



## Christadelphian Sunday School Union Autumn Newsletter 2024

Editorial:

# How we Teach our Children

**This edition we are looking at the different ways we can teach.**

As teachers, we are always thinking of new ways to engage and motivate our students. At our Teachers' Forum, which we held on 'Zoom' back in the Autumn of 2023, we considered how we might promote greater spiritual learning in our Sunday Schools. One of the contributors to that day was Ali Silby. The slides she shared with us are on our website but we are highlighting just a few aspects from them in this Newsletter to remind you.

At this year's Teachers' Forum, due to take place on Saturday October 5th God willing, we hope to address ways in which we can make learning fun and perhaps more memorable for all our children across the age range. It would be great to have your Sunday School represented and for you to share some of your own ideas with others.

A little while ago, I was having a conversation with one of our Junior pupils about what he had learned in his recent lesson. He replied that it was hard to remember because they hadn't done an activity and it was that which helped him to recall the details. Interesting! Perhaps fun activities really do count!

A random internet search came up with the following list of suggestions:

- *Make teaching interactive through games, electronic or otherwise*
- *Always connect the Bible topic to the children's experience (as promoted in the CSSU lesson under the heading of 'Relevance to the children's lives')*
- *Get children to work in pairs or teams, sometimes with a competitive element introduced*
- *Use a variety of storytelling techniques, not just a straight telling or reading - puppets, acting out or the 'Saddleback Kids' 3 minute videos on YouTube are an excellent recap.*



***I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you. Psalm 32.4***

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- *Why not use humour? Jesus did!*
- *Encourage and celebrate good questions asked and answers given.*
- *Help children develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills using hands-on activities. Science, music, art and even maths are not just for day school.*
- *Make use of various drama techniques to introduce a topic, to explore emotions in a story or to develop a deeper understanding of a character's motives.*

There are many ways we can catch children's imaginations and foster a greater love of scripture and surely, we should be doing our best to bring variety and interest into our lessons. After all, Jesus was a master storyteller and teacher and used many ways of getting over his point. Let's think about how we might make learning more fun for the next generation of Christadelphians.

***Ali Lawrence & Caz Parsons, Editors***



**Please share any other good ideas you have up your sleeve on our Facebook page or send to [caz@cssu.org.uk](mailto:caz@cssu.org.uk) for inclusion in our next newsletter so others can benefit!**

# How to make lessons accessible to all

Sis. Ali Silby presented a very engaging talk at the 2023 Teachers' Forum full of tips for how to hold our students' attention. We are sharing a selection here but if you'd like to watch the talk in full (or any of the other talks from 2023 or 2022) please contact sis Caz at [caz@cssu.org.uk](mailto:caz@cssu.org.uk) and she will share the YouTube link.

## Creating a spiritual environment



1. All children have a primary need to belong and feel part of a group
2. Our primary responsibility is to help children develop their sense of belonging
3. Ultimately, this will help them develop a deeper and more meaningful relationship with God
4. Encouraging children to think deeply and critically should be the first goal of our teaching
5. This will help them develop greater spiritual strength and tenacity

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## Strategies for reducing cognitive overload

1. Establish clear links to previous learning e.g., mind maps, photos etc
2. Share the big picture / end goal e.g., WAGOLL
3. Shorter chunks of activity e.g., 5 minutes and then a break
4. Use clear and precise vocabulary
5. Include multi-sensory activities
6. Repeat key instructions
7. 10 second rule for processing

## People remember:



10% of what they read



20% of what they hear



30% of what they see



50% of what they hear and see



70% of what they say and write



90% of what they say and do

## Creating the right environment



1. Spiritual growth happens when children are challenged to think:
  - this is what helps them transfer knowledge from their working memory to their long-term memory
2. For spiritual growth we need to encourage children to think critically not simply memorise information
3. However, background knowledge is essential as it helps children make sense of new information
4. Knowledge is best retained when connections are made between 'old' and 'new'

# Teaching Tips

## *Making Learning Fun for children with Special Educational Needs*

Thanks to **Jessica Ali** from **Nottingham South** for these:

**1. KNOW the child:** always ensure you get to know the child as an individual. If they have a diagnosis, do your research and use this to inform your practice, but ultimately get to know the child themselves, not just their label.

**2. UNDERSTAND the child:** understand what works and doesn't work for the individual child. What types of activity does the child enjoy? How do they learn best? Do they pay attention more in certain learning environments? Ask the child how they like to learn and use this to inform your practice.

**3. PLAN for the child:** using what you've learned from getting to know and understand the child, plan lessons accordingly. E.g. if the child is a physical learner, plan lessons with plenty of movement and effective use of space. Having a well thought through plan in place will give you confidence in how to approach the lesson and get the message across effectively.

**4. ENGAGE the child:** Don't expect children to learn effectively if you're sitting and talking at them in a monotone voice! Be fun, dynamic and engaging. Use resources such as visual aids, videos, movement, etc. to present a story. Get the children involved in telling the story and actively participating in the lesson. Give them ownership of their learning so that they remain motivated and engaged.

**5. ADAPT to the child:** you never know what circumstance you will find yourself in when you begin your lesson, what mood the child is in, what's happened before the lesson, what the child is preoccupied with, etc. Always be ready to adapt anything you have planned to work for the individual child on the day. This may mean throwing your lesson plan out of the window completely and doing something completely different. Sometimes it may mean the child doesn't learn anything new that day. That's fine. As long as they feel safe and heard, they are more likely to want to come back the next week to learn

# Book Review

## *A Place to Go*

*by Christine Walker*

I read the first few chapters of this excellent book to our Senior Sunday School group, aged 12-15 years.

The book centres around siblings Izzie and Em, who are desperate to keep their peer group enthusiastic about meeting up and sharing social time together. Through a series of incidents, they make new friends who appreciate the warmth and honest company the church group provides.

Each individual has his or her own issues to deal with, some more serious than others, but each finds solace and companionship within the group, enabling them to find a way through their problems.

The group found the book easy to relate to. It voiced several situations with which they were familiar, either for themselves or among their peers. One said it helps the reader to understand that everyone has their own struggles but that supporting friends through difficult times can be very healing.



One of the 15-year-olds was keen to borrow the book and read to the end for herself. Why not offer it to your young people? It will show them how important friendship based on the solid foundation of Christ actually is.

# News from the CSSU



Join us on 5th October GW  
for an uplifting and inspiring  
**Teachers' Forum**

## Coming soon: *a new (and better!) CSSU website*

The current CSSU website began its life nearly 30 years ago, and although it has grown and improved over the years it is still all hand-crafted. By now it is showing its age, and parts of it are no longer working properly. Our new site, God willing, will be completely new, and will use up-to-date technology.

Much of the new site should look like the current one, and downloading lessons etc. will be as easy as it is now. But there are some improvements that we hope you will like, which should make life easier for us all.

Registering and logging in should be much simpler, and payment will be made at the time of ordering, removing the hassle of paper invoices. We will continue to provide books free of charge where they are supporting the preaching work of the CBM, and to give discounts in other cases to support our community at large.

We gave up charging for magazines a few years ago due to the hassle of chasing non-payments, and since then they have been free. But we can't afford to do that indefinitely, so with the new website we would like to ask anyone who orders magazines to make a contribution to the cost.

Our aim is to help you to teach the gospel to young people in a way that they will enjoy, but we also provide a personal service to you, and we want the new technology to help us to do that even better. So we are looking forward to a new website from which we will all benefit.

## We LOVE your contributions!



Please share any good ideas you have up your sleeve on our Facebook page or send to [caz@cssu.org.uk](mailto:caz@cssu.org.uk) for inclusion in our next newsletter so others can benefit!

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