

# Jump into the Bible

## Helping Children get into the Bible and nurture their faith.



All children love the small coloured sweets called SMARTIES - they taste good and look fun to eat. We want to portray the Word of God to the children as fun to read, but also encourage them to taste the Word of God and see that He is good and that they will want more of Him. Using the acronym SMARTIES we look at how you can help your children get into the Bible.

- S** **Start where they are at.** Bear in mind the background and age of the children in your class. We have a tendency to try and cram everything we've learnt in our Christian lives into the minds and lives of our children! Impossible. Stick to the simple aim of the lesson, and let the children meet God on every page.
- M** **Modelling.** Is the Bible a living book to you? Are you involved with God as you daily meet Him in the scriptures? It will show! Not because you constantly quote memory verses at the children, but because your life matches what they've learnt of the basics of the Bible. You are a role model for the young people you are with, and their view of the Bible will be shaped at least in part by what they see in you. How has God helped you through the Bible, Tell them!
- A** **Asking, answering, affirming, anticipating.** Encourage children to ask questions and look for answers to their questions in God's Word. The Bible has to be a major part of how we affirm young people who often have a sense of worthlessness and helplessness. The Big story of the Bible gives them a past and a future in God's plan. God gives them self-respect and a shape to their existence.
- R** **Responding.** We want to encourage the children to respond to the passage for themselves in their own way, rather than just reading the passage to them and trying to interpret it for them. We want to encourage them to see for themselves what God is saying to them and others through His word.
- T** **Telling.** Storytelling is popular with all ages of people. It has to be told using appropriate language and methods. You can tell the story without explaining it - Jesus told parables and sometimes He chose not to explain it. Other times it needs to be clarified. Enjoy talking about Jesus and His Word.
- I** **Inhabiting.** The Bible is God's story and God's people's story. It is also your story. It is about You! We are called to inhabit the text. Look for ways for the children to see the Big story as well as the little story you're looking at each week.
- E** **Expectations.** Getting into the Bible can be a slow process, but we want to encourage the children to make the Bible a part of their lives NOW. We're investing in young people's lives when we open the Bible with them, and we can expect God's Word to take root even if we don't see immediate fruit.
- S** **Stick at it - it is worth it!** To see a child or young person opening up the Word of God for themselves is guaranteed to thrill you and will help them in their walk with God.

# INSPIRED STORY TELLING.



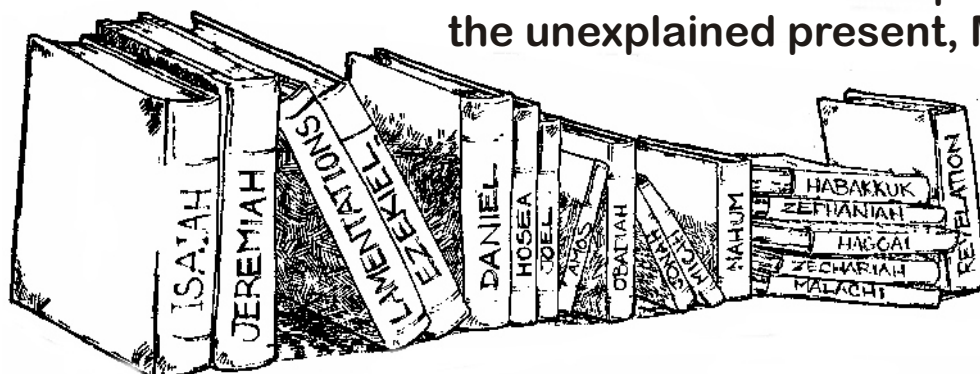
Good story telling is about relationships - those first of all that are established between the reader and the characters in the story. In oral story telling however, there is another relationship that is significant - the one between the story teller and the audience. Story telling is not about someone tossing out a mouthful of words and another bunch of people catching them. It's about something being created between them - the result of imagination and participation and eye contact and laughter and response.

In Biblical storytelling we have a third special relationship - that between the listener and God. This is the most important relationship of them all, because 'story' is the way God has chosen to reveal Himself to us. It is an opportunity for God to reveal Himself, to show us who He is and what He has done. So storytelling is sacred - yes, but it also can be enormous fun! Deciding how to tell the story is the fun part, so here are a few tips to help you.



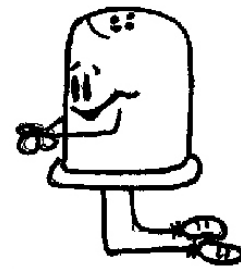
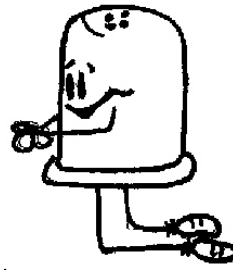
## TOP TEN STORYTELLING TIPS

- 1. Adopt the attitude of play** - that you want to have fun with the children, and then when it is more serious they will follow you there too.
- 2. Lay down a few rules** - allow them to laugh when it is appropriate, but then when you want quiet again, simply raise your hand in the air, to signal that it is time to settle down again, and move on with the story.
- 3. Keep it simple** - find a simple voice, facial expression, or posture that will distinguish one character from another. Limit descriptive language and costumes and props, as they can slow you down and hinder the explanation rather than aid it if not used correctly.
- 4. Add speaking voices** - by altering your voice and pitch.
- 5. Be prepared to look foolish** - children love it when you give them everything you've got. Being half hearted always works against the story.
- 6. Use repetition** - catchy phrases being repeated again and again, help the audience to interact and makes the story more memorable. When I tell the story of Jonah, I start with the phrase, 'Jonah was a groaner!' And the children groan every time they hear it. It keeps coming up, again and again, and each time the groans get louder and louder. It is fun and helps get the point across.
- 7. Use participation** - the important thing with this is to clearly explain what you want from them, encourage them along the way, and make the activity as much fun as possible. You can use actions, phrases, etc.
- 8. Keep it short** - Better a few short stories than one long one, or one short story, and then some rhyme or poems to fill in the gaps.
- 9. Don't worry if you have to use the book** - preparing a story every week means lots of memorization. You can apply most of the ideas given here with a book in your hand as long as you have familiarized yourself with the story and worked out how you want it to go and what participation you expect.
- 10. Finally, have fun** - if you are enjoying yourself, the children will too. They will learn as much about God from the way you tell the story - from who you are - as they will from the story itself.



**'Men wrote of the unrecorded past, Men wrote of the unexplained present, Men wrote of the unknown future Under the Inspiration of God.'**

# Helping children pray.



Prayer is more than an activity in a children's programme or a formula to be learnt. It is part of the Holy Spirit in our lives, at any age or stage of faith.

As fellow learners, we all need to practise and learn about prayer, and there are things that we can pass on to our children too.

SSALT material usually places it's prayer in the final section as a response to what you've heard from God. But prayer can be part of every stage of your time together.

One of your aims in praying with the children in your group should be to help them pray outside the group! They can come to God at any time, in any place and about anything.

## SOME QUESTIONS ALWAYS ASKED

*What is prayer?* One way to describe prayer is that it is communicating with God - like being with a good friend, but far more than that. Talking, listening, being together, are all part of our relationship with God.

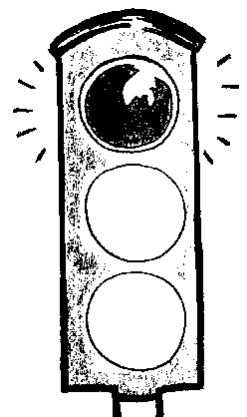
If God already knows what we need and what we are thinking, why do we need to talk to Him? Maybe we don't have to, always. Part of helping children learn about prayer is giving them time to be quiet and recognize that it is ok just to be. Prayer is about lifting high the name of Jesus, and exalting Him just because He is God, so when we lay our requests before Him we are acknowledging His Supremacy, and when we are just praising Him, we too are exalting Him.

*Does God always answer our prayers?* This is a hard one to answer. One way to help understanding is to give an example of a time when a friend asks for something, but it would not have helped your friend if you had given it to them.

Another way to answer is to draw a large set of traffic lights.

- Red** - No, I'm sorry
- Amber** - Not yet, wait a while
- Green** - Yes

Explain that these are all answers, even if we do not like them, or do not understand them.



## HOW TO PRAY?

Prayer is a spiritual act, a communion between the Lord of the universe and the members of your group. At the same time, children and their leaders, are physical beings, full of energy with senses that are preoccupied with the things around them. Let these become part of prayer, helping children to bring all of themselves to God!

*Eyes closed?* There are times when this helps to shut out distraction, to listen quietly to what God wants to say, or when you want children to think about their own response, rather than what their friend is thinking and doing. But closing our eyes isn't part of a formula for prayer!

*Eyes open!* Children can also use their eyes if they are given something to focus on e.g. Each other - if you are praying in a group.

*Pictures or posters* - particularly ones that they have made to help them pray.

*Looking outside* - if thanking God about things you see etc.

*Hands together?* Making our bodies still and focused on God can be helpful. Hands together, or palms turned upwards, can help children realize that they are giving themselves to God.

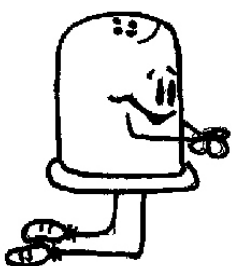
*Using hands!* Everyone could put their thumbs upward as they thank God, thumbs down as they say sorry to God, and thumbs out as they pray for each other.

*Using our voices* - God can hear us when we are silent, when we whisper or when we shout. Varying the volume of our prayers, reminds you that you are communicating with God, everywhere, all the time.

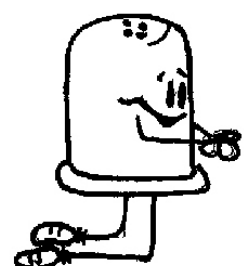
*Leading prayers* - keep your prayers at the children's level of understanding as well as language. Link your prayers to what you have been learning. Explain that 'Amen' is a Hebrew word that means 'True, faithful and trustworthy' and Jesus often used it to introduce very serious sayings. We close our prayers with 'Amen'. in His name, as a seal of our consent or more simply, we are saying, 'I agree', Encourage children to say 'Amen' if they agree with what you have been saying to God.

SSALT gives creative ideas for prayer to help you and the children dedicate yourselves to God - not just your minds but all of you. Hence our suggestions of use of craft, or play, or movement. It is fun, but it is intended to be more than that. Creative prayers, through craft or play are intended to help us give praise to God for our whole beings, and glorify Him through it all.

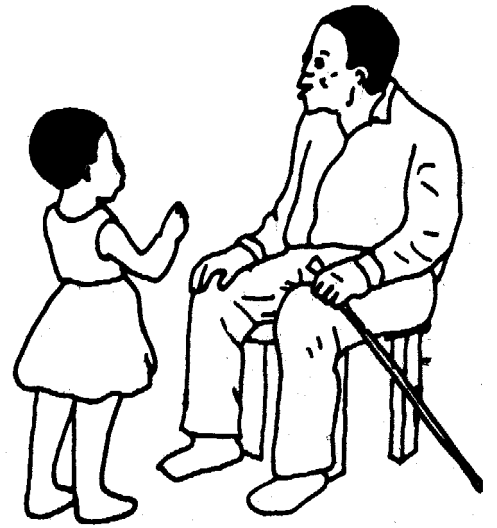
In helping children to pray we want to bring them to a place where they say,  
'God is real' and I want to talk to Him'!



Remember  
'Pray at all times,  
giving thanks'.



# Helpful Teaching Techniques

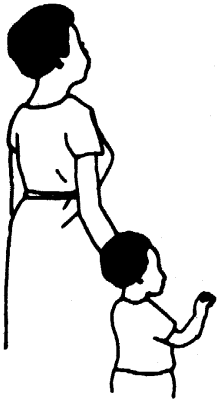


## Questions and answers

Often in our teaching of a lesson we are scared of allowing children the opportunity to ask questions for a number of reasons. Perhaps it is inconvenient and could distract the lesson, or perhaps we are scared we may not be able to answer the question, or even sometimes we do not really want to know how the children are thinking.

However it is through asking questions that children learn and often the best learning occurs through this time, so we want to encourage you to try it and allow it in your time of teaching the children.

Be enthusiastic about the children's questions. Be glad they asked! Commend them for using the good minds God has given them to find out about the truth. Encourage them to keep asking questions. Remember that questions give us valuable insight into their thinking and understanding. Dealing appropriately with the children's questions and answers can be tricky, so the following Do's and Don'ts may be useful.



- Treat all questions seriously
- Affirm that it's good to ask questions
- Give simple answers and stick to the point
- Ask the child 'What do you think?'
- Give the child more information if they are unsatisfied with the answer
- Ask the child to restate the question if you think you may have misunderstood what is being asked
- Take care with the language you use. Keep in mind the age, understanding and experience of the child. Avoid using Christian jargon which the child will not understand.

## DON'TS

- Use complex language or concepts
- Be afraid to say you don't know the answer - tell them that you will try to find out and invite their participation in finding the answer
- Invent an answer or say something that you know to be wrong just to satisfy a child
- Ask and answer your own questions or the children will learn to wait for you to provide the answers.

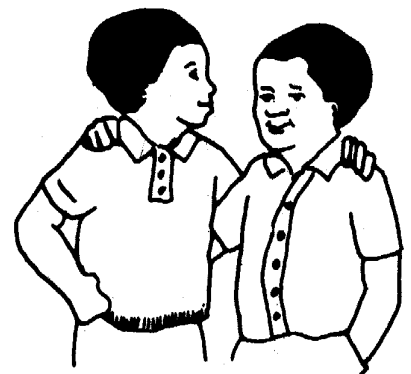
## What to do when...

A child suggests an answer that is incorrect:

- ☺ Affirm that it was good for the child to offer an answer
- ☺ Suggest that the child considers something from the lesson that will help them to see the correct answer
- ☺ Clarify any misunderstanding before you move on.

No-one offers an answer:

- ☺ Give the class some extra information that will help



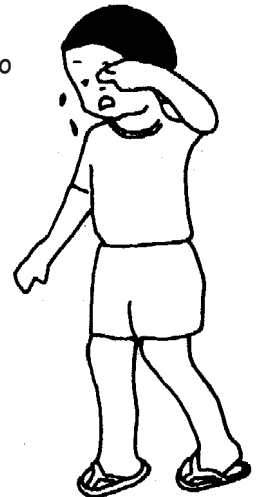
- ☺ Retell the section of the lesson that contains the answer
- ☺ Tell them the answer and move on with the rest of the lesson.

A child's answer is very lengthy:

- ☺ Affirm that the answer is thoughtful but that others in the class should also have a chance to answer
- ☺ You may like to suggest that the child could see you later and continue to talk with you (don't forget to do this).

A child begins to give you personal details or information that is not appropriate:

- ☺ Tell the parents of the child.
- ☺ You may have a responsibility to inform the pastor of any information regarding sexual or physical abuse.
- ☺ Report it to your Sunday School Superintendent or person in charge of children's work or the pastor and ask for their advice.



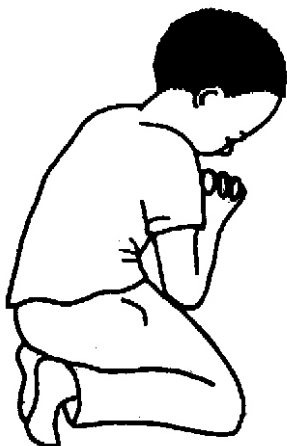
### More suggestions for questions and answers

**Why do we use question and answer techniques?**

- ? They involve the children in thinking about learning for themselves.
- ? They help the teacher discover some of what is going on in the children's minds and hearts.
- ? They help reinforce the Bible truth.
- ? They help make links between new learning and what the children already know.
- ? They encourage children to relate Bible truth to life as they know it.

**So how should we handle children's questions?**

- ? Always be enthusiastic about their questions. Be glad they asked!
- ? Ask yourself what the question is telling you about the children's thinking and understanding.
- ? Don't expect to be able to answer all the questions the children ask. Our ability to answer their questions depends very much on the answers to the questions of life that we have found ourselves. It's okay to say 'I don't know, but I'll find out the answer!' or 'That's a good question - I'm still working on it myself.' Children respect honesty in their leaders.
- ? Plan work together sometimes to discover the answers to difficult questions.
- ? Young students often want a simple, quick answer. Avoid overloading them with information. Answer only what they have asked. If the child asks further, expand your answer.
- ? Listen actively to the questions they ask. Try to identify the real problem that needs an answer. Some questions are straight forward, others may indicate that the questioner is grappling with a much deeper problem. Careful listening will help you know at which level to answer.
- ? Take care with the language you use. Keep in mind the age, understanding and experience of the child.



- ? Invite the questioner, then other group members to share their thoughts on the answer to the question. Build on what they contribute.
- ? Make sure the answers you give to theological questions are biblically based.
- ? If questions come at an inconvenient time, allow yourself the freedom to make another time to answer...and don't forget to do so.
- ? Consider the possibility of writing an answer to a student's question in letter form and delivering it personally. Children love the personal interest this shows and can read your answer in the next lesson. Most importantly, encourage the children to keep asking questions.