

Helping Children Engage with the Bible

Facilitator's notes

Hello!

We are delighted that you want to use this training package and we hope your team will find it helpful as they prepare to work with young people in a small group. It's our prayer that, as your team become more confident in handling the Bible, children will be gripped by all that they hear and experience, and long to search out more about the Lord for themselves.

SU Scotland's vision is ***“to see the children and young people of Scotland exploring the Bible and responding to the significance of Jesus”***.

This training package helps to unpack ways we can encourage children to explore and engage with the Bible. We know that the Bible is exciting and living but for many it can be complex and wrongly perceived.

You should find everything that you need to lead this session with your team in this package.

Aims:

- To understand some principles in planning Bible engagement with children
- To acquire some practical tools for exploring a Bible passage with children

Outcome:

- To become more confident in using the Bible with children in a small group context

Resources:

- TV or laptop and data projector
- Whiteboard/flipchart
- Workshop notes for each participant
- Emojis

- Psalm 139: 1 -18 (not NIV)
- Resources for group activities
- Reading the Bible in groups resource

Room:

Set up the room ahead of time. You will need sufficient chairs set out in a horseshoe shape, which can then be easily moved to form smaller groups. You will also need to place emojis around the room.

Background notes:

The video presenter will guide you through the package and will invite you to pause the video at various points to allow for group discussion and interaction. All participants should have a, small “workshop notes” booklet, to follow during the training session and to use as they prepare afterwards.

This session should last 90 minutes. You may wish to serve refreshments as people arrive and then begin the programme or serve them at the end. Whatever you choose, it is important participants arriving feel welcome and relaxed. Ensure the seats are set out and ready, notes are on each seat and you are set to make a start with all of the equipment working! When your group is gathered from different churches or you have a large team and not everyone knows each other, then please provide name badges for everyone.

It may be preferable to split the training and run it over two nights. Look at sections 1 - 2 first and then sections 3 - 4. Depending on how you use this resource, you may need to brief some team members to lead an activity in Section 3.

Introduction (10 mins)

Introduce yourself at the beginning and welcome everyone to the session. Ensure you point out the following:

- Toilets
- Fire exits
- Workshop notes for each person and a pen!

Although your group may know each other it is worth taking time to do an ice-breaker.

Try one of the following:

- Invite each person to introduce their name, followed by a food they like beginning with the first letter of their name. eg My name is Jackie and I like Jerk Chicken; my name is Tim and I like Tomatoes

OR

- Invite each person to introduce their name followed by two things that are true and one which is untrue about them. It is worth asking everyone to take a moment to write down the three things they wish to share so that this can be done quickly. The group then seek to choose which statement is untrue.....you will need to encourage the group to choose speedily or you can allocate the responsibility for choosing to the person on the left of the speaker. (Don't do this activity if the group is larger than 8 or split into two groups).

OR

- Invite each person to introduce their name followed by their favourite chocolate bar or sweet. e.g. My name is Jackie and I like Galaxy

Section 1

Beginnings (15 mins)

Outline how the training session is going to work:

- Guided by a video
- Discussion
- Activities to participate in
- Things to note down in workbook
- Encourage everyone to participate.

Play the video from the beginning until **02:57** where pause and discuss is on screen. **Pause the video**

Essential ingredients of good Bible exploration. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 is read aloud on the video. You may wish to speak a little about this verse and then ask the group to split into pairs and discuss the questions on the screen (and in work book).

- **What are your best and worst experiences of being led in Bible engagement?**
- **What made them so good or so bad?**

You may wish to elaborate or give a personal example to help discussion. Ask a few of the group to share and note these on a whiteboard or flipchart. Ensure some of the following appear:

(lack of enthusiasm, old fashioned Bible, couldn't answer questions, too long a passage, everyone being asked to read around, people mucking about, difficult to understand etc)

Acknowledge the good practice and comment that, for most of us, there have been positive and negative experiences.

Section 2

Principles of Bible Engagement with Children (15 mins)

The video will go through these principles – you may wish to encourage the participants to jot down notes, in their booklets, against each of them. **Pause the Video at 08:05**

Once the video has been paused ask the group to discuss the following:

- Did anything strike you as new when the 5 principles were outlined?
- When you prepare, are there steps you miss out or are tempted to miss out?

Encourage some feedback and ensure comments you make help to reinforce what has been outlined in the video. You could choose to speak from your own experience. For example, thinking you were exploring a very familiar biblical story and realising, as you begin to tell the story, that you don't have all of the facts quite as much to hand as you first thought.

1. A nurturing role - we often have the privilege of acting as a guide to young people, helping them to explore a part of Scripture and seeing how God is at work with them. The disciples themselves had "their eyes opened and then they recognised him". That's what we long to see the Holy Spirit do as we encourage and nurture the young people we work with.
2. Personal preparation - a focus on how important it is for each of us to

be reading and engaging with the Bible, praying and allowing God by his Spirit to bring change in our lives. It is so important that we spend time reading, asking questions of and understanding a passage, ahead of exploring it with children. We should be able to explain the main point of a passage.

3. A good way in - knowing the passage and personal preparation helps in choosing an appropriate activity, illustration or story to capture or whet children's interest and attention.
4. A good story well told - know the passage through and through. Don't rely on old knowledge! Choose an appropriate story-telling technique. Many options are given as part of the workbook.
5. Good discussion - encourage everyone to speak and think carefully about appropriate and open questions.

Section 3

Practical Ideas (35 mins)

In this section the video introduces various biblical genres and a group activity for each one. It would be helpful to model one of the genres with the whole group before giving out the group activities. To help with this the video presenter will read **Psalm 139: 1 – 18**.

Pause the Video at 11.25

Emojis have already been placed around the room. Ask your group to reflect a little on the Psalm they have just heard read and to go and choose an emoji that

illustrates how they felt while the passage was being read. In pairs, ask them to share which emoji they picked and why.

Now read the passage again from a different translation and pause at the end of verses 6,10,12,16 and 18. Each time you stop ask your group to pick up an emoji for that section. As the group move around picking up emojis, ask for a couple of volunteers to share why they have chosen a particular emoji.

Gather the group back together and discuss the following questions:

- How do you imagine the author of this Psalm was feeling?
- What kind of situation do you think he might have been in?
- Have you ever felt like the person who wrote this Psalm?
- What does the author know about God?
- How well do you think God knows you?

Now, if possible, create 4 different groups and pass out an activity to each group. Each activity needs someone to take the lead who should be briefed beforehand. Participants are encouraged to enter into each activity as if they were a child. It would be good to explain this.

Group 1

Old Testament

Genesis 15: 1- 6 Abraham

Make a tent out of black material (bin bags or material) and make holes in it. Place some cushions inside. Invite your group into the tent and ask them to lie down and listen as you read the story.

Give everyone a scratch star art magnet to decorate. (These can be bought cheaply online.)

As you decorate together, ask and chat about these questions...

(remember that wondering takes time so give children plenty of time to ponder their responses without rushing onto the next question!)

- What was Abraham worried about?
- I wonder what you worry about?
- What did God promise Abraham?
- I wonder what other promises God has made to us in the Bible?
- I wonder what promise you need from God right now?

Group 2

A Parable

Luke 15: 1-7 The Lost Sheep

Tell the group you are going to read a parable which is a story Jesus told. Ask the children to use felt pens/pencils/crayons to create a picture about the story they are hearing. Explain that the picture can be from part of the story, or how the story makes them feel. Use some of the following questions to chat about the story while you enjoy drawing and doodling together. (Bear in mind that these are just starter questions, so be prepared with follow-up questions that flow from answers given.)

Remember too that wondering takes time so give children plenty of time to ponder their responses without rushing onto the next question.

- Why do you think the sheep got lost?
- I wonder how the shepherd feels about the sheep?
- Why did they have a party when they got back?
- I wonder why Jesus told this story?
- If God is the shepherd, and we the sheep, where are you in the story?

Group 3

A Gospel Story

Luke 24:13-35 The Road to Emmaus

Read or tell the story. Then ask the children to imagine that they are one of those who met Jesus on the road...you decide you are going to leave a note to tell the others in the house why you ran back to Jerusalem. This could be a picture or letter that explains what happened and how you were feeling. Here are some questions to help you get into the idea...

- What would need to be in the note?
- What did you have to tell the people you had left behind?
- I wonder what you would have been feeling?
- What will you draw or write?

Once the children have all drawn or written something, ask them to share about what they have created.

Group 4

An Epistle

1 Cor 11:17-26 The Lord's Supper

Read the passage together and then ask these questions:

- What is going on in this passage?
- Who is writing?
- What were the people eating?
- Why were they eating it?
- How do you feel hearing these words?

Use the script below to help your group think further:

Let's take a piece of bread and make a sandwich with the fillings I have brought today – butter, jam, chocolate spread, sprinkles, crisps.

Once we have all made our sandwiches, let's keep them in front of us and listen to the story again.

I'm going to pour everyone some juice or water. When bread is mentioned in the story you can start eating your sandwich. When the cup is mentioned you can start drinking your drink. Let's enjoy the meal together.

When we are all finished, would anyone like to pray, thanking Jesus for loving us so much that he died for us?

Trainer – Feedback

(10 mins)

Encourage the groups to come back together. Ask someone from each group to share their thoughts on the method they explored. How did you feel as you engaged with it? What did you like and what could you imagine a group of young people liking? Is there anything you would do differently? Use this opportunity to place emphasis again on the importance of personal preparation, a good way in, preparing the passage well and the importance of asking good questions. Ask each individual at the session to reflect on where they feel they need to give more preparation.

Section 4 (5 mins)

Storytelling : Exploration : Response

The presenter finishes by summarising the session and reading from **Isaiah 55:9-11**. **Play the video to the end**. Then you may wish to say a little about the promise in verse 11 and refer back to the list you made in answer to the best and worst experience of Bible engagement. Comment that we want to aim for young people to have the best experience of exploring the Bible and responding to the significance of Jesus. Put up the SU Scotland Vision Statement on screen or refer to this. Encourage everyone that they are part of seeing this come to fruition.

Finish with prayer, thanking God for the Bible and praying for the preparation that will go on ahead of any work with children and young people as team members decide how to explore different passages with the young people in their group.

Your Notes:

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