

# primary school scripture

the MINISTRY PAPERS

## missed opportunities...

Harry can't believe it - another broken hip! That's both hips in less than two years. It could take months to recover, if at all. As he lies in bed thinking about the implications, Harry's mind turns, as it often does, to his scripture class. He prays for them - for Graeme and Heidi and Seth and Ari and Ellie and, of course, for Jake, who seems to need it more than most.

Who's going to teach them while he's bunged up in hospital? Everybody's so busy these days. They hardly seem to have time to raise their own kids properly let alone teach scripture to other people's kids. And it's true that it's hard work and the pay's not great...

6 months later and Harry was confined to a wheelchair in a nursing home - his scripture teaching days were over. And unfortunately no-one was found to replace him. The school decided to opt for twice a term scripture assemblies rather than the normal weekly lessons. They require fewer people and free up more class time to meet the demands of the curriculum.

Some of the parents were surprised to hear of the change but not concerned enough to do anything about it. A bit more time spent on maths and spelling couldn't be a bad thing!

And the kids - well they missed old Harry for a while but soon forgot about him...

and soon forgot about the Bible...

and soon forgot about Jesus...

**LEADERS:...**before taking someone through this paper, review the two key introductory MINISTRY PAPERS: 'the ministry training church' and 'meeting one to one'.

Connect. Grow. Serve. After **connecting** to God through trusting in Christ, a vital way we can **grow** is through a growth group and a vital way we can **serve** is through a ministry team.

This MINISTRY PAPER is designed to help your school scripture ministry team leader introduce you to what it means to be part of serving in the **school scripture ministry team** at our church.

It's much more than a training tool, it's all about relationships: who you minister *for*, who you minister *with*, and who you minister *to*...



*Ephesians 4 is a great starting point for all our ministry teams...*

read **Ephesians 4:1-16**

1. Who are we ultimately ministering *for*? Explain.

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2. What do we learn here about those we minister *with*?

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3. What do we learn here about those we minister *to*?

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4. We must 'speak the truth in love'. What is this? Why is it crucial?

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5. *What personal challenges are you aware of in terms of playing your part in this ministry team?*

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6. *What role will being actively involved in a growth group play in enabling you to carry out this ministry well?*

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# flexible & fixed

Many of our ministry teams are focused on a particular age group or demographic, e.g. kids club, youth group, university ministry. That makes sense because each of these groups has its own particular needs. Each group has its own special challenges and opportunities. However, it's sometimes easy to recognise only what's **unique** about each group. It's easy to forget what **all people**, whatever age or stage, have in common. This section of the paper helps us think through what's **flexible** and what's **fixed** in our ministry to children through school scripture...



read **1 Corinthians 9:19-23**

1. What is *flexible* in Paul's approach to ministry?

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2. What is *fixed* in Paul's approach to ministry?

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3. Referring to the 'profile of a school scripture child' opposite, in what ways will ministry to these children need to be flexible?

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4. In all of this, what needs to stay fixed in our ministry to these children?

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## challenges and opportunities

Have another look at the 'profile of a school scripture child'. Think through the particular challenges and opportunities of this ministry...

what are some of the <b>challenges</b> ?	what are some ideas for <b>facing</b> these?
what are some of the <b>opportunities</b> ?	what are some ideas for <b>making the most</b> of these?

## profile of a school scripture child

*It goes without saying that kids are great. But it also goes without saying that kids are kids! So to be a good Scripture Teacher you need to get your head around who these little ones (and not so little ones) are so that you're armed with the right expectations.*

### open

Scepticism and suspicion are the fruit of life's disappointments. Children have usually experienced less of these than adults and are therefore quite willing to accept what they are taught as being true.

### high energy

Most children, are blessed with boundless energy. The later in the day, the more restless they tend to get. If you have any say in what time your scripture class is scheduled, aim for sometime in the morning.

### short attention span

The rule of thumb for how long the average child can remain focused on one thing is 5 minutes plus their age - and that's when they're interested! So mix it up and build in opportunities to be active.

### concrete to abstract

One of the biggest changes that occurs during primary school (often around the ages of 8-10) is that kids develop the ability to think in "abstract" ways and about "abstract" concepts.

### sensitive

Children, even the rough ones, are very tender creatures. They are easily damaged and words can be even more hurtful than "sticks and stones".

### kids priorities

It's been said that play is the work of a child. And so understandably, kids often don't share our priorities. If we approach a scripture lesson too much like work, it probably won't work!



# 30 minutes...

...That's the duration of your average weekly scripture lesson. What can you hope to achieve in such a short space of time? How can you make the most of it? The answer is to see the brevity of the lesson as a positive rather than a negative and to turn it to your advantage. With a little thought and planning, you can easily become the best thing that happens in the classroom week. The secret is to try to communicate just **one big idea** but to have a whole lot of fun doing it. And the beauty of it is that you don't have to deal with the aftermath - that's the teacher's job!

## carpe diem

The opportunity to teach school scripture in NSW is not one we should take lightly. Many children who attend Christian Scripture lessons at school have no other exposure to the gospel. We should indeed "seize the day".

Under current legislation, government schools must allow a minimum of 30 minutes per week for "religious instruction" conducted by approved community-based teachers - that's you!

But the sad fact is that scripture teachers are a dying breed - literally! The average scripture teacher is well into their 60s and when they hang up their boots there are insufficient new recruits enlisting for the fight. In many schools around the state scripture classes are a thing of the past not because of hostility towards the gospel from the outside but because of apathy towards the gospel from within.

What can be done about this sad state of affairs? Well with conscription still a dirty word we can only rely on Christian people with a desire to serve, putting their hands up for this front line ministry.

So good on you for recognizing what a tragedy it would be if this opportunity went begging. And hey, while you're at it, why not consider teaching more than one class - you've already done all the preparation, why not make the most of it and seize just another half hour of the day in the hope that some might be saved as God does his will with your efforts?

Chances are you won't have much say in what material you use in your scripture class. Such decisions are usually made by a committee attached to a local "minister's fellowship". But you certainly have the freedom to adapt the material to best suit the needs of your class - and that's where the fun starts! Your goal in any lesson should be to teach one big idea **in a number of different ways**. Once again, flexible & fixed go hand in hand.

Mixing up your lesson will hold the kids' interest, help you to reinforce your big idea, and allow you to cater for a wide variety of learning styles. The table below contains some examples of how this might be done.

method	description	benefits
<b>games</b>	even games played in the seat will be an immediate hit with kids	provide a brain break and can often be related to the big idea
<b>songs</b>	Colin Buchanan, emu kids and Johnny Burns all produce fun Bible-based songs. If you can use actions, all the better	cater to another learning style and are a great memory aid
<b>memory verses</b>	choose a key verse that clearly captures the big idea you want to convey. Repeat where possible	get kids into the Bible and can often be turned into a game - always a bonus!
<b>stories</b>	kids learn best through stories. The challenge is to teach not just the story but its significance	the Bible is a story so teaching the stories of the Bible is natural and interesting
<b>workbooks</b>	reading, drawing, puzzles, cartoons, code breakers etc. are all good paper tasks so long as they're not overdone	provide some quiet time and an opportunity for higher-level brainwork



1. Which of these teaching methods do you feel **most** comfortable with? Why is that?

2. Which of these teaching methods do you feel **least** comfortable with? Why is that?

# getting equipped

There's nothing worse than being given a job to do but no help in doing it. Failure becomes inevitable. We all need to be equipped and we all need to keep being equipped if we're to minister effectively to the children in our Scripture Classes. Whether its knowledge, skills, or just having the right attitude towards our ministry, we all need to work at staying sharp so that nothing hinders children coming to know Jesus. Below are some examples of Australian resources that everyone in School Scripture Ministry should have access to and become familiar with.

Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." **Luke 18:16**



## teaching & training resources



### Connect (CEP/Youthworks)

This has become the standard material in "protestant" scripture classes throughout much of Australia. And for good reason. It's a comprehensive curriculum and comes with quality add-on resources like student workbooks, CDs and glossy visual aids. There's usually too much material to cover in the average 30 minute lesson so you should feel free to pick and choose what you feel will work best for your class in any given lesson.



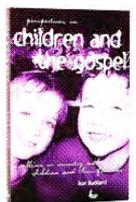
### Their God is So Big (Matthias Media)

An excellent introduction to kids and kids ministry. Contains helpful sections on childrens' abilities, writing teaching material from scratch, and lots of great hints on how to teach an effective lesson. Focuses on 3-7 year-olds.



### The A-Z of Ministry with Children (Scripture Union)

A great collection of kids ministry ideas and helpful practical tips from two of Australia's veteran kids workers. A is for abstract ideas, Z is for zest and there's so much helpful stuff inbetween. The dozen or so pages on illustrating a story are invaluable for those of us with little talent in the art department!



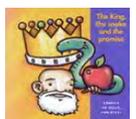
### Perspectives on Children & the Gospel (Scripture Union)

A helpful investigation of the issues surrounding ministry to children. Part 1 includes a good exploration of the issue of "conversion" in children. Part 2 is made up of 20 principles to guide kids ministry. You might not agree with all the author's conclusions but it will certainly make you think.



### Remember the Lord (& many others)

CDs & DVDs from Australia's most loved Christian children's performer - Colin Buchanan. Invaluable for their Bible-based lyrics and fun music. Songs for every situation whether you're teaching from the Old Testament or the New.



### The King, the Snake and the Promise

is a great overview of the whole Bible story in song & narration.



## child protection

### safety first

While the focus of this paper has understandably been on meeting the spiritual needs of the children in our care, we must remember that we minister to the whole child and as such are concerned for their total wellbeing.

A significant part of this concern is ensuring that the Scripture class environment is one of **uncompromised safety** for every child. This is our "duty of care". Sadly this duty has not always been taken seriously in churches and some terrible stories of abuse have resulted.

Our Child Protection policy - "Breaking the Silence" - aims to protect both children (first and foremost) and teachers from the terrible effects of abuse.

### checklist

- do you know who to talk to at your church if you want to report an incident or ask a question about child protection?
- have you completed the Breaking the Silence training so that you are aware of your responsibilities for notification of abuse and the signs of abuse?
- do you have a copy of the Breaking the Silence brochures "Our Policy" and "Our Code of Conduct"?
- do you have a position description?
- have you filled out the Working with Children Check?