

Opening the Bible with children

So you're opening the Bible with a group of children.

Opening the Bible with children is both a massive privilege and a huge responsibility. Children learn in lots of different ways so we want to make sure that we don't use the same methods each week or also simply teach the way that we learnt as children.

So let's have a think of a few different ways that we can open the Bible and engage children with the Word of God.

The first is the written word.

The most common way we experience the Bible is through the written word. It is so important that children get used to handling the Bible, knowing how to find books, chapters and verses and reading the words. Children need to progress from simple children's Bibles with pictures to more advanced versions that are closer to the actual translations of the Bible.

However, it is also important to remember that not all children will find reading the Bible easy. There will be those who struggle with literacy generally and those who simply don't enjoy reading.

It is still important to encourage all children to handle God's Word but we may need to think of other ways to engage children with the Bible.

The second is drama.

Drama is rooted in story and so was much of the ministry of Jesus. The parables that Jesus told helped to capture the imagination of the people and enabled them to grasp the Word of God. Jesus may have used props, he acted out scenes visually and he drew people into the stories with Him.

Many people learn through doing rather than reading and listening, and this especially applies to many children who find it hard to sit still for long. Acting out a Bible story is a great way for children to hear, learn and remember God's Word.

And there are many resources out there that can help you with how to do that.

The third way is by listening.

Sometimes it's hard to listen to the same voice all the time. For people who learn best by listening especially, but also simply to help keep all children's attention, think about using different voices for reading the Bible. This might simply be the voices of the children in the group or it might be using recordings of others to help bring the story alive. Think about how you can help children hear the words of the Bible differently.

The last way is through art.

Creative learners need a way to express themselves and worksheets do not always cut it. When was the last time you encouraged children to paint or draw a picture about a story from God's word rather than simply colouring one in? Allowing children to draw, paint, build, make or create something as they respond to God's word can be amazing. It allows them freedom to express what the Holy Spirit is perhaps communicating to them. It can also be a really good way to check that they have understood the story.

Opening the Bible with children is one of the fundamental building blocks of children's ministry in our congregations. So let us strive constantly to make better the means and methods with which we help children engage with the Word of God as part of their ongoing discipleship.