

## Preparing to Lead a Children's Meeting

The notes below should help you to prepare to lead either an Infant's or Junior's meeting. There are some principles which relate to both age groups and there are some hints which relate to a specific group.

Realistically, you shouldn't be expected to get all this perfect and sorted straight away! The notes below show how you could do the job ONE DAY - it will take lots of practice before you are able and confident to do it all. This just lays it all out before you so you know what you are aiming for eventually. For those who have never led before, just getting through it might be considered a success for you! I remember my first leading experience consisted of being bright red all evening and mumbling a lot!

Success is not about programmes, techniques or experience - it's about whether you are willing to let the Holy Spirit use you - in one way you've succeeded by just being willing to have go!

Have a go at including what you can of these principles and hopefully this will be the beginning of an exciting journey of discovery for you.

### **General Spiritual Principles**

#### **1. Leading is not about personality or performance**

Don't think you will wow everybody if you put on a great 'show' with loads of gimmicks, entertainment and 'fun stuff'. That's not the leader's job. People can't see Jesus if you are in the way! Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit whilst you prepare and as you lead, so that Jesus is the main attraction, not you!

#### **2. The leader's job is to facilitate the message and the team**

You are a 'link' person - the 'glue' that makes sure the individual building blocks of the night flow together and all convey the same message.

#### **3. Know the application of the day.**

Make sure you know exactly what the application is for the meeting you are leading. Make sure you *understand* what the application means in its entirety - you can't teach others what you don't know or understand yourself! If you're not sure - ask!

#### **4. Know how the application relates to the Theme Verse and story.**

The individual parts of a programme shouldn't have been chosen at random. Applications should have been derived from the story, and the Theme Verses chosen to backup the story and application. So make sure you know what the link is between the story and its application, and between the Theme Verse and the application. Make sure you *understand* how these parts relate to each other and why they have been chosen. If you don't get it or are unsure what the thinking is, please ask!

## **General Practical Principles**

### **1. Leaders lead and followers follow.**

(a) People need to be given a lead in order to know what to do next. If you let everybody do what they think is right at the time in their own mind you will end up with chaos. So know what the schedule is - the timings - how long things should take, what time things should be starting, etc. etc. You won't always get things to happen on time because you can't be 100% in control of how long people take to do their items, but try to keep one eye on the clock so we stand as good a chance as we can to give each item its fair time and ultimately finish on time.

(b) Be clear when you do things like lead songs - know the actions for example and do them boldly not apologetically. If the leader is half-hearted or apparently embarrassed, so will everybody else be!

(c) Don't let power go to your head; don't start barking orders - that's not pretty! Remember - it's not about you!

### **2. Pay attention!**

Remember how your job is to be the 'glue'? In order to succeed in this you have to be constantly watching and carefully listening to everything that everyone else says and does from the front. You have to be continually thinking, analysing and asking yourself the questions, "are we getting today's point across?" and "do the kids get it? Do they understand?".

Listen to other people's applications - are they clear, are they right?! If anything needs clarifying, correcting, explaining or reinforcing - that's your job! That's why it is so important that you know and fully understand the application. You should be the one who has the firmest grip of the theme and can relate it to the kids in a number of different ways. You can't be locked into a pre-prepared set of dialogues (a script you wrote to follow) because you have to see what is needed as the night unfolds. Understanding the theme is far better than learning it off by heart. This is what the links between items are for. **However...** if somebody's application was good, don't repeat it again! There is such a thing as overkill! Don't snatch the power of a good application away because you think you have to say it again!

### **3. Have fun and enjoy yourself.**

If you are relaxed and enjoy yourself, so will the kids. Humour is a great communicator. But don't let it become a 'show' - everything you do should have a purpose. Everything should reinforce the application. Don't fall into the trap of thinking leading is all about being goofy and entertaining the kids - if we wanted that we'd hire a clown!

## **Hints and Tips - Infants**

### **1. Sensory Overkill**

Younger kids aren't so keen on extreme sensory experiences! For example, *louder* is not necessarily *better* for littlies, *darkness* is just plain scary for some littlies! If you're leading the infants meeting be gentler, smile, be protective towards these vulnerable and precious little ones.

### **2. Age Appropriateness**

Be careful about your illustrations and analogies when you're teaching or reinforcing the application. Some of these children have only just started school so it's not a greatly familiar environment yet. Their life experience is still very limited and they won't be able to relate to lots & lots of stuff. Keep your illustrations simple and basic.

### **3. Developmental Age**

Don't expect them to be able to cope with big or complicated concepts - they're not thick – it's just that their brains haven't developed enough yet to be able to process complicated ideas and concepts! Keep it simple and keep asking yourself, "Would a 4-year old understand this?"

### **4. Vocabulary**

Think carefully about the vocabulary you use - use normal language not 'language of the kingdom' (jargon and Christian phraseology that the kids won't understand).

### **5. Team Work Prior to the Meeting**

Before the meeting, communicate with the Way-In team so they know when they're going to be up.... and don't steal their thunder!

### **6. Singing - it's like Marmite!**

Try to choose songs which have some connection with the theme (difficult I know). Aim for one song at the start, one at the end and maybe one in the middle. Remember, littlies need songs which are simple to sing and don't take too much reading ability for them to be able to join in.

## **Hints and Tips - Juniors**

### **1. Reality vs Image**

Don't try to be cool, trendy or 'in' - they'll see right through you! Be yourself - they'll see that too and respect you for it.

### **2. Vocabulary**

Talk their language - think carefully about your vocabulary - don't use Christian buzzwords, jargon or 'language of the kingdom'. For example, say "God" or "Jesus", not "the Lord", etc. Don't talk down to them or be condescending; consider treating them as young adults!

### **3. Relate To Their World Not The Other Way Round**

Use illustrations and analogies they are going to relate to – Primary School is a massive part of a child's life and lots of major, life-shaping stuff happens there - tap into their world and experience.

Think about what kids are into, their mindset and 'level' and tap into that. Lots of values are taught in school (both classroom and playground) - a few bad ones need contradicting with explanations of why, but the large majority need reinforcing because they are good - tap into that world and mindset! Don't force a child to understand your world and life-context - you need to move to theirs!

### **4. Team Work Prior to the Meeting**

On the day, communicate with the way-in team so they know when they're going to be up.... and don't steal their thunder!

### **5. Singing - it's like Marmite!**

Try to choose songs which have some connection with the theme (difficult I know). Aim for two or three songs at the start, one rousing anthem(!) at the end and maybe have a spare ready for the middle in case you need it. Remember that older Juniors (year 5 & 6s, especially boys) don't really like singing cheesy songs with cringy actions – they're more into R&B and Hip-Hop!!

Don't fall into the trap of thinking that singing = worship. There's a lot more to worship than songs – be creative and use your imagination if you want to include worship ☺