

INTERGENERATIONAL BIBLE MESSAGE

Including top tips for running
an intergenerational service



TOP TIPS

on planning an intergenerational church service

How to prepare...

- Gather together a small team of creative people who can help plan and resource your service. Where possible this team should represent a cross-section of people in your church (ages, gender, ethnicity etc).
- An intergenerational service is not about doing lots of new and different things (in fact most people's response to the word 'different' is one of fear and withdrawal). Rather, take the usual elements of your service and think about how you can ensure they are accessible to people of all ages.
- Plan to use multi-age worship concepts (multi-age, multi-ability, multi-sensory, multi-intelligence). But it's important the creativity doesn't become a distraction from God. We want actions that support the point of the song or prayer. We want visuals that support the theme and assist people to make connections.
- When having all ages together, aim to keep your service to around 60-75 minutes.

What to say...

- Ensure explanations, invitations and directions are clear so that participants know expectations.
 - Use language that is hospitable, invitational, inclusive and understandable to those present. E.g. *"We are going to open the Bible and listen for God together. This takes all of us opening our hearts and minds, not for what we can learn individually, but for what God is calling us to be as a community of faith in this neighbourhood."*
- "This is a time for nourishing, encouraging, serving and challenging one another – no matter how little or much faith you have, or how little or much skill or giftedness you have. The Spirit is here to ensure we all are blessed, and all are blessing one another."¹*

What to do...

In everything you do, consider the following:

- How can the whole space be used effectively? When can people move around?
- How can different senses/intelligences be incorporated?
- How many different ways/options are there for people to participate?
- Keep your talking short and to the point.

And remember...

- Not everything will be for everyone, but our aim is that everyone will have an opportunity to be blessed and to be a blessing.

For more help...

- <http://www.ctmresourcing.org.au/engage-together-generating-intergenerational-worsh>
- Contact SUNZ for more support and advice, www.sunz.org.nz.

¹ <https://www.youthandchildrens.work/Childrenswork-Past-issues/2014/December-2014-January-2015/All-age-Worship>



BIBLE SUNDAY 2019

Intergenerational Bible Message

BIBLE MONTH

July

2019

In preparation:

- Before this message, have the following Bible passages read out loud:

Exodus 19:1-6

Mark 12:28-34

- Have copies of these two readings for people to look at and refer to later in the service.
- The third reading is from Deuteronomy 6:4-9. This will be done as an interactive reading as part of the message. It is available as a powerpoint, but if you can't use powerpoint in your service you can print these slides on to paper for people to use.
- You will also need pipe cleaners for everyone to use in the response time at the end.
- Think about the best way of getting people the resources they need. If you have a small group, you can hand things out as they are needed during the service. But if your group is larger, you might need to hand things out at the door as people arrive or have them on seats at the start so you don't waste time handing things out to lots of people in the middle of the service.

Introduction

Set the tone for this time by saying something like:

We are going to open the Bible and listen for God together. This takes all of us opening our hearts and minds, not for what we can learn individually, but for what God is calling us to be as a community of faith. So, let's help each other as we explore God's word together now and listen to what he wants to say to us.

Display the following:

I get distracted

I'm too busy

It's just not a priority

These are three reasons why people find something hard to do...

What do you think that something is?

Take some suggestions.

These are the three main barriers people identified as to why they don't read the Bible more often. They are from the Bible Society 2017 survey on Bible Engagement.

But what is going on behind the scenes? What are the struggles behind these reasons?

Display the following:

I get distracted = **It's boring**

I'm too busy = **It's inaccessible/too hard**

It's just not a priority = **It lacks relevance to me and my life today**

What's the common factor underlying all three of these struggles?

We see the Bible as... INFORMATION

We read the Bible as a book of instructions and moral teachings of how to live a good life; like a Christian version of Aesop's fables. Bible engagement becomes simply an exercise of the mind.

And of course the Bible does have plenty to say about how we should live and behave but those things mean what they mean in the light of the whole story.

More than just our minds or our understanding is required when we come to the Bible.

The Bible is less about information and more about TRANSFORMATION.

We are not transformed by information alone; by what we can understand in our heads.

We are transformed as we engage with God's truth through the story of the Bible with our whole person: mind, heart and soul.

As I read this quote, think about what words stand out to you:

"A good story doesn't permit casual observation. It wraps you up in truth and recognition and won't let go. You are there, in the story; your imagination is kindled; you are involved; you interact with truth on a deep and personal level because you are in the story and now the story is in you. Then it's over, and you sit in the embrace of truth. The story is still resonating in the deepest part of you. For a moment, you are still because it simply takes some time to 'get back'. And once you emerge from the story, you are never the same again. That's what stories can do."

*- Grant and Reed, *Telling Stories to touch the heart: how to use stories to communicate God's truth.* 1990*

What words stood out to you?

Invite people to share with those next to them.

Take a few ideas from the front.

Now, just to be clear, these authors aren't saying that all stories are good for us and that all stories echo God's truth. We must acknowledge that some stories can distort God's truth and can lead us down a harmful path, if we let them.

But if what Grant and Reed describe here is true of a good story; a story that points to God's truth? How much more should this be our experience when coming to God's story, the Bible?

Coming to the Bible in this way is not just an intellectual exercise, it requires all of us: mind, heart, and soul... as we'll see in our third Bible reading in just a moment.

So, our purpose for the next few minutes is this:

To experience the Bible together in a way that is...

Fascinating

Accessible

Relevant

...irrespective of our background, age, skill set or amount of faith we feel we have today.

So let's give this a go and jump into God's story.

Setting up the story

Invite three or four people (mix of ages) to the front and give them an animal mask to wear. (You can purchase masks from any dollar shop or emporium)

What part of God's story is the passage in Exodus telling that we heard read earlier?

- God's people, the Israelites, had been living in Egypt for 430 years.
- Most of that time they had lived as slaves and were treated badly by the Egyptians.
- Generation after generation of Israelites had been living in the middle of the Egyptian way of life, including the gods the Egyptians worshipped (point to the people wearing the animal masks).

Display the following:

- These gods are mostly interested in each other, not in humans.
- Humans need to do all sorts of things to get the attention of these gods - offering sacrifices to please them and make them happy.
- And these gods can be manipulated and controlled by priests and magicians (spells and incantations).

The Israelites knew about these gods well enough.

The stories of Exodus are throwing these ideas around - testing them.

Is the God of the Israelites like the gods of the Egyptians?

Invite the volunteers to return to their seats.

The Story

Display the first slide of the accompanying powerpoint with the words from Deuteronomy 6:4-9.¹

If you can't use the powerpoint then print out the slides on paper (one on one side and one on the other) and hand out to everyone at the start of the service.

Group everyone into four teams: Yellow, Blue, Red and Green.

Give each group a minute to check that everyone in the group knows the words they are to read on the slide (you may have children who can't read, people with English as a second language, someone who is colour blind. Have printed copies available for those who can't see the words on a screen. No-one is excluded in the family of God and no-one is left behind).

Now have each group in turn read their words out loud together, e.g. Yellow group read all their words, followed by Blue group etc.)

Next, have each group read their words out loud in order they appear on the screen, e.g. Hear, love, your God, with all, your heart, with all, your soul etc.

Finally, bring up the second slide and read through as before but this time you read the words in white to fill in the gaps.

After reading...

Considering this passage and the readings from Exodus and Mark (which you have copies of), what kind of God are the Israelites discovering their God to be?

Display the points about the Egyptian gods from earlier to help them in their discussion:

- More interested in himself than people?
- Require people to jump through hoops to get his attention? Offering sacrifices to appease him?
- Can he be manipulated by priests and magicians?

Discuss in groups.

Take some brief feedback.

¹ This interactive reading is courtesy of Beth Barnett. Her resources are available at <https://www.suvic.org.au/shop/category/beth-barnett-resources/>

Summarise by making the following points:

- More interested in himself than people?

No. He created people to be in relationship with him. He loves them and will protect them just as an Eagle does its young (Exodus reading).

- Can he be manipulated by priests and magicians?

No. When his people cry out to him, he hears them and he responds, taking their side. But he cannot be manipulated or bought off with sacrifices, as the Israelites discover at their cost when they decide to make and worship a golden calf at the foot of the mountain where God gives Moses the instructions for his people to live by (Exodus reading).

- Require people to jump through hoops to get his attention? Offering sacrifices to please him?

No. God's number one policy is... Love him! In fact Jesus tells us that this is the most important thing we can ever do. Love him with all our being (Mark reading).

But how do we do this? Let's finish by thinking about this for a moment...

The story in Deuteronomy gives us two clues:

1. Live his way in the place where God gives us to live. Show we love him by what we say and what we do everyday in our families, in our schools and workplaces, with our neighbours.
2. Share the commandments with each other (Deuteronomy 6:7) and continually tell the stories of what God has done (as we hear later in Deuteronomy 6:20-25)

Response

Pipe cleaners

The Israelites took God's advice very literally about keeping his ways close to their heads and hands. They made head and wristbands with little boxes that contained the words of God. Regardless of whether God really meant for them to keep His words on their heads and wrists in little boxes, what's important is that God did want them always to remember his good ways, and be reminded that God was always with them.

Make a wrist band as you tell the person next to you how God has been with you this week. It could be something big or small. It could simply be by sharing one thing you are thankful to God for this week.

I hope today as we have engaged with God's word together as a community that your experience has been that the Bible is indeed: Fascinating, Accessible and Relevant.

Finish with the same quote from start...

I pray that this describes something of the experience God has given you in his Word this morning.

You'll notice I've changed the opening words

"God's story doesn't permit casual observation. It wraps you up in truth and recognition and won't let go. You are there, in the story; your imagination is kindled; you are involved; you interact with truth on a deep and personal level because you are in the story and now the story is in you. Then it's over, and you sit in the embrace of truth. The story is still resonating in the deepest part of you. For a moment, you are still because it simply takes some time to 'get back'. And once you emerge from the story, you are never the same again."