policy is in place).
- We can be **more effective in avoiding chaos** and managing crisis.

(Boffey, 2021)

How we look after the 'general running' of things in God's house can play an amazing role in advancing the Kingdom. Let's not underestimate it!

The different ways we generally see this playing out is in the week-to-week tasks that ensure that Sundays run smoothly, then also in the bigger scale administration of the team. Whatever our role we'll need to make sure our communication is strong.

Communication

We can't administrate well without effective communication. Without it, there will be confusion and eventually disorder.

Whatever your administrative role in kids' ministry, **look to improve how you communicate and find ways of determining if your communication is effective enough**. For example, you could ask others on the team whether there were any things they are confused about, or ask them to tell you where you could improve.

Try make sure your communications are as clear as possible and visual where necessary. Use them as opportunities to convey heart and vision as often as you can. **By communicating heart and vision, it doesn't necessarily mean you need to say more, but it might affect the way you word things and the tone you use.**

Try think how others are thinking – what are they receiving, how could they interpret it, and in what ways could they end up confused, overwhelmed, or just on a different page to you? Then work around these.

Week-to-week admin

Depending on the size of your kids' ministry, there will be a different amount of admin required for any given Sunday. These are some of the aspects of weekly Sunday admin that you will need to consider:

- **COMMUNICATING TO THE TEAM WEEKLY:** Certain information will need to be sent out to the team weekly, including who is on team, what curriculum material you'll be covering, and any other information they might need for the week.
- **VENUE ACCESS AND PREP:** Make sure that the team have access to the venue they need, and that the venue is ready for them. The team can get involved in moving furniture, etc., but they'll probably need some direction on what they should do, and also what they are allowed to do (e.g. if you're meeting in a school, you might be asked not to move certain furniture).
- **GETTING THE TEAM TOGETHER:** Most teams will get together early on the Sunday to finish preparing for the time with the kids. Make sure your team know what time they need to be there, where they need to be, and what's expected of them.
- **REGISTRATION:** Make sure that the registration system put in place by your congregation coordinator is being carried out properly by all those on team, and then orientate any new leaders and families on the process as they need it.
- **SUPPLIES:** Check that everyone has what they need for the lesson. If you have a storeroom where all the supplies are kept, make sure that everything is stored neatly, and ask the team to help you in that.
- **PRINTING:** The leaders might need to print activity pages on the Sunday. Help them with this where necessary, and if you don't have access to a printer on the Sunday, help find ways to make sure everything is printed in

the week.

- **REFRESHMENTS:** If your team serves any refreshments to the kids on Sundays, it's very helpful to either prepare everything before the meeting or to have a helper prepare the refreshments while the other leaders are busy with their teams.
- **EQUIPMENT (E.G. SOUND OR GAMES EQUIPMENT):** If your venue has AV equipment available for the kids' ministry, make sure the team know how to use it and look after it well. If you notice that any equipment needs to be replaced or fixed, make sure your coordinator knows.
- **CLOSING THE VENUE:** You might be the last person at the venue on the Sunday. Make sure all the doors and windows are closed and lights switched off, then lock and arm the venue.

Administrating the team

Here are some of the administrative things you'll need to think of if you are heading up a team of leaders:

- **REGISTRATION SYSTEM:** When finding a registration system for your kids' ministry, remember that the main goal of registration is not just for the sake of roll call. A good registration system would include a means of record-keeping, such as sign-in pages with the kids' and parents' information on them, as well as a means of making sure that the right kids are leaving with the right parents (this is especially important

in a bigger kids' ministry). You could also double this up with an access card, which is helpful when enforcing restricted access into your kids' area.

- **ROSTER:** If you're in charge of setting up the roster, you'll need to decide whether the same teams will always be on together. If this is the case, you can simply cycle through the teams, and then leaders must take the initiative to swap out if necessary. We've found it helpful to have team names for each week of the roster (e.g. for our 3-week roster, we have 3 different team names), then we can remind the group weekly which team is on, and then just move people between teams when necessary. That way we can post the roster for the whole year up-front, and send updated rosters as changes happen. If you choose the approach of finding out when everyone is available and then slotting them into a roster, make sure you give enough time to put together a roster and send it out.
- **COMMUNICATION RHYTHMS:** If you're heading up a team, you'll need to develop rhythms of communication to help your team. These include the weekly messages that go out to the whole group or individuals, termly messages orientating the team, and messages regarding any team meeting/training times.
- **CURRICULUM:** Choosing a curriculum is a decision best made alongside the elder that oversees the kids' ministry. Once you've decided which curriculum you'll use, strategise about the best way to use it in your context, how to distribute the content, and how to equip and envision your team

to use it best.

- **SUPPLIES:** It helps to have a set of basic supplies that the kids will use every week, such as stationery and games equipment. Find out the best way to store that so that every team has access to it, and then make sure that you are replenishing supplies when necessary. If there are any different supplies that the leaders need for a particular craft or activity, decide whether they should buy the supplies themselves (and get reimbursed by the church if possible), or whether you as the coordinator will get the supplies. Whatever you decide, make sure the team are aware of the plan.
- **TEAM MEETINGS/TRAINING TIMES:** Team meetings are an important part of everyone being on the same page in terms of heart, mind and values, as well as the procedures relating to your meeting times. As part of your role, you would need to coordinate these meetings, sending out invitations and trying to get your whole team together. Your coordinators or overseeing elder could help you decide how frequent these meetings could be, so that you can strike a helpful balance between meeting often enough to stay unified, and not too often as to overburden the team.
- **KIDS CARE:** Another thing to consider is organising kids' care for church events. Depending on the event, it might be helpful for families to be included if there is kids' care offered. Similarly, depending on the rhythms in your annual church calendar, you could decide to offer kids' care in the holidays while you give your regular leaders a break.



LET'S RECAP

1. What stood out to you in this section? How would you view administration differently based on what you've learnt?

2. What area of administration do you feel you need to grow in?

3. List some of the administration tasks that you'll need to carry out based on your role on team.



MORE RESOURCES

Books:



The Fabulous Reinvention of Sunday School

By Aaron Reynolds



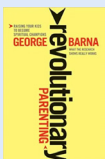
Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your Church's #1 Priority

By George Barna



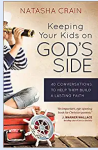
Shepherding a child's heart

By Tedd Tripp



Revolutionary Parenting

By George Barna



Keeping your kids on God's Side

By Natasha Crain



Faithfully Different

By Natasha Crain

GAMES RESOURCES:

Often prepping exciting games means that you spark your creativity by browsing through other ideas, then come up with ideas that will work in your context or for your specific lesson. Here are some helpful places to start looking for ideas...

Games for preschoolers:

Early Impact Learning - Circle time games

<https://earlyimpactlearning.com/21-circle-time-games-for-preschool-that-actually-work>

Pre-K Pages - Indoor recess games

<https://www.pre-kpages.com/indoor-recess-games-and-activities-for-preschoolers/>

Koo Koo Kanga Roo videos on YouTube

(NOTE: There are a few of these videos we wouldn't use with our kids - remember to pre-watch them!)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJfz4ZD1ADS08wFg70j0Niw>

The Kiboomers

<https://www.youtube.com/@thekiboomers>

Games for older kids (we like looking at youth group games and adapting them for the age group):

The Youth Group Collective

<http://www.youthgroupcollective.com/up-front-games/>

Youth Group Games

<http://youthgroupgames.com.au/>

Stuff You Can Use

(requires you to create an account, but you can access their games for free)

<https://stuffyoucanuse.org/>

The Source For Youth Ministry

<http://www.thesource4ym.com/games/default.aspx>

TEACHING IDEAS:

Steve Spangler (science experiments)

<https://www.stevespanglerscience.com/>

The Bible Project

<https://bibleproject.com/>

The Skit Guys

<https://skitguys.com/>

Alpha Youth Series

<https://alpha.org/youth/>

Truth For Kids

<http://www.truthforkids.com/>

Music:

Finding great worship songs for kids can be tricky. Sometimes we use some of the same songs that we use in the congregation, provided they are simple enough for the kids to remember and understand. For fun, upbeat songs created specifically for children, here are some of the artists that we've used:

Amber Sky Records

Hillsong Kids

North Point Kids

GO Kids Music



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