

Wesleyan Reform Union
Young Peoples Department

Running Children's Activities / Clubs



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1. **Introduction**

This booklet is designed to help you structure your children's club and also share ideas. Whether you have run a Sunday School or Kids Club for years or this is your first step to running a club, this booklet is designed to help you.

- Fresh ideas & different approaches
- Development of leaders gifts and skills
- Good practice
- Health and Safety / Child Protection
- Resources

The Opportunity

Parents really appreciate the opportunity for their children to attend a safe and well run club of some kind. Children really like meeting friends outside school and especially meeting kids from other schools. Spirituality is actually a big part of today's society and parents and kids have big questions to which they would like answers, such as "Why suffering?", "Is there a God?" and "What happens when we die?". They are also seeking understanding about life issues such true friendship, love, faithfulness, peace and hope. Subjects such as image, expectation, materialism, satisfaction, desires, peer pressure etc all worry parents and kids alike. The Gospel has a lot to say on these issues, but instead of rules and philosophy, the Bible offers a Person! The Person - Jesus Christ!

2. **Getting Started**

If you are starting from scratch then your first questions are likely to be :-

Who will run it? When & where will it be held? What will we do? Where will the kids come from? What do we call it?

a) Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

Why?

Children, young people and vulnerable adults have a right to be safely cared for and parents and carers need to have confidence in the environment into which they are entrusting them.

We have a duty to care for everyone for whom we provide activities or services. A set of thorough child protection policies and procedures will allow your church to demonstrate that you have taken all possible steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children, young people and vulnerable adults with whom you work.

In order to do this the Government have introduced the Criminal Records Disclosure Scheme.

It should be noted that the policies are also in place to protect you, the worker.

Who is affected?

Most voluntary and paid people who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

What you need to understand and act upon

The Child Protection Officer in each church should have information regarding these policies.

Such things as a Child Protection Policy and guidance in other matters, eg. recruitment etc. should already be in place in each church. However, an updated booklet regarding these issues will be available later this year.

Contacts / Resources

- The Union's Safeguarding Coordinator
- The Churches' Agency for Safeguarding (currently used by the Wesleyan Reform Union)
- <http://www.churchsafe.org.uk/>
- The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service
<http://www.ccpas.co.uk/> (their FAQ are very good)

b) Registration

It is vital you have full details of every child that comes to your group. Make sure their parent or guardian fills out a registration form like the one below, on their first visit. Parents today expect to fill out a form of this kind, and are more likely to have a problem with not being asked to do so. Each child should have a new form filled out at least once a year.

The form should make clear the type of activities you run, and give the name of the main leader and a mobile number on which you can be contacted at the club.

Name of Church	
Name of Main Leader and Mobile Number	
Name of Kids Club – Tuesdays – 6pm to 7:30pm (During Term Time)	
A typical meeting could include :- Crafts, Painting, Singing, Run Around Games, Bible Stories, Prayer time, Quizzes, Refreshments, Tuck Shop	
Childs name :	
Gender	
Date of Birth	
Age	
Address	
Your Full name	
Are you over 18?	
Your relationship to the child	
Contact Phone No.	
Contact Mob. No.	
Email	
School	<i>So we can plan around holiday's and training day's etc.</i>
Is your child allergic to anything. (Please list)	
Please tick here if it is ok for us to take a photograph of your child to be used in publicity <input type="checkbox"/>	
I agree for my child to attend Kids Club as described above	
Parent / Guardians signature _____	Date _____
Signature _____	

c) First Aid & Incident book

St Johns Ambulance Web Site - <http://www.sja.org.uk/>

gives all the up to date information on;

Type of first aid kit

What training your staff (Voluntary and Paid) need

First Aid Kit

Easily found and accessible

All instructions in English

Out of reach of small children

Details from St Johns Ambulance Web Site 2010				
Product	1 Pers	10 Pers	20 Pers	50 Pers
Emergency booklet	1	1	1	1
Assorted waterproof plasters 10pk (not catering kits)	1	2	4	6
Assorted plasters blue 10pk (catering kit only)	1	2	4	6
Eye pad		2	4	6
Triangular bandage	2	4	6	8
Safety pins 6pk	1	1	2	2
Medium dressing 12 x 12cm		6	9	12
Large dressing 18 x 18cm	1	2	3	4
Cleansing wipes	2	10	10	20
Pairs of nitrile powder free gloves	1	1	2	3

Must be checked regularly (every month) and re-supplied

First Aid Training – (Renewed every 2 years) – For children

Incident book – This needs to be a log of any incidents that happened before, during and after the meeting. It must be kept in a secure place, indefinitely.

e.g.

- 1) All accidents and injuries.
- 2) Misbehaviour from the kids.
- 3) If a child has had to be restrained for their own or other peoples safety.
- 4) Misbehaviour addressed.
- 5) If a child reports anything of concern. (You should also log the actions you plan to take). (See Child protection Section Chapter 1)
- 6) Disturbances from outside.

3) What type of Kids Club

a. What is already available in your area?

How can your church compliment what is already available?

It is tempting to start with "What can we provide?", but then you might never objectively consider "What does your area need?", and restrict your plans. Looking at "the area" first will cause you to rely more on God, and stretch your faith, (which can't be a bad thing). It will also enable you to deliver something that brings value to your wider community and addresses genuine needs.

Do some research into what is already provided in your area by churches and secular organisations e.g. Youth Services, Community Centres, Schools etc. Talk with parents, youth leaders and community groups.

What do they offer? When do they meet? Who are they providing for?

e.g another local church might already have a well established club on a Wednesday, with quizzes, stories and memory verses. Why not have a chat with the leaders there and ask what they think the area needs. Maybe on Friday's or alternate Saturdays you could run a Craft/Drama Club or Outward Bounds activities for the same kids. All the leaders could share in running the Wednesday and Weekend sessions so the kids get to know you all and make the connection between you all and your faith in Christ.

True Story – A neighbour of ours helped with a litter pick around a local block of flats. Kids from the flats joined in, and parents offered tea and coffee. People mostly asked "Why are you doing this?" In the afternoon the litter had been cleared so they organised some games, which became more of a free for all! He is now running a weekly club in one of the flats, that is a sort of "Community Centre", teaching openly about faith, and has gained respect & support from families and the residents.

b. The right time and day

You certainly don't want to clash with other groups, activity or time wise, for instance school clubs are aimed at specific groups and run for a fixed number of weeks.

- Consider Saturday mornings, which might help parents while they go shopping, particularly if you are near shops etc.
- Consider straight after school – but remember kids have homework even as young as five.
- Consider the age of kids, bed times, Do they have school the next day? Although a child may seem fine at the end of your club, "YOU" won't be trying get them to get them up for school the next morning. Some young children (ages 5/6) may only be able to stay for the first hour because of this.

c. Location

Do you have to meet in the church? Is there a local Community Centre that offers better facilities? Is it more central? Is there a cost?

Do regular Risk Assessment; for instance.....

Health and Safety :- Ask a parent to look at the room and give their opinion on its layout. Make sure all cleaning materials are well out of reach. Look for hazards. Remember children will be children and will run about. So remove vases, cactus plants, furniture that is fragile, valuable or could be dangerous. It is so vital to try and keep the whole church with you in your work, so regularly reinforce rules, and respect for each other, leaders and the building.

The kind of room and space you have will dictate in some way on the kind of programme you can run.

b. What kind of club?

Leaders gifting and skills:

What age group are they good working with?

A budding "Ant and Dec style" leader who could run a high energy, up front, game show programme; using kids as the audience, with volunteers taking part in challenges. For ideas watch Saturday morning Kids TV.

Crafty Kids - Working on a craft gives great opportunity to chat with kids and get to know them, but realise that most boys are not as good at concentrating, and have a lot of energy to burn up, especially if they've been at school all day.

If you are running lots of games at the same time, a craft table, or board games table can be excellent, but limit the numbers of kids throughout the evening at each table.

Puppeteer and Sketches :- These are great ways of teaching kids and getting them involved in presentations. Also very good for parents evenings. (The author would like to point out that he is useless with puppets and admires those with the skills.) Having a large bag full of dressing up materials is a great way to get kids involved in acting out the story.

Quizzes & Story :- This is more traditional, but you can still be very creative with the quizzes, visuals and materials you use.

"Powerpack" – Youth Club – Games - Craft & Chill :- Have lot of different things going on for the first hour (e.g. Play Station, Wii, Pool, Table Tennis, Craft Table, Board Games, Dance Mat, Chill Area, Tuck Shop) .

Table Time – for 15mins sit everyone round a table, for example serve pizza, chips, pancakes and lead a discussion on a given subject or tell a Bible story and ask questions.

Rounding the evening off : team games, where everyone joins in. See further on for examples of each of these types of programme

Something different every week.

You might want to change what you do each week, but be aware that kids do actually like routine as it helps them to feel safe. Most people and children are scared by new things and surroundings, so be careful how you introduce things.

Also children on the autistic spectrum especially struggle with change. That is why a school playground can be a very frustrating and scary place for them, as their friends can behave and act differently throughout just one play time.

Using Music

The good old way of worship for kids is either acapella, a key board or a guitar. But you can now buy CD's with the sound of a full band, music, choir, lead singer etc... It works really well especially if you don't have anyone who can

sing very well or play very well. You can just turn it up and have a good time worshipping God together.

Themed Clubs

Many clubs run a special theme for a whole term. For example Space, Wild West, Jungle, Scooby Doo etc. They would create a backdrop, say of stars and planets and paint round lampshades to look like planets hanging from the ceiling; or a Wild West Town. Leaders would dress up as "Woody" from "Toy Story" or someone from "Star Wars". They would also play theme tunes from famous films. All the games and challenges would then connect with the theme. The Bible teaching would also fit in with the theme. e.g. with the stars you could do Abraham, hoping for a child; or with the Wild West you could do David hiding from Saul.

Parents Coffee Bar

Parents journey; what will they do between dropping off the children and picking them up? Some clubs hold a Parents Coffee Bar, while the club is taking place or just for half an hour before the end. Maybe older members of your church could run this?

School Lunch Time Club

If you have built up a good working relationship with your local school, you could offer to run a club during the lunch break. This can be a great opportunity, and could encourage Christian kids in their faith. Here are a few things to think about....

Prayer : Many of these groups have been born out of a regular prayer meeting held by parents, teachers at the school.

Inter-Church Work : Encourage other local churches to get involved, especially Christian parents of kids at the school. Maybe invite a youth band to play at a one off event, or maybe a puppet group, or do a "Godly Play" session that fits into your theme. This will be a great witness to the school.

A Good Name : This is vital, as peer pressure plays a big part on who comes along. I personally feel J.A.M. Club is good, standing for "Jesus And Me", or "Discoverers".

Working with the school : You will need to write a letter to all parents explaining about the club and its aims, and ask for them to contact the school if they do not want their child to attend. You will have to also work with the room the school lets you use. Also beware of what will happen if there is "Wet Play", you may well have to cancel that week, because there might not be a classroom free.

Kids that come : I have found in junior schools, that you will be unlikely to get any kids from year 6, and also not many lads, as they prefer to be outside, kicking a ball about.

It is their lunch break : remember they have been in a classroom all morning, and will be returning to one, so they won't want another lesson, or even craft time every week. Keep it as varied as possible, with lots of fun, and opportunity to chat.

What does the school need : Ask! Maybe they are desperate for someone to run a chess club, or drum / guitar / music group, photography etc. Again what are your skills and gifts?

4) The Leaders

Appreciate your workers - remember they are volunteers, so treat them well! Think of ways to thank and appreciate them e.g. Holiday Postcard, Gift, Meals out etc., but more than anything involve them in the planning and running of events. Remember they are giving up an evening, and so will want to feel they have used that time well. It can be a big sacrifice, to miss out on meals with friends, rearranging holidays so the club can continue etc.

Plan regular meetings together

a. Assessing & Developing gifts and skills

Spend time individually and as a team discovering and exploring each others gifts, and experiences. Maybe hold an away day for the team.

Look at what people do professionally, for hobbies, enjoyed as children, maybe something they have always wanted to have a go at. Explore the gifts you see in each other, for example:

admin, publicity, music, craft, puppets, organising, humour, technology, design and making of props or backgrounds, cooking etc.

Maybe there are church members or parents who have gifts that they can use on a one-off basis. (e.g. sessions on craft, knitting, music or cooking)

Maybe they don't want to work directly with the kids, but could cook for them or design and paint a back drop or art work for the theme you are doing.

This could be a great opportunity to involve non-Christians and build contacts with them. People can be very generous in this way.

b. Delegating to others

Being involved in running any Christian activity, can have a major impact on spiritual growth. Maybe you might sail through preparing and telling a Bible story on your own, but for others it might be a huge undertaking and step of faith. The experience could well lead to deepening their prayer life and personal study of the Bible.

Delegating responsibility and jobs does take forward planning, encouragement and patience, but it is well worth it.

If anyone asks "Can I help?", never, never say "No I'm ok!" They might never ask again. Find them a job, putting chairs out, washing cups, making drinks etc.

In the long run it will

- a. help retain staff – because they will feel valued – give them some ownership of the work
- b. improve the work – because all your prayers will be more focused – all your gifts are being developed.
- c. ultimately lighten your work load (hopefully!)

c. Feeding back

Give the whole team opportunity to talk about how things are going from their point of view. Lead by example by inviting them to "constructively" criticise your work, and make changes accordingly. People need to know and see their opinion is valued and that some of their ideas are implemented. Involve your leaders in decision making and coming up with new ideas.

Check list of things that need to be discussed regularly

- The Children – Pray regularly for each child by name as a team, consider how they are getting on within the group, if concerns arise out of any discussion, deal with them appropriately!
- Teaching – Is it pitched at the right level, are there enough illustrations, is it interactive enough, are the kids listening. Is the teaching Bible based and Gospel Centred.

Do the kids come away from the session inspired, challenged, thinking or are they frustrated because they all just mess about?

- Spirituality – Do the kids have a chance within the programme to experience God through
 - a. Worship
 - b. Prayer
 - c. Meditation/Reflection
 - d. Service – Opportunities to do something, raise money, help someone who is vulnerable, do a “street clean up” etc.
- Rules & Safety – regularly do a risk assessment considering rules, potential dangers, fun element, are children being left out, or growing tired of a game.

d. Using teenagers in the team

This can be a great opportunity for them to get involved. Use their energy, and enthusiasm.

Bear in mind

Where occasional helpers are used, e.g. a 14 year old helping out in a crèche as work experience, they should always be under the supervision of, and be responsible to, a named ‘approved’ worker and never left on their own with the children.

Using their enthusiasm for example :- there is a great singing warm up exercise called “Boom-Chick-A-Boom”, that a teenager could lead (with some encouragement). Lead it the first three times to teach the kids how it goes, but then invite one of the teenagers to do it in different styles, getting the kids to follow.

I said a boom chicka boom

[Kids repeat]

I said a boom chicka boom.

[Kids repeat]

I said a boom chicka rocka

Chicka rocka, chicka boom

[Kids repeat]

I said a boom chicka boom.

[Kids repeat]

Oh yeah (echo), **uh huh** (echo), **next time** (echo)

Styles try – “A little softer, louder, slower, faster, cool style, lazy style etc.”

5. Ground Rules and Discipline

It is vital that a set of Rules are drawn up, for both discipline and safety reasons. Maybe get the kids to contribute to these. The rules should be displayed in all rooms where activities are run. This will not only serve as a reminder to the kids and leaders, but also (if left up) show the wider church that discipline is an important element in the running of the group.

If you are starting from nothing, then you are best making the rules as simple as possible

Example of Kids Club Rules

1. Have fun!

{Talk through how obeying the following rules will help them have fun.}

2. Help everyone else to have fun!

{Join in everything. Don't make fun of someone who is struggling with an activity. Congratulate others when they try hard or win, even when they are on the other team.}

3. Listen and be quiet when a leader is speaking!

4. Be gentle with those smaller (and bigger) than you!

If specific issues arise, you may need to add other rules, but these are best left out if they are not a problem. For example you might not have a problem with swearing, drugs or chewing gum, but if they do become a problem, then clear rules must be added quickly to address them.

Optional rules if you have a problem :-

No swearing, no bullying, no touching electric equipment, no chewing gum, no leaving the building, no going on the stage or only one person in the toilets at a time.

(This last one was asked for by the kids of one group, because they wanted to feel safe.)

Reading out the rules

If discipline is a problem, then you may need to read the Rules out at the beginning of every session, or if it's the start of term or you have new kids in the group.

Be clear and consistent as a team, with regard to all rules, and following through threats, so be careful what you threaten!! Options might be –

- Call them over to you, look them in the eyes, and firmly without raising your voice explain what they did wrong. Ask them to apologise to leaders or kids they have wronged, and to you for breaking the rules. Maybe go over the rules with them. (But try to avoid addressing an individual's behaviour publicly.) After you have addressed the individual, you might want to speak to everyone, reinforcing a particular rule, or expectation.
- Remove them from a game, but don't keep them out for too long, or they will lose hope and become worse.
- Using a points system – to buy sweets or prizes at the end of the club (I have only done this for a short period, when we had problems with discipline.)

- If a child does something out of character, or their behaviour takes a sudden turn for the worse, try to find out if there is something bothering them at school or home. It might be that they are just tired, but it could be that they are being bullied, abused or neglected.

N.B. It is vital all your staff are aware of the right way to respond if a child reports abuse or you are concerned for a child welfare. The CCPAS (Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service) have very good advice and training materials available. You could maybe arrange with other local churches to invite them to lead a training day.

www.ccpas.co.uk/

It is no good leaving this until a problem arises, there will not be time then to read up on the matter, and or plan a procedure.

- Missing the next week's club can be used when someone has refused to behave or has become a danger to others or themselves. (Parents will need to be contacted in this instance as you don't want the parents sending them to the club the following week, unaware that they are actually roaming the streets.)

Rules with regard to Organised Games

At the beginning of every game, explain each rule clearly, even if you play the game every week. Make sure everyone is clear on what they have to do, and also what they must not do. Warn them also of potential dangers; for example

- Remind children to be careful of younger children and others around them. Stop dangerous behaviour immediately.
- If two kids are running for the same object, warn them about banging heads. It might be very obvious to you, but in the heat of the moment, it will be the last thing on the child's mind, until they collide, that is!

If someone is hurt badly in a game, stop playing the game for the rest of the meeting. Then reassess the dangers before considering to play it again.

It is also good practice to regularly hold team meetings and to jointly do a risk assessment of new games and to assess all the games you play. You must listen to any fears or reservations, but at the same time realise that a certain amount of challenge and risk is healthy and is great for building character.

6. Naming your Club and Publicity

The name can be important and give the kids an identity with the group. You could ask the kids for ideas. Sometimes the kids give it their own name anyway, usually the day on which it is held. Here are some ideas anyway

- **"Friday" Kids Club**
- **Kids Klub**
- **J.A.M. Club (Jesus And Me)**
- **Explorers, Discovers**
- **Powerpack**
- **All Stars**
 - Tiny Stars**
 - All Stars Kids Club**
 - All Stars Kids Church**

Publicity & Hype

If they don't know it is happening they won't come!

This is a key and fundamental part of every kids club. You have to advertise and let people know that it is happening.

It needs to be eye catching

Use colour, images.

It needs to be informative without giving too much away.

Display the name of the club, when, where, how much, for whom, no more than 6 things that you do there, e.g. games, stories, challenges, tuck shop, songs, dancing.

That's it, no more! That's all they need to know.

The publicity needs to be where people will see it

Shop windows Schools Libraries Parks Shops

In the paper In the local village magazine

Note : If giving them to a school, ask for permission and for class names & sizes.

Then bundle the leaflets for each class with the class name and fix with an elastic band. Otherwise they may never get to the kids.

It needs to look **professional!**

It needs to **look good**

Spend time on it

Spend money on it !

If you need help on this, don't leave it, contact us and we will design, print and post to you. It is that important.

If they don't know it is happening they won't come

7. Teaching the Living Word

This next section is designed to help you build a strategy for communicating God's Word in a relevant and dynamic way, and is bigger than just how you tell a story.

God's Word is living! Atheists demand proof for the existence of God but God does not tickle their intellectual fancies with watertight arguments! No! He sent a person, with a **watertight character**, and furthermore sent His Holy Spirit to live within Christ Centred Communities (the Church), to demonstrate His love and character to the world! So the Word of God needs to be experienced within the context of a church community. When children and adults alike hear of God's love through a sermon or Bible story, they need to see it working in the lives of Christians around them. Jesus said "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." We must not just rely solely on just telling a Bible story and hoping that they will make the connection. They need to experience it!

The Moses Model

Deut 11: 18 Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.

19 Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Please notice two things;

1st v19 that it must be taught and discussed within the context of every day life and situations. Moses particularly draws our attention to three great opportunities when thoughtful discussion most naturally occurs. While relaxing at home, travelling and at the beginning and end of the day.

2nd v18 speaks of the context; of what we think (forehead) and what we do (on your hand). So if you are in the car, sharing breakfast, on a walk, late at night round a bonfire, fixing a car, working in a garden or putting chairs away - discussions will arise, problems surface, questions asked, prayers are said, issues are thrashed out and here is the opportunity for Bible passages to come alive.

The Fellowship Offerings.

Lev 10:14 But you and your sons and your daughters may eat the breast that was waved and the thigh that was presented. Eat them in a ceremonially clean place; they have been given to you and your children as your share of the Israelites' fellowship offerings.

This was a meal brought back from the temple to be shared amongst family, friends and neighbours. It was an act of worship to be shared, experienced and tasted around a meal table with friends, family, servants (class mates/colleagues/employees) and neighbours (a fellowship offering).

The Passover Meal

Ex 13:14 "In days to come when your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' say to him, 'With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

Moses here anticipates that as the family repeats the Passover meal in coming years the children will ask about its meaning. The father of the family is given the responsibility of explaining at the table what it all means and how it relates to their salvation (and actually ours). The meal was a visual aid to great spiritual truths. Remember at the original Last Supper there were lots of questions, discussion, banter and feet washing. It was not a quiet affair. Sharing a meal with the children and the wider congregation should be an essential part of church life.

Reflect on these things

Spend a moment reflecting on all this and think of ways these opportunities could be introduced into a kids club, Sunday school and church life.

I know of one club that holds their teaching around a meal table and in the form of "Guided Discussion". Why not find a venue for a bonfire once in a while, or organise hikes, walks, coach trips or sleepovers. Sometimes reducing numbers can help as individuals can get lost within a large group. Maybe split girls and boys, or chose an activity like climbing, that only takes eight people at a time, and then stop off at McDonalds or Pizza Hut on the way home.

Now theory is important, don't get me wrong. We need to get firm footholds on doctrine regarding relationships, marriage and death, well before we face them. It's a bit too late to start reading books on choosing a life partner after falling in love. But is hearing enough for something to become real? God's Word needs to be taken from the page or pulpit and applied into real situations as they arise. The most effective way to see God's Word come to life is when a child asks for advice on relationships, bullying, worries, homework, illness, friendships etc. but we need to be available to listen and talk, when they are ready. So plan activities like picnics, walks etc. that give the kids space to be themselves and get to know you as a friend as well as a leader at the front.

Opportunities to serve

Putting God's Word into practice plays another vital part in this process. Create opportunities for Church Members, children and young people to get together and serve their community, the poor and their friends. For example - take a church service, get a small group of the older kids to lead the game/teaching at their own club or at another youth group. social action and charity, clear a piece of waste ground, litter pick, shoe box appeal, Children in Need, raise money for an overseas project, gap year projects for teenagers. Church twinning provides great opportunities for all ages, adopt a child, etc. Realise the potential of young people and release it. The Scouts are excellent at this! Then when the question is asked "Why are you doing this?" be ready to give a reason for the hope that is with us"

Teaching the gospel in context

I'm sure many of us have been compelled to abandon Sunday School lesson material because it missed the point, or have winced at a Bible verse taken out of context. It is not right to say that taking a verse out of context is ok as long as its vaguely theological. In reality this only confuses the listener but far more seriously it dilutes the power of God's Word and Gospel.

Heb 4:12 "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword,..... discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.....all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

We need to seek to understand the original intention of the Holy Spirit and author of the passage and hold back from allegorising before we have told the story. Tell the story in all its beauty, before pointing to Jesus and Gospel and eventually making applications into lives. Remember the big picture will hold the most important truths and the big picture comes in a number of sizes a bit like a russian doll.

I personally take as much time to prepare a story for a Toddler Group as I do when writing a sermon. In fact applying a passage to toddlers or an assembly of school children takes more effort. The understanding of the passage is the same whoever it's for. It's only the delivery and application that is different. Once I feel I have an understanding of the passage, I then set aside time to pray for the people I am going to speak to-thinking about them and how this passage is relevant for them. So it might be a ladies meeting, or grandparents and people who are retired worried about their family, illness or lack of purpose, or perhaps toddlers and their mums full of energy and easily distracted. (See further on for ideas on communicating and illustrating your talks)

Understanding the Big Picture of the Bible

Big Picture	Theme and meaning
Creation <i>Genesis 1& 2</i>	Mankind created in God's image to be in relationship with God Application: Our identity comes ultimately from God who made us in His image
Fall – exile from the Garden <i>Genesis 3</i>	Sin enters the world Mankind's image of God spoilt Relationship with God broken Creation and Mankind broken and cursed Application: Our identity and relationship with God is broken and we need a saviour. Someone to crush the head of the serpent! Crush his power of Sin and Death!
Call and promise to Abram <i>Genesis 12:1-3</i>	Call – Go from your country, kindred, father's house & land Promise – I will make you a great nation, bless you, make your name great Mission – through you all the nations of the world will be blessed. Those who bless you I will bless and those who curse you I will curse. God is going to bring Jesus into the world through Abram's great family/nation. The broken image and relationship will be fixed through Him. This is the blessing (salvation) that Abram is promised. Application: God has not abandoned his Creation, and will provide a Saviour through Abram's family.
Incarnation	The Word becomes flesh. Jesus is born in the image of man and God. Application: We have a human representative within the Godhead for all eternity. When Jesus dies He will pay for our sin.
Crucifixion	Jesus is punished for our sin, in our place. The status of our relationship with God is signified by the ripping of the temple curtain. The flaming sword at the entrance to the Garden of Eden is removed. Access to God and the Tree of Life is now open to anyone who would trust in Jesus.
Resurrection	Jesus defeats death, gaining all authority in heaven and on earth.
Ascension	Jesus ascends to heaven in full view of the then Church, giving us an eternal perspective on life and fixing our hearts on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.
Pentecost	The Holy Spirit is sent to dwell within the people of Christ's Church, giving birth to the Church and a living relationship with Christ through His Holy Spirit,
Heaven	The eternal destination of the Church, who are being prepared like a bride for the completion of our relationship in Christ.

Historical perspective of Israel

The physical blood nation of Israel are the promised descendents of Abram. They were placed in Canaan to illustrate to the world the relationship Adam and Eve lost in the Garden of Eden. For example Canaan is described as a land flowing with milk and honey. The walls of Solomon's Temple were decorated like a garden, which is where the nations were

to meet with God. The relationships within the Song of Solomon are all based around a garden, and they describe each other using plants and fruit.

Yet when Israel fell away from God, the garden ceased to be. The crops failed, famine came, other nations invaded and a saviour was needed. Israel was not our salvation. This relationship is best understood in Deuteronomy 28 and the book of Judges. Ultimately Israel and Judah are exiled to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar from the promised land, just like Adam and Eve from Eden.

Now any Old Testament passage must be understood within this context and below are a number of examples of how this works.

A Saviour needed

All the way through the Old Testament saviours come and go; Noah, Moses, Gideon, Sampson, David but in every case they end up falling into sin. So we see that although they saved the people in their day, there is still a Saviour to come, who will deal with the ultimate exile from God.

When Matthew opens the New Testament with his gospel, he starts with the genealogy of Jesus and concludes with

"Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ." Mat 1:17

Notice that Jesus is the end to the exile in Babylon (not Ezra or Nehemiah), but actually Matthew is presenting Jesus as the end of all exiles, the "blessing" promised to Abram, and through Him to all the nations of the world.

a. Its not what you know but who you know

Esther is a beautiful story of a girl who becomes queen, and then uses her position to save the Jews from persecution.

I. Tell the Story

Use lots of detail to bring it alive. Highlight the tensions, relationships and create imaginative suspense. Emphasise that Esther had access to the king. That the reason she was able to secure the Jews salvation was because they had Esther as their friend.

II. The Saviour

Now once the story is told we can take a sideways jump and look at how we have a human being (refer to Jesus Birth) in the Trinity, who is our mediator and sits at Gods right hand on our behalf.

III. The Application

We need to trust in Jesus to be the mediator for us before God.

IV. The Action

We can look at being mediators for the vulnerable around us, the poor, bullied, asylum seekers and most importantly telling others of their need of a Saviour.

b. I need a hero, to trust in

Beware of misplacing the characters. For instance we are told to be like David and have the courage to kill the giant, but I am no action hero and Jesus does not inspire me to be one! Saul's entire army was quaking in their boots, hiding with the king in their tents. That is exactly where I am and my congregation, our knees are knocking with yours at the sight of giants like cancer, death, sin and Satan. What we need is a hero, a Saviour whom we can trust in, to kill the giant for us. It was only when the giant was dead, that the army sheltering in the shadow of David, ran off to fight their own smaller battles.

So again,

I. Tell the Story

Use lots of detail to bring it alive. Highlight the tensions, the fear, the size of Goliath. Emphasise even the King was scared. Present David as a hero to trust in, more than an example to be followed. Don't forget the bit when David chops the giants head off, and what he did with it!

II. The Saviour

Once the story is told we can take a sideways jump and look at how Jesus defeated Satan at the Cross, killing the giants of Death and Sin. Maybe consider the promise to Eve that her offspring would crush the head of the serpent.

III. Application

We need saving from our own sin, and death in forgiveness.

IV. The Action

What are the bad things that need to be dealt with in our lives? Lies, Swearing, Hatred, Bullying, Racism etc. David used his sling. Jesus died on the cross. What are appropriate ways, living in the shadow of David and Jesus to deal with the problems we face?

c. Is becoming a Christian that simple?

With a desire to make things simple and easy, we can end up devaluing a life in Christ. A gospel presentation can be so focused on how to become a Christian that we forget to explain what being a Christian is – “An eternally secure living relationship with the Triune God within the context of a Church community”. Now we wouldn't explain it in those words but Jesus call was to make disciples not converts.

To make the point lets look at one of Jesus miracles, the healing of the leper in Mark 1:40-45. After healing the man, Jesus tells him to do two things. First, do not tell anyone about the healing and second to present himself before the priests so he could be accepted back into society. Now the second one is a bit puzzling, looking from the culture of a western society obsessed with Fame, Success, Numbers and Power. Why doesn't Jesus want to draw attention to his unlimited power to do miracles?

My brother fixes computers for a living, and he is very good at his job. So much so that he is constantly getting phone calls from mates wanting advice about their computers. It is wrong that I go for months without speaking to him, and then only give him a call because I have a problem with my computer? I know my brother would prefer his mates to phone him for a chat, plan a BBQ and not to mention their broken computers, although he always comes up trumps and fixes them when they do!

Jesus did not come to be a doctor, handyman or wine producer. He came to mend the broken relationship between God and Man and to know us eternally. He healed this man because he had compassion on him Mark1:41, but he wanted much more than just to heal him. When word got out people came to him with their physical problems, but then left as you and I would after visiting the doctor.

In the next passage Mark 2:1-12 Jesus forgives a man lying on a mat, again confirming that His mission to mankind is first and foremost relational, fixing the problem between God and us.

So when presenting the gospel, forgiveness must be communicated in the context of an ongoing relationship with God through Jesus.

d. Salvation a way of life not an event

The Gospel can be seen by some as being solely for the purpose of conversion. Just trust in Jesus, ask to be forgiven and then you carry on your life as before but under the

title of Christian. Sin is to be avoided, try and do good works and attend Church every Sunday.

At the home of Zacchaeus, Jesus declared "today salvation has come to this house". He was not talking about a commitment, or just the transformation of Zacchaeus, fantastic as it was. Salvation had come to live, grow and multiply from this home. Zacchaeus was spreading salvation to the poor and all those he had wronged. The Gospel goes on working in our lives day by day, and can be applied into each and every situation we face.

The Gospel is like a multi-faceted diamond, refracting light into endless colours and beauty in all directions. Remember that the Gospel incorporates the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, pentecost and much more besides. When feeling weak and down we need to look to the Holy Spirit within us to give us life to the full. When knowing failure we need forgiveness. When bored or miserable we need the hope and perspective of eternity, remember after the disciples witnessed Jesus ascension, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy! When feeling selfish or unmotivated look to the self sacrifice of Jesus for us and His example of loving his neighbours while they were still sinners. .

Each of these amazing facets have endless applications for kids and adults alike and will give a reality and substance to the gospel message, within the context of a Christ and Gospel Centred Church.

Telling a good story

Imagine if you will; a campfire on the night before battle, soldiers staring into the glowing embers, a hand tight around the hilt of a sword (knuckles white with fear), cold damp moisture seeps up from the ground. Huddled together to keep warm, they are listening intently to a story told of a left-handed nobody called Ehud. He killed Eglon the fat King of Moab, losing his small sword in the king's belly. The soldiers roared laughing as they heard about the servants wondering if the king was on the toilet. Not very PC, yet all the ingredients for a great story. It's the fact that Ehud was left handed, on his own and with a sword so small it could be hidden strapped to his right leg. The underdog that would have captured the imagination of those poor soldiers, and given them courage as dawn drew nearer. God uses the weak and humble things. For us we see Jesus born in a stable, nowhere to lay his head, and being killed on a cross. It's all a stumbling block to the wise.

Have a think about how you could tell Matthew 6:28

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

Why not wait till you can sit the kids down in a meadow of daisies and wild flowers, maybe include a picnic. Give them Jesus' instruction to "consider the lilies of the field", then let them make daisy chains, play football and enjoy the meadow. Get them to draw and colour the flowers they find. Then while enjoying the picnic discuss the flowers' beauty and get them to think of Christ's beauty and righteousness, of the security we know in Jesus, that enables us to free ourselves from peer-pressure and the self-image culture.

Most children will know next to nothing of the stories of the Bible and how they are a key to knowing about Jesus and trusting in him. Very few bible stories hold any moral

teaching, like the story of Ehud, but point to trusting in the Saviour who was human just like us. Every opportunity I get I use to tell bible stories, to keep them alive in peoples memories. I try to use a wide range of visual aids to help tell the stories such as felt, OHP slides, Powerpoint and getting the kids to act out the story. See at the end of this manual for lists of resources.

Toddlers love a large Felt Board, with bright figures they can touch and put on the board themselves. Older kids also love to create their own scenes once the service is over.

Getting them to tell the story – get younger kids to be a flock of sheep. Create a pen with chairs and some blue cloth for quiet waters. Start with the sheep safe in the pen, and then take them out to graze. Go through Psalm 23, finding them still waters etc. Have an older child to be a wolf that chases them back into the pen. Every time they come back in, make sure you count them, and then lie down across the gap as the door. Then on one excursion out to the river, get one of the kids to run off and hide while the others panic to get back into the pen during the wolf attack. Then act out the lost sheep. Have loads of fun, and teach them all the pictures of Jesus in the different stories. You can even give each sheep a name.

Learning to tell stories better : story telling is a real art and I make it my business to learn from others. I read lots of children's books and adult novels. I record radio plays, book and film reviews on to my MP3 player and listen to them while at the gym or in the car.

I seek to understand how words work well, how images are formed best with the least amount of words. I am interested particularly in short stories and how the writer creates an entire plot in just a few paragraphs. One Line Story! Oscar Wild, C.S.Lewis are real masters!

Practice makes perfect : I tell the story over and over, usually pacing up and down the room. I start by fixing in my mind the audience (toddlers, infant assembly, all age worship, kids club). Then trying different words, phrases, lines and approach, imagining how it will be received and understood. I would love to be able to use rhyme as this is an excellent way of fixing things in peoples memory. Have a read of the Gruffalo story or the Bear Hunt and see what I mean.

8. Quizzes

Quizzes are a great teaching tool, and can be seen by the kids as great entertainment. Again watch what works on the TV game shows.

Making it a Game :- The best way to add fun to a quiz is to have a method of scoring. A simple way to do this is to play a game of Tic-Tac-Toe or Matching Pairs. When a team gets a question right they can take a turn at the game. The team who has collected the most pairs wins. These kind of quizzes encourage the less academic kids to take part with real enthusiasm, and even win vital points for their team.

Making the Visual Aids :- It is well worth spending money and taking time on the props for each quiz, making them so they last and can be used a number of times over the year. For example with the Matching Pairs, create 12 numbered squares with an attractive font for the numbers. Make them colourful and bright. Then create 6 pairs of pictures to hide behind each square. You can also create a number of sets, so you can vary it week by week. e.g. Wild Animals, Cars, Cartoon Characters etc.

e.g. Here is a Fish Game I made, where behind each fish is a weight, and the idea is to get the heaviest "Catch of the Day". So when a team answers a question correctly, they then choose a fish, and hidden behind the fish is the weight. The team with the heaviest catch at the end wins. You get nothing if you find the "Red Herring" of which there are two. You can also use the Fish with Numbers for the Relay Quiz (see below).



Relay Quiz :- To the left of the kids you place a board with cards numbered 1 to 12, like the fish ones above, (but you could make cardboard crackers for Christmas or Bunnies for Easter etc.)

The first team selects a runner, who stands in front of the question master. You then start a timer for one minute. The question master has a list of twelve numbered questions. As soon as you call "GO", the child runs to collect one card with a number on it and runs back to give it to the question master. Their team has to then answer the question he/she picked off the board. When answered they run and get another one. Don't wait for hands to go up, just get them to shout the answer, as soon as you hear the correct answer they can run again. You collect the numbers that they

answered correctly. At the end of the minute you record the score, and place the numbers back on the board for the next team. By the time each team has had a number of goes, every child will have learnt many of the questions, and the more goes they have the more they should be able to answer in one minute.

The Answers in Front of You! Quiz :-

This is a great quiz, to teach facts the kids don't already know, because all the answers are in front of them on the wall.

Equipment needed

- Answers to the quiz written on pieces of card and bluetacked to a wall or projected on to the wall.
- The Hot Seat (either an arm chair, or a chair different to those everyone else has.)
- Spotlight – to shine on the person and add pressure – don't shine it directly into their eyes.
- Timer – either a tape of a clock ticking or music that lasts a minute e.g. Countdown Music.

Get a volunteer to sit in the Hot Seat; they have a minute to answer as many questions as they can. All the answers are in front of them. If you have ten volunteers, then the first few questions will be heard by everyone 10 times, and everyone is listening for the correct answer, so when its their go, they will get more right.

9. Games

Kids, and especially lads, have lots of energy to use up. Team games are great for helping children experience fairness, justice, losing, winning, teamwork, community, sharing and caring. The traditional Youth Club model of Snooker and Table Tennis, can encourage individuality and community. If you do run a group with these kind of activities incl. Wii and Play Stations, I would strongly suggest including at least two compulsory team games that includes everyone.

You can make a good game bad and a bad game good

What I mean by this is if you totally believe in the game, you enjoy it, it will work. It doesn't matter whether the game is good or not you can make it good just by going for it and being enthusiastic. Believe in all you do

Practice makes perfect

Before you try a game with the young people practice it first within your team, your friends, and your family. The reason for this is you need to get it spot on perfect first time. If you don't know what you're doing the young people will get bored and lose interest, they just want to get on with it. Secondly make sure you have all the equipment to hand that you need for each game

Professional

You have to make sure that everything you do is as professional as possible, the young people get good stuff from the world, the radio, TV, and cinema so we have to be better than good, we have to be great in all that we do. For ideas I recommend watching Saturday morning TV, i.e. *'The Saturday Show'*, *'Ministry Of Mayhem'*, Weekday afternoon, early evening TV, and game shows, etc... the idea of this is to see what works, what gets young peoples attention and if you can duplicate that in your youth program, that's great

Justice and Fairness

Nearly all children and adults have an inbuilt sense of justice. Although they will try to cheat, if the referee makes a wrong decision, they will get very annoyed. So make sure all rules are explained clearly at the beginning of every game, even if the game is well known to all. Also point out dangers clearly, e.g. if it is a race to pick up a ball, warn them of the chance of banging heads, or knocking each other over. If playing the Hockey Game (see below) warn them about swinging the bat high or throwing the bat. If a rule is not adhered to then deduct points, or take the person out of the games for a couple of rounds.

Age grouping

For safety reasons and to make games work you need to make sure you don't match big children against small children, where possible. For example numbering teams in order of height, and then calling out numbers.

Team work & Community

All inclusive

Try to use games that put everyone on a level playing field, or even favours the small and younger ones.

For instance you could pitch a 5 year old against an adult leader on the following challenges

- Race on hands and knees through chair legs
- Answer five questions on Cbeebies characters
- First one to pass their whole body through a small Hoola-Hoop
- Who can be lifted the highest off the ground. Each contestant can pick anyone in the room to lift them up safely.

Non-exclusive

Try to avoid games that exclude people as the game goes on, for example Musical Chairs. However, if the game is about trying to get people out by hitting them below the knees with a soft ball, then those who are out join those on the outside trying to get everyone else out.

Examples of games that include everyone

Circle Games

Pirates and Coastguards

Items needed : 1 light plastic skittle

Sit everyone in a circle on the floor and place the skittle in the middle. Select one person to be a pirate. The pirate needs to leave the room, while you chose a couple of coastguards from the children sitting down. The pirate is then brought back into the room, to capture the skittle. They do this by picking it up and taking it (not throwing it) out of the circle, without being touched by the coastguards. The coastguards can't move until the skittle has been touched by the pirate. The pirate can pretend to swipe the skittle, so as to reveal who the coastguards are.

Bounce the Table Tennis Ball(s) :

Items needed : 3 Tables Tennis Balls, Chairs, Hard Lino Floor

Sit everyone in a circle on chairs facing inwards. Throw a single Table Tennis ball up in the air so it bounces high in the middle of the circle. As you throw it, shout a name, and that person has to run into the circle and catch the ball before its second bounce. Once everyone has had ago, try it with two balls. (I have never seen anyone catch three)

Pass the ball/ring

Stand or sit in a circle with one person in the middle. Use an object small enough to hide in a hand. You can have a piece of string that goes right round circle that everyone holds with both hands and on the string is a ring. They then pass the ring around the circle **secretly**. The idea is for the person in the middle to guess who has the ring. Everyone pretends to be passing it on, so as to confuse and trick the them.

Hockey

Equipment (4 x Hockey bats – Tightly rolled up newspaper, covered in Red or Black masking tape) for the two teams.

Line up everyone in size order, and then chose two teams by selecting every other child. Then get the teams to sit along the side line of a marked out pitch, in size order and number them, 1 being the tallest down to the smallest. Use chairs to mark out goals at each end, and place two hockey bats(see above) in each goal and a small soft ball on the centre spot.

Then call out one or two numbers, say 1 and 3. The children who have been numbered 1 & 3 on respective teams run collect a bat and then try to hit the ball into the other team's goals.

Rules

1. Never throw a bat, even after you have lost a goal!
2. Only the ball must be hit with the bat, certainly not the other opponents or spectators
3. Once a goal is scored, place the bat back in your own goal and return to your seat.
4. If your number has not been called out, do not try and grab the ball, if it comes your way, sit still and let it bounce off you.
5. If the whistle is blown stop running and freeze

Hiding a ball

One team goes out of the room, while the other team hides a ball. The team searching is timed on how fast they can find a ball. After the ball is found, the other team goes out and tries to find it faster.

Zone Quiz

Each child is given a coloured arm band. Place three zones A,B,C in a large room. Have a list of multiple answer questions A,B,C. The kids must stand under the letter of the answer they think is correct. The child loses an arm band if they are wrong. They can carry on playing and running to the zone, but it's the team with the most arm bands at the end of the quiz.

10. Resources

The 21st century has so much to offer in terms of resources. You can go online, order something and have it on your doorstep in a couple of days. Here are some good website were you can buy stuff or just get ideas or images etc...

Books

Centre for Rural Mission - <http://www.ruralmissions.org.uk>

The Power of Story Telling 25p

Children's Work Training Manual £15

Children's Work Audit £5

Footsteps £5 (Teaching material – games, quizzes, craft, ideas etc.)

Children and Prayer £5

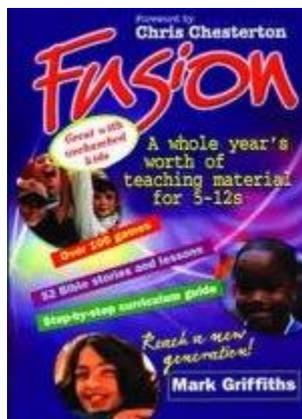
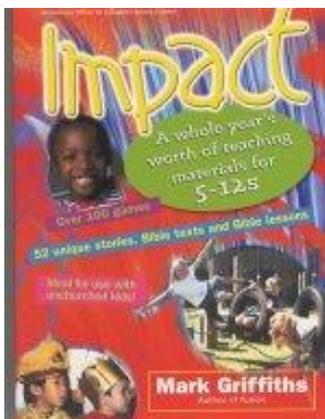
Amazing things happen when children learn to pray effectively. The author has hosted a number of special Prayer Days for children and seen how this contributes to growth in their faith.

Light Live by Scripture Union

www.scriptureunion.org.uk/lightlive/

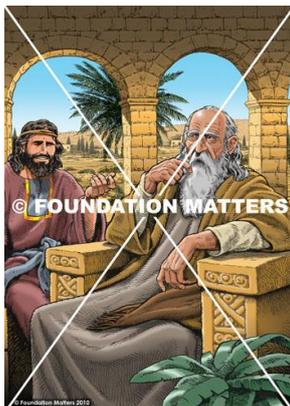
This is a great FREE! online resource, packed full of ideas, for anything from a Toddler Group to a Teenage work. Once registered, you set up details of each group with an age range, and it will give you an entire program each week, with stories, games, colouring sheets and references to other Scripture Union material, relating to that week's theme.

Fusion & Impact resources by Mark Griffiths – Can be ordered on Amazon or at www.eden.co.uk



These are fantastic resources packed full of great ideas that cover a year of material. Great stories, themes and ideas!

FoundatFoundation Matters www.foundationmatters.org/



Powerpoint resources, including 3D pictures. You can download stories from the New and Old Testaments

<http://store.foundationmatters.org/>
www.hillsong.com/kids
www.duggiedugdug.co.uk

11. Contact's and Youth Organisations

Wesleyan Reform Union

Church House
123 Queen's Street
Sheffield
S1 2DU

0114 2721938

YPD - Young Peoples Department

ypd.co@thewru.co.uk

Development and Outreach Co-ordinator

doc@thewru.co.uk

Youth Organisations that could be operating in your area, and help/advise you with your youth work.

Scripture Union

Web site : www.scriptureunion.org.uk

Urban Saints

Urban Saints Support Centre, Kestin House,
45 Crescent Road, Luton, LU2 0AH

Phone: 01582 589850

Fax: 01582 721702

Email : email@urbansaints.org

Web site : www.urbansaints.org/

Youth for Christ Head Office (National Director: Gavin Calver)

Business Park East, Unit D2, Coombswood Way,
Halesowen, West Midlands, B62 8BH

Tel: 0121 502 9620, Fax: 0121 561 4035

Email : yfc@yfc.co.uk

Web Site : www.yfc.co.uk/

Youth-180

The Cube, Edwards Street, Nuneaton, CV11 5RH.

tel: 024 7637 3180

email: info@youth-180.org

web: www.youth-180.org

United Beach Missions

Runs excellent children's and youth work, with fantastic on the job training and opportunities for youth workers of all ages.

www.ubm.org.uk/

Main Office: office@thebeachteam.org

UBM, Spring Cottage, Spring Road, Leeds, LS6 1AD.

Tel: 0113 2304362