



*kids talks

the MINISTRY PAPERS

slapping it together

It could be any Sunday morning – someone, somewhere is waking up feeling pretty crusty after going to bed late Saturday night.

Suddenly, it dawns on them that they are rostered on for that morning's Kids Talk at church.

Frantically, they scurry about, thinking of any idea that they could loosely connect to "something about God." They grab the breakfast cereal – "surely there's something here I can say. God is just like, just like... nah, no good".

They look around, "What else is there?" It's not coming together very easily.

Finally, in the shower they grasp the soap. "Eureka!" they cry. "God is just like soap, he makes us clean!"

"That'll be good enough, they're only kids after all."

Looking at the clock – they notice its only 8.30am – plenty of time for another half hour of sleep.

Believe it or not, this is not the right approach to kids' talks. There should be no "good enough" or "they're just children." Children are important to God. We need to keep this in mind, as we prepare to teach children.

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

Our church has two main 'arms': small groups & ministry teams. This 'kids talks' paper relates to the **ministry teams** arm. It's designed to help your kids talks ministry leader introduce you to what it means to be part of our kids talks ministry.



kick off

1. What are some bad reasons we might have a kids' talk ?

2. What are some good reasons we might have a kids' talk ?



investigate

read Luke 18:15-17

3. What does Jesus have to say about children?



think & apply

4. How might we hinder children from coming to Jesus?



ideas for discussion

What do you think are the key ingredients of the "perfect" kids talk?

the kids talk...

For many good reasons the Kids Talk has become a common part of many church gatherings. However, good intentions don't always transpire into a good kids talk. While many attempts are both inventive and entertaining, it doesn't necessarily follow that children are comprehending what we're saying. It's easy to forget that the kids talk actually exists to teach children about Jesus. We need to work hard at kids talks so that we are actually reach our audience.



dodgy kids talks 101

It's easy to come up with a bad kids talk. A bad talk is one that exhibits any of the characteristics listed below. Preparation is key to avoiding these deadly mistakes.

- **moralising:** turning the Bible is a list of do's and don'ts
- **confusing & complicated:** too many points and too little clarity
- **pointless:** possibly with high entertainment value but nothing more
- **long & boring:** everyone knows what this means
- **predictable:** the same old , same old, same old, same old...
- **incomplete:** exciting talk... right up until the bit about Jesus!

a good kids talk is:

• clear

You need to understand your bible passage so that you can express it in one simple statement, or one Big Idea. Try to do too much in your talk and you will achieve less. Remember an individual talk is part of a weekly diet of bible teaching.

ONE TALK = ONE POINT

Language should also be clear. Look at children's books. There are no big words. There are no unnecessary words. In fact, each word is carefully chosen. Words AND pictures tell the story, so you do not need to state every detail. Use short sentences. Break your information into chunks. Repetition keeps children's attention and helps children to learn.

• concrete

The Bible is full of abstract concepts. Children are concrete thinkers. The challenge of a children's talk therefore, is to take an abstract concept such as forgiveness or grace and teach it to concrete thinkers. For this reason, stories are better than object talks because they take an abstract concept and put it into the context of relationships. Therefore, where possible you should tell stories.

• creative

All people have limited attention spans. Children generally have even shorter attention spans. We need to present talks in an engaging manner to stimulate children's senses. A great way to do this is by encouraging involvement. You should also use a variety of different styles to present your talks so that they do not become boring or predictable.



how do you say?

There are some jargon words that are good for children to understand – like sin, for example. However, where possible you should avoid jargon and try to communicate a big concept in simple words. Sometimes you may even need to use a number of sentences. For really big concepts you may need to write an entire talk which communicates the concept using words and pictures. There's always another way of saying something. Have a go at putting the following concepts into something children can understand:

* salvation:

* justification

* grace

* penal substitutionary atonement.

* circumcision



it's for kids...

It should be quite obvious by its very name that kids talks are for kids. The thing is, adults often learn a lot from the kids talk too. However, this should not result in a change of focus. As soon as you try to write a talk for both children and adults, the children get left behind. It's easy to lose focus and start focussing on what will generate a laugh from the adults in the congregation. As soon as you do that, realise you're probably going right over the children's heads. Any teaching the adults receive should be incidental. Keep it aimed at children and you won't miss your target.

smarter than you think...

It's easy to think that because "they're children" that there are ideas and concepts beyond their understanding.

People are often surprised by the questions children ask. Questions such as:

- does God hate?
- why didn't God create everyone to believe in him?
- why did God make pain?

It shows that children are thinking a lot more than we often expect. For this reason we need to take them through the Scriptures; we need to teach them the whole counsel of God. We should not teach them the same simplistic concepts every week.

The challenge is to communicate big concepts in a way that children can understand. Simplify but don't dumb it down.

choose one of the above questions – How would you answer it in a way that a child could understand?

get them involved...

From the following Retention Rates, it is evident that involvement increases learning. Therefore we should make every effort to involve the children.

hear: 10% **hear & see:** 50% **hear, see & do:** 80-90%

the congregation can:

- make sound effects
- be a character
- be a group – eg. a crowd, the Israelites
- add atmosphere
- repeat the story
- draw, photograph or film

finishing well...

Many children's talks fail at their conclusion. The talk up to that point was vivid and engaging but unfortunately the ending is rambling and unclear. If the children don't grasp what it was all about, then the talk was a waste of time. For this reason, make sure you know how you will finish by scripting a clear statement of conclusion. This can be anything between one and five sentences. Your ability to do this will depend on how well you have understood your passage and been able to reduce it to one big idea.

It is a good idea to memorise the conclusion as it is essential to finish strongly.

scripting

It's recommended that you write a full script for your talk. The advantages of scripting are:

- it ensures that you put careful work into your talk.
- it keeps you from rambling during delivery.
- having a full script means you have a handy resource to share or use in future.



Some styles of talks lend themselves more easily to being read from a script (e.g. narrated drama). For others you will need to work hard at memorising so that your talk flows smoothly during delivery.

creative ideas

They say that variety is the spice of life. Variety certainly ensures that children's talks don't get boring and predictable. You don't have to teach the same way every week. The one thing that must remain consistent is gospel-centred biblical teaching – but there are numerous ways of getting this across.

You can teach using:

- **narrated dramas** – a narrator reads the action (not every detail) and the actors bring to life the narrator's words. Once the talk is written this method requires little preparation and is very visual.
- **puppet plays:** children love puppets. However, puppetry takes some coordination and practice is needed so that the puppeteers are not reading their lines as they go.
- **the interview:** these are often scripted and normally quite short.
- **lone storyteller:** the lone story teller has a large variety of different methods at their disposal. These normally take a lot more preparation by the individual.
- **OHP talks:** using cut-outs shapes, shadows and coloured OHTs to tell a story
- **chalk talks:** the story teller draws the story as they tell it. Requires practice and basic proficiency at drawing
- **felt talks:** using pictures that are stuck to a felt board/velcro as the story is told

Many of the above methods can be combined and adapted

some general tips

- in a church context the talk will be given to a broad range of age-groups. Aim for a talk that five year olds will understand.
- organise your props and/or actors well beforehand so there's plenty of time for a practice before the service.
- always practise using the sound equipment (microphones etc) to be sure that everything can be heard. Communicate with the sound person any special requirements (i.e. which microphones will be used)
- make sure you practise your script at home. This will help your delivery on the day. Time yourself to see if your length is appropriate (3-5 minutes). You might be surprised that your talk was longer than you thought.
- know how you're going to start and finish. This includes how you will direct the children to and from the front, and whether you need to announce what's happening next (e.g. a kids' song). Give priority to your conclusion, so that it leaves a lasting impression.
- if children are distracting, stop and get the children refocussed. Otherwise, your talk may not be heard.



checklist

clear

- ...truth communication
- one big idea
- is it true to the passage?

...appropriate language

- simple words
- one concept sentences
- clear conclusion

concrete

- does my talk make an abstract concept concrete?
- is it appropriately applied? (see box and table below)

creative

- is my talk engaging?
- does it involve the audience?
- have I thought through alternative ways of teaching?

The introductory paper, '**the ministry training church**' set out some key goals for all believers, shown in the table below (there, in the context of small groups). These goals relate to our children as well, and should be kept in mind in all ministry to children, including kids talks.

a growing relationship with God , especially through personal Bible reading and prayer
growing relationships with other believers , especially in the small group
growing relationships with those in their family/household , as servants
growing relationships with unbelievers, especially through personal evangelism
growing relationships with the whole church in mission, serving in a ministry team

recommended resources

Children's Talks – A practical guide by Sandy Galea (published by SMBC)



www.kidswise.com.au

A subscription based website. Have a look for some good ideas.