



Unión Bíblica

Scripture Union International

Ligue pour la Lecture de la Bible

# Catalyst

AUGUST 2007 ISSUE 2



## From Information to Transformation

### From The Ministry Coordinators

#### Welcome to Catalyst again!

During 2007 schools across the UK have paid special attention to the bicentennial of the abolition of Britain's shameful slave trade. One little girl was deeply shocked to learn in her primary school that slaves were forced to change their birth names or to have a number tattooed on one arm. After days of imagining herself reduced to a mere cipher, the child went to her teacher and suggested that all her class might share the experience of becoming nameless. For two weeks children and teachers addressed each other only by the numbers inked on their arms. So powerful was this imaginative living out of one aspect of the slaves' experience that the whole school has now become involved in supporting the Anti-Slavery Society ([www.antislavery.org](http://www.antislavery.org)) which

campaigns against the exploitation of children and other vulnerable groups.

But what's all this got to do with the theme of this second edition of *Catalyst*? Well, simply that our keynote article focuses on how we can encourage children and young people to interact imaginatively and creatively with God's Story so that they will be impacted as profoundly as this little girl was by what she heard about the suffering of the slaves. For her, reading and learning went far beyond mere information to a transforming experience that eventually involved her whole school community.

We've included questions and suggestions again for how you might use this article with your staff and / or volunteers, to encourage creative reflection and action.

Thank you for sending feedback to the first edition of *Catalyst*. We've taken on board your suggestions, such as increasing the size of the print so that it's easier to read on screen, and making a direct link to the online edition. More details in 'Feedback' on page 7.

Don't miss the results of the photo competition on page 12!

Clayton Fergie, Pauline Hoggarth,  
Wendy Strachan

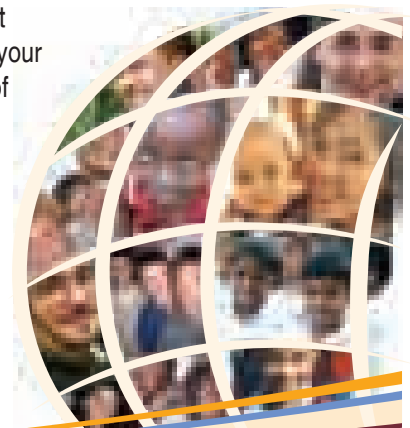
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**At the SIL/Wycliffe Worldwide Scripture Use Consultation in March 2006 to which SU International brought a group of eight delegates from around the world, Wendy Strachan, Children's Ministry Co-ordinator, was invited to lead a seminar on children and Scripture engagement. This is a shortened version of her paper, which prompted a lot of discussion.**

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT



# Opening Up The Bible With Children

### **A true story**

***'Miss, I think he's an idiot!'***

It's almost the end of the session with a group of 11 year olds. They've been listening to the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife. The earlier parts of the narrative – Jacob's favouritism and the brothers' treachery – have captured the imagination of at least some of the children. The story of the attempted seduction is a little trickier. Finally, just as the teacher announces (triumphantly) that Joseph refused the woman's advances, one of the boys blurts out, *'Miss, I think he's an idiot!'*

How would we have responded? Would we ignore the boy and hope that the others didn't hear? Reprimand him? Or grasp an opportunity? This boy has actually made a connection between the Bible narrative and real life. The story he's just heard is familiar material in the TV programs he watches, the families

he's close to and the conversations he has with his mates. This story *connects*. Why would we want to condemn or avoid this fact? This child is close to learning something about God, himself and his world. Close to encountering God.

### **Understanding our task**

What do we believe our task to be when we open the Bible with children? Isn't it to make the Bible **relevant**? Consider the implications of this answer. We imply that God has given us a book that is largely *irrelevant* to 30% of the world's population – and that we have to struggle to make it relevant.

Let's think again! It's true that Scripture doesn't talk about drugs or internet pornography. But this doesn't mean that it is not contemporary. It tells us about families – dysfunctional as well as happy ones. It tells us about favouritism and unfairness, about bad things happening to good people, about trouble that comes when you make a wrong choice and trouble that comes when you make a good choice. It talks about not being noticed or valued, about peer pressure, about sex and sexuality. It tells us about feeling on top of the world and at the bottom of the heap. It describes confusion, disaster and celebration. It speaks of uncertainty and loose ends. And if these things are not the realities of a child's life, then what is?



***'Our first responsibility is to let the Bible speak for itself...'***



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So our problem is not relevance. It is **accessibility**. The world of today's children is different from the world of the Bible with its unfamiliar names, values, cultures, countries, politics and history. Our task is to build bridges between the world of the child and the world of the Bible so that children can enter that world and meet the God who is so utterly relevant to their world today. Our task is to *open up the Bible*.

### ***Closing down the Bible: where adults can go wrong***

It's tempting for us as adults to reduce the Bible to bite-sized pieces that we think are palatable to children – or are comfortable for us. We can do it in a number of ways – and when we do so, we rob children of the experience of being intrigued by God's story, of the chance to wonder at it and be enriched by its practical insights into life.

1. We close the Bible up when **we sanitise it**. When we tell children about David and Goliath but omit David and Bathsheba, don't we miss what *both* parts of the story express about God's character in choosing a man like David?
2. We close the Bible up when **we trivialise it** – as if children can only engage with it if it is turned into entertainment. Even child-friendly, creative approaches such as puppetry, drama, visual aids, songs, story-telling and rap can miss the point if children become amused spectators rather than participants. Sometimes in an effort to contextualise the Bible into the child's world we make fun out of pathos. We turn the tragic story of Samson into something uncomfortably close to comedy. Yes, we keep the children entertained but where do they connect with God?
3. We close the Bible down when **we reduce it to a book of 'stories with a moral'** as though it is more important to be good than to know God. Lawrence Richards urges, 'You and I are not to use the Bible to club the child, or to impose demands that he or she conform. We are to use Bible stories... as a doorway to hope rather than as a nagging demand for change.'<sup>1</sup> What is the main point of the story of the boy who offered his lunch to the disciples: is it intended primarily to encourage children to share, or to open their eyes to the wonder of what God might do through them?
4. We close the Bible down when **we treat it as a book of rules** without understanding that those rules only make sense within the context of relationship. What tone of voice do we use when we read the Ten Commandments? Do children hear them as the pleading of a loving Father or as the legalistic demands of a tough head teacher? If it's the latter, we've missed the point: no child falls in love with such a God.



***'Let young people explore Scripture...in ways that won't let them down as they get older.'***

5. We close the Bible down when **we treat it as a textbook of information** to be memorised. Is it more important that children know what kind of tree Zacchaeus climbed or to reflect in wonder about how that meeting with Jesus changed his life so radically – and what might happen if they met Jesus?
6. We close the Bible down when **we treat it as a book of stories about heroes** – as if the most important character is Moses, or David or Paul – when the most important character is God. Scripture is God's story. The Bible is far more than information, rules, entertainment and selected – often disconnected – stories. 'When we use the Bible with children simply to teach doctrinal tenets, moral absolutes, tips for better living, or stories of heroes to be emulated, we... deprive them of the spiritual story of God.'<sup>2</sup>

So what might a different approach look like? How do we open up the Bible to children so that they encounter in it the God who will accompany them today – and throughout life?

### ***Opening up the Bible***

Our first responsibility is to **let the Bible speak for itself**, to adopt a mindset that allows God to speak to the children through his Word before we do! This commits us to the 'risk' of relinquishing control and the expectation that the Holy Spirit will teach and guide.<sup>3</sup> It means that the adult will take

<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Richards, *Children's Ministry: Nurturing Faith Within the Family of God*, Zondervan, 1983.

<sup>2</sup> Ivy Beckwith, *Post-Modern Children's Ministry*, Youth Specialties, Zondervan 2004.

<sup>3</sup> This willingness to 'lose control' and acknowledge the crucial role of the Holy Spirit was a key finding of all three ministry consultations of 2001. Reports of the consultations are available from the ministry consultants.



a step back to allow the child to enter more fully into the Bible narrative. It's a serious task: there is a spiritual battle being waged. Prayer is essential.

There are at least three main aspects to the task of opening up the Bible. These three interact with each other, opening the door to transforming relationship with God. We invite children to:

- explore the Bible narrative in their imagination;
- build a framework of understanding;
- respond in ways shaped by God's Word – in worship, saying sorry, and in becoming 'servants of a world in need'.

### **1. Exploring the Bible text in their imagination**

The Bible is a Big Story in which children can participate; they can 'step inside' it. Its focus is a real human being, Jesus, who has fought for good and against evil – and won! But this is no fairy tale. It doesn't always turn out the way we think it should. It is no mistake on God's part that most of the Bible is narrative. Through the imagination, a child enters into the story with his emotions, his mind, his experiences. It becomes *his* story. He discovers himself, his world and God and begins to listen to what God is saying to him. The adult is there to help with the necessary biblical background and to help make authentic connections. But the primary interaction is between the child and God.

One person who has championed the importance of the child's imagination in Bible engagement is Jerome Berryman. He has developed an approach called 'Godly Play' in which he encourages children to 'wonder' at the biblical story. He avoids cluttering the narrative with added detail but simply

unlocks Scripture by inviting children to quietly wonder. The responses that arise are very different from the right or wrong answers to the closed, information-based questions that we so often tend to ask.

#### **An example: The healing of Bartimaeus in Mark 10**

*I wonder how it feels to be blind?*

*I wonder how it feels to see for the very first time?*

*I wonder why Jesus listened to Bartimaeus when the others just told him to be quiet?*

*I wonder why Jesus came near Bartimaeus when others wouldn't bother with him?*

*I wonder why the first thing that Bartimaeus did after he could see was to follow Jesus?*

*I wonder how Bartimaeus felt following Jesus on the way to Jerusalem?*

*I wonder what happened to his coat?*

*I wonder who you are like in this story...?*

If we invite children into the Bible narrative in their imagination, we can expect a range of responses because each child is unique. One answer does not have to be considered better than another. As long as we believe that God is at work we will not prescribe only one 'right response'. A while ago, I was talking with children's workers in India about the New Testament story of the man whose demons were cast into the herd of 2000 pigs. One worker told me of the response from a girl who was overwhelmed to realise that Jesus would think one person worth more than all those pigs; another mentioned a boy who was outraged that Jesus would apparently destroy a person's livelihood. One story, one God, two children, two experiences, two responses.

Does this mean that we should accept all responses? Insofar as they represent the child's journey with God, yes! The honest, '*Miss I think he's an idiot*' is surely a better response than the silence that signals scepticism or boredom. We must respect children's contributions and ideas. This is not inconsistent with believing the Bible to be authoritative for children – that is, it is changing their way of understanding the world, themselves and God, reshaping their perspectives, conforming them little by little to the image of Christ. As guides on their journey, we are helping children to understand more about God and discover a relationship with him.

But what if there seems to be *no* response? God has promised, 'my word... shall not return to me empty...it shall accomplish that which I purpose' (Isa 55:11). Children *will* respond – but it might not be with words! Do we offer enough creative alternatives: drama, prayer, silence, clay modelling, music, worship, movement, writing a letter or a poem, drawing, celebration...?



## 2. Building a framework within which children can interpret their world and God

The Bible is not a string of unconnected stories; it is one coherent Big Story. But how do we help children to grasp its scope and so to integrate their own story into the story of God's people?

One important way is to help children – whenever they explore the Bible text – to build a framework that enables them to understand their world and God. They are building a store of knowledge that will help them to answer questions such as:

'What is God like in this passage? How does he act?'

'Is this how you would expect God to act?'

'Why do you think God acts in this sort of way?'

'What does God want?'

'What might it be like to live with this God?'

'What would you want to say to this God?'<sup>4</sup>

This is not just a comprehension exercise: the answers arise as children experience, learn, play with and think about Scripture – in all its variety. It's at this point that some children may actually be disadvantaged by their familiarity with the Bible. We need to remind them that while *they* may know the stories well, the people who lived them did not know what was going to happen next; theirs was a response of faith – or lack of it.<sup>5</sup>

Joseph, for example, had no idea what might happen when he resisted the advances of his boss's wife. He may have guessed that this could land him in trouble, but he certainly had no idea that the ultimate outcome would see him as prime minister of Egypt. Was it easy for him to make the choice to resist? We are cheating children if we imply that it was! Yet Joseph still made the right choice.

Issues like these are all about real life. There's no question of their relevance for young people. Children will ponder, *How can I make right choices? When circumstances make it easier for me to choose wrong than to choose right – why would I bother to choose right? And why doesn't God come to my help when I make the difficult right choices?* We should encourage a questioning spirit!

As children build up the framework of the 'Big Story', three things are happening. One is that they are *beginning to piece together the story of God*, from creation to the present and the hope of the new creation. They are learning about the God who creates, promises, judges and rescues, the God who meets them in everyday life. *The God who rescued Noah is the same God who judged David, the Father who invites us to call him 'Abba' and hears our prayers today.*

4 Based on Terry Clutterham, *The Adventure Begins*, Scripture Union, 2000.

5 N T Wright originally proposed the important and creative concept of the Bible as a drama in 5 acts in which we can participate (*Vox Evangelica*, 1991, 21, 7–32); the idea was helpfully developed in J R Middleton and B J Walsh, *Truth is Stranger than it Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Post-Modern World*, SPCK 1995, pp 181–184.

The second thing that is happening is that children are *building up an understanding of the content of Christian faith*, a theological / doctrinal understanding. They do so not initially by learning a set of abstract propositions, but by discovering experientially (sometimes in small steps, sometimes in giant leaps) who the God of the Bible is and what it means to live in relationship with him. And as they learn more, each new insight reshapes their understanding. Gradually we help children to develop the tools that they need to become bolder Bible explorers. As children mature, these tools become more sophisticated and children's understanding of God and of what God expects deepens.

The third thing that is happening is that children are *learning how to communicate with a God whose ways are different from theirs* – to pray and live by faith amid the puzzle.

These three approaches let young people explore Scripture in ways that equip them for living life with God now and won't let them down as they get older.

## 3. Responding to God's Word

We have talked about the child's response to the Bible – but in Scripture the response to hearing God's Word is very often 'action'. 'Go and do likewise,' Jesus said to the teacher of the law after he had identified the Samaritan as the true neighbour (Luke 10:37).

Encountering God in his Word brings transformation – of mind, attitudes, behaviour. For a child, it is very often in the 'behaving', that he learns what it means to follow Jesus. As he acts with the kindness that identifies Jesus' followers, so he learns what it means to be a follower. So when we provide opportunities to serve, we also help the child to make an abstract concept (e.g. loving others) into a concrete understanding. In Global Community Games, children are invited to decide how they could 'be Jesus' to people in the community. Their responses have ranged from learning how

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**'Encourage a questioning spirit!'**



to massage the feet of elderly people in retirement villages, to sweeping railway stations and visiting children's hospitals.

Some time ago in Amsterdam, I met an 18 year old who was studying social work at university. When she told me that her intention was to work among teenage prostitutes, I asked her how that interest had been sparked. She told me how her church encouraged people to volunteer to go down to the red light district and share 'good news' with the prostitutes and their clients. This girl had volunteered when she was only 12 years old. One midnight she found herself talking to a girl her own age who was a prostitute: 'That conversation changed my life forever.' What a risk that church, that child and that family took. Was it worth it?

### **So where does the adult fit in?**

If the primary encounter is with God as children read the Bible, what is the role of the adult – and specifically the SU worker? Deuteronomy 6:6,7 describes how God's laws were to be communicated to children. 'Tell them to your children over and over again. Talk about them all the time, whether you're at home or walking along the road or going to bed at night, or getting up in the morning.'

This is a picture of children in the community of faith learning what it means to follow God. How are they learning? Where are the chalkboards, data projectors, flannelgraphs or programs? They're not there. Instead, learning takes place in the context of everyday life and perhaps also in the stories, proverbs and rituals that were part of Hebrew culture. It's a picture of people learning together: adults and children journeying together with God. Relationship is at the heart of this Deuteronomy picture.

As we strive to open up the Bible with children in the most helpful ways, let's not forget that the most significant learning often occurs in unplanned moments. It can happen as children watch a camp team work out what it means to follow God in their own relationships. It can happen when SU leaders are willing to share their own experiences of what it means to journey with God. It can happen when someone takes the time to notice the shy child or spend time with the difficult one. It can happen when we encourage parents to be confident that they can pass on their faith to their children. Learning takes place in the humour and patience and kindness that children experience on an SU event. Intentionally or not, we are *all* learning. Together we listen, watch, question, enjoy, discard and imitate. No program will ever replace the enjoyment and excitement that children experience when people who are passionate about the Bible and the God of the Bible meet them in a relationship that takes their searching seriously. That's what Jesus did.

## **Taking it further**



### **Feedback and discussion on 'Opening up the Bible with children'**

*Helpful responses to this article came in from several children's ministry practitioners from around the world. We offer a sample of these, together with discussion questions to use with staff and volunteers.*

**From Estonia, Mari Vahermägi** raises the key issue of how to overcome the initial prejudices of adults and children towards the Bible: 'It bothers me a lot that a child will learn so quickly to put on this "Sunday school" face, learning to build a barrier between the message and themselves... Many churched children see the Bible as a difficult book. They know it is supposed to be "useful" but they are certain in advance that they will not understand it or find any joy or excitement in it.

In Estonia children today face a big problem: daring to believe what is told to them. There is a lack of trust in adults (there are so many adults who have let children down), and also in their God...

One Sunday morning last December when I reached the church (I was late) I found one of our older teachers in tears standing at the door of her class. Her whole Sunday school class had run off in a silent protest at her way of teaching. She had prayed and prepared the whole week, but she was unable to enter their world in ways that connected and they were not willing to accept this anymore. I found the refugees in the cellar and asked them to share with each other about their favourite passages in the Bible. I had to deal with other tasks in the church but later the young people shared with me as well. They did so with great freedom; in fact we ran out of time. It was a fascinating journey; I mostly listened and learned from these kids (11-12 years old). There was not much I could add, or wanted to add, to what they shared but I was happy they tried to answer my questions. That morning I learned that respect towards a child's word can be a key...' >>>





- In your country, what are the attitudes and prejudices with which children come to the Bible? How are you / your team helping them to overcome them?
- As you consider your face-to-face ministries and publications (if your SU movement publishes), what aspects might you want to change in the light of the keynote article and of Mari's comments?

**From Cameroon, Emmanuel Todjo** comments, 'This article echoes the 2001 children's ministry consultation in Nottingham and SSDC in Cape Town and focuses on issues we plan to deal with in 2008... It challenges some of the practices in Sunday school here in Cameroon where children just have to recite the lesson without any concern about real-life implications. For years this has produced "Christians" whose lifestyle contradicts the Good News. Before I encountered the Lord, I was a much-appreciated Sunday school teacher. In reality, though, I was helping children to play, without making any connection to the Lord Jesus. Even my lessons were just an introduction to jokes and entertainment... This article is so relevant for the situation in our churches. During the Aid for Aids programme among children, we realised that they all had the right answers to questions – but they admitted the reality of their lives was very different. 90% of young people answered that the best way to avoid AIDS is abstinence and faithfulness. In fact 44% admitted to being sexually active and 32% said they would continue because they simply don't know how to stop.'



- Emmanuel's honest response to this article points to an uncomfortable truth – that there is often a big gap between our knowledge of God's Word and its impact in our lives. Why is this so common? How can we help one another to '...be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves' (James 1:22)?

**David Leong, writing from Singapore and with wide experience in East Asia,** writes, 'I was told recently about a church in Singapore where Sunday school children are not allowed to ask any questions about the lesson. The teacher asks the questions and answers them herself! Offering a range of alternatives to children to enable them to respond to God's Word is important. Not every child is "vocal" or brave enough to voice his/her feelings. Also, there are many ways in which a child learns – multiple intelligences! I agree 100% with what is said about the involvement of the whole community in encouraging children on their journey with God. Children need to see examples that are filled with spirit and life! It would be good to include something on how parents are the most important teachers and how the church can help to equip them...'



- What strategies might your SU movement be able to develop to encourage local churches to help families and faith communities to work together in building faith in the next generation? If your movement is already working in this area, what new ideas might be helpful?
- In what ways is this article also relevant for SU's ministry with young people and adults?

## Feedback from the SU Community

Your feedback really matters to us, so keep your comments coming – in French and Spanish too! In response to feedback, we've increased the text size, made a direct link from the 'prompt' email to the *Catalyst* PDFs, and provided low-resolution versions for easier downloading. Remember you can ask for a print version if you have problems downloading *Catalyst*. Write to Sue Stott at [a1admin@su-international.org](mailto:a1admin@su-international.org)

**From Australia** 'Thanks so much for the revived *Catalyst*. I have been blessed, challenged, informed, motivated to pray, and helped as I prepare a series of studies on "Mission" for a church retreat! Zac's article was superb...'

**From South Africa** 'The invitation should have said: "Click here to go to the SUI website and follow the links to *Catalyst*." But well done for a classy-looking new initiative!' **From USA** 'Congratulations! A great start. I love the thought that someone is working hard to bring us together and make one family out of SU. I hope and pray that *Catalyst* becomes a valuable tool in drawing us together and making us healthier, stronger, wiser and more LOVING!'

**From English-speaking Canada** 'Thanks for such an informative issue. Can we submit an article to tell others what we're doing in Canada? Thanks again for a job well done!'

**From Sweden** 'Hey good workers for *Catalyst*, I think the big article was very, very good. The initiative of re-starting *Catalyst* is also very good. You need to improve on the size of the main text. Appreciating you...'

**From England** 'Congratulations on the new *Catalyst*. It's brilliant and deserves a very wide readership!' **From New Zealand** 'Good on you for putting this together. I have a blog that has a similar aim and may be of interest. In particular I have written an article on Ministry in a Web 2.0 environment, which aims to show the possibilities of this new technology. The blog can be found at: <http://brownblog.wordpress.com/>. I'm keen to encourage comment and participation!'

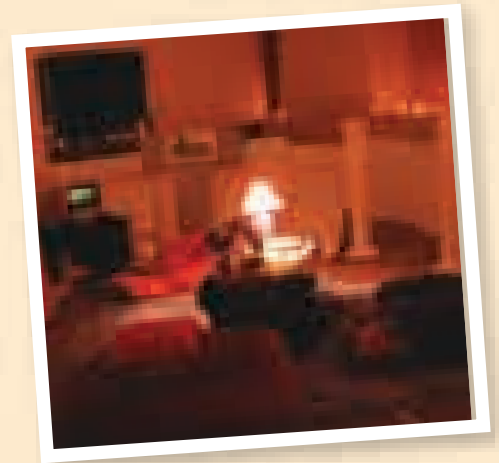
# The many faces of **Scripture Engagement** with children and young people



## **'Schoolies' test the Labyrinth ... in South Australia**

*Glenys Tiller, SU South Australia Youth Camps Coordinator and Encounter Schoolies Volunteer describes how churches and Christian groups are reaching out with God's good news to young people leaving school...*

In Australia a culture has developed which sees Year 12 students head to the coast every November to celebrate the end of their secondary schooling. Thousands of these young people, known as 'Schoolies', converge in holiday locations for parties that go on for days. Add alcohol to the mix and there have been some disastrous consequences. Churches in South Australia (and other states) worked together to respond. The resulting network, called 'Encounter Youth' runs an official Schoolies' Festival to encourage young people to celebrate in a safe environment. Around 500 volunteers from churches, partnering with numerous government agencies and community groups, provide food, activities, music and dancing.



Last year for the first time, Scripture Union provided a 'Labyrinth' as part of this festival – a reflective space filled with interactive displays, candles, Bibles and beanbags. Amid all the noisy celebrations, many Schoolies appreciated the opportunity to slow down and reflect. 'Our aim was to encourage Schoolies – both Christian young people and those with no Christian commitment – to consider God's Word, to connect with Scripture,' says James Krieg, SU South Australia's State Youth Coordinator.

It's difficult to measure the effectiveness of the Labyrinth because it's such a personal experience and sometimes beyond words. This space encouraged young people to do business with God, to hand over burdens and to leave in a different frame of mind. Seeing some individuals reading Scripture for the first time was amazing. Young Australians are sceptical but curious, seeking something real, but hesitant about anything that looks overtly religious.

Working in such a setting is risky, messy and can even look controversial to fellow Christians. But I shall always remember those conversations at the kitchen table as we listened to our Schoolies and made them cups of tea.

Comments like these were typical of the responses:

***'First time I've had a conversation with God...'***

***'I've heard a lot of this stuff before but this is the first time I've actually looked into the Bible.'***

***'This was a moving experience – the first time I've ever cried while I was praying...'***

***'So how do you learn stuff about God? How do I find out more?'***



"No, Mr. Holmes. We're having an *inductive* Bible study."



# The many faces of **Scripture Engagement** with children and young people



## **LEGO® City – creating together and discovering Jesus ... in Switzerland**

*Many people are familiar with those colourful little LEGO® bricks that can be built into castles and cities, palaces and space stations. But that this children's toy can be used to share the gospel will certainly be a new idea for many. Peter Egli one of the field staff in SU German-speaking Switzerland writes:*

Gerhard Windhövel, a pensioner from Germany, collected LEGO® for many years. He used them to build whole cities and coupled this with an evangelistic programme. Three years ago SU German speaking Switzerland was offered one of the 'cities' – and it's become an exciting new ministry tool.

The concept is very simple: SU, with its LEGO® City, accepts an invitation from either individual Christians or a church. Together we prepare a church room and distribute flyers. And then the work begins! On average, about 35 children spend eight hours building a LEGO® City. It becomes a ten-metre square work of art created by the children working as a team. In the breaks, we chat about the importance of building our lives on good foundations and we relate this to everyday events. So it's a great opportunity to help children discover that Bible stories are relevant to our lives and that God wants to meet with us through Jesus Christ.

We build the city on a Friday and Saturday. Then on the Sunday, there's a family service. Relatives and friends are all invited to take part. Usually, lots of family members who wouldn't normally attend church will come to the special LEGO® City services. Recently we heard that the richest man in the village was coming to church for the first time because his son had taken part in building the LEGO® City during a scout camp.

In the past three years, children have built LEGO® City over forty times. We also use this concept in Children's Mission weeks. These are special opportunities to go deeper with practical Bible discovery activities. Even organisers of non-Christian holiday clubs are keen to include the LEGO® City in their programme and accept the Christian message that goes along with it. At events like these there are a lot of children present who have no contact with the Christian faith.

***We build the  
city on a  
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# The many faces of **Scripture Engagement** with children and young people

## **‘New Experience, New Horizon, New Direction’ – slogan of the ‘Sun Pilot’ campaign from SU Hong Kong...**

Lucia Cheung directs SU’s ministry in Hong Kong. Her movement has launched an innovative campaign to encourage Bible engagement among young people.

Matthew Wong, secretary for youth ministry, reports that over 5000 teenagers from around 110 churches and schools in Hong Kong, along with some 900 from Macau have joined in. Teenage ‘Pilots’ use Bible guides designed to help them follow a one-year plan divided into four ‘stations’. They can log on to a special website (see it on <http://sunpilot.hk>) to report their progress.

‘Captains’ (youth leaders and teachers) can access

group Bible reflection resources that reinforce the individual programme. Rallies, camps and competitions also encourage participation and ‘pilots’ can earn ‘pilot miles’ for keeping up with the reading plan, going to events and joining in web discussion. SU Hong Kong also rewards those churches and fellowships that have best encouraged their young people to participate.



*Clayton Fergie with Matthew Wong*

One ‘Pilot’ writes, ‘I was born in a Christian family. Going to church every Sunday became a habit. Many people saw me as a “good” Christian, but deep in my heart I didn’t know much about God. As I joined the Sun Pilot Campaign, I promised God to do devotions daily. I began to see my life change: reading the Bible

every day helps me to know God more, communicate with him and reflect on his Word. Thank God that I can experience my faith in him grow.’

A younger ‘Pilot’ tells of the impact of God’s Word on relationships: ‘I used to dislike one of my classmates. One day, she made my best friend to be punished by a teacher and that increased my resentment against her. That night I read Luke 6:27-36 about loving our enemies. God used this passage to remind me to love this classmate and pray for her.’



## **Excited about Quiet Times ... in Uganda**

*Sarah Musika, Central Region  
travelling secretary for SU Uganda  
writes about an encouraging*

*response to one  
of SU’s most  
traditional models  
of ministry.*

Imagine a school administration team so excited by the impact that a daily Bible reading plan can have on their students that they order enough materials for every child to be encouraged to participate!

Hard to imagine? It’s happened in Uganda. SU Uganda recently held three training workshops for Bible Club patrons from 80 schools. They challenged each patron to buy a copy of the SU children’s materials and share them creatively with youngsters throughout their school. Some of these resources found their way onto school notice boards. Other patrons distributed the Bible readings to children at the weekly Bible club – rather like the start of SU’s Bible ministries in the 1870s, when young Annie Marston wrote out a list of Bible readings for each of the girls in her Sunday school.

The idea has spread through many schools. ‘The feedback has been amazing,’ writes Sarah Musika. ‘We hope that through this effort, more and more Ugandan children will adopt the habit of reading their Bibles and praying every day.’

## Resources that will take you deeper...

We list resources here that are available in any of SU's three official languages – French, Spanish and English. Please let us know of any helpful books or websites that you have discovered so that others can share them too.



### Books

Charles-Daniel Maire, *Parole de Dieu, Cultures des Hommes*, Éditions Ligue pour la Lecture de la Bible, Valence 2006. Charles-Daniel, who worked for many years with SU in Côte d' Ivoire, helps us re-read the Bible texts in the light of cultural anthropology and to examine the specific cultures in which we seek to help others to engage with God's Word.

Margaret Withers, *Mission-Shaped Children*, Church House Publishing, London 2006.

Primarily addressing issues of children's ministry in the UK, this book nevertheless addresses questions that are becoming more common in our globalised world. It's about 'engaging with and growing young Christians who can give as much as they receive'.



### Websites

[www.littworld.org](http://www.littworld.org)

The website of Media Associates International, whose passion is to develop Christian writing all over the world. Several SU people have attended their training events. Their bi-monthly e-newsletter, Trainer Network, provides useful tools and ideas for equipping Christian publishers, editors, writers, booksellers and other literature workers. Start your free English or Spanish subscription or view articles online.

[www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright\\_Bible\\_Authoritative.htm](http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Bible_Authoritative.htm)

N T Wright, now Bishop of Durham, England, is one of today's most able and clear apologists for the Christian faith. His book *Scripture and the Authority of God* (SPCK, 2005) is important for all of us in SU. But if you can't get the book, this article opens up the key ideas.

<http://www.beyondborders.net>

Interesting mission website. Follow the links to their 'Living Words' pages and see how this group is using the ancient practice of lectio divina to help adults and children engage with the Word of God. Free downloadable resources.

<http://www.logoscom.org/>

Creative Bible engagement resources in French from Henri Bacher, who used to work with SU in Peru.

<http://www.damaris.org/>

It's worth keeping an eye on this website for their printed resources alone. Damaris have long provided creative resources for Bible reflection, sometimes in partnership with SU England and Wales. Now they are moving into TV and the internet. They promise 'Rapid Response' video clips to promote discussion about new films, as well as video for use in school assemblies.

## 'Does Jesus really love me?' Good news for Rebecca in Assam, India...

*Pankaj Kumar Sahu leads SU's North India Development Team, pioneering work in some of the most remote and inaccessible parts of the country. He writes about some of the children his team works with...*

'Sir, you said there is a God who understands us and loves us. But I don't believe in this God. There's no God who can solve my problems; no one loves me or understands me...' Rebecca is twelve years old. She lives in a village in Assam, forced to work as a servant in the house of abusive adoptive parents. They won't allow her to go to school, but – surprisingly – do let her come to the SU children's programme in the local church.

Pankaj listens to Rebecca's story, gently encouraging her to trust herself to the Lord Jesus and talk with him about all that's going on in her life. He encourages her to believe that the Lord understands the pain of her unloving family and will act in this situation.

Some days later, Rebecca returns with a joy-filled face to tell Pankaj that back home she had started to pray for her adoptive parents and their 'real' daughter, asking that each would also come to know Jesus. The mother had overheard her praying and been deeply shaken: 'We've been mistreating this child and she is praying to Jesus for us.' God has done great things in this family because a child took the Lord at his word and trusted that he truly did love her.

Pankaj and his team come alongside many sad children in Assam and Sikkim. The prayers they encourage them to write often describe situations of loneliness and need. Tenzing who is nine writes, 'My mother left home one year ago and has never returned. My father got married to another woman. I remember my mother so much. Please pray for me and for my uncle and grandfather who work as monks in a *gompa*

(Buddhist monastery).'



# Catalyst

## Photo Competition results

and another chance to enter your favourite photo...

SMILE!

Many thanks to those who sent entries to this first competition. Our judges were David Gifford, a graphic designer and illustrator in England ([www.inscriptdesign.com](http://www.inscriptdesign.com)), and Simon Hood, Creative Director of Logosdor in Australia, who is the genius behind the KidsGames website (see [www.kidsgames.com](http://www.kidsgames.com) and [www.logosdor.com](http://www.logosdor.com)). Our thanks to David and Simon for giving generous time to judging the entries. Prizes are on their way to the two joint winners.

### The results are:

#### Joint First Prize:

**Victor Mutinda** (SU Kenya volunteer) for his photo entitled 'Mission in a conflict region', and **Sonja Hotke** (Programme Manager with SU Sportz in Canada) for her photo captioned 'Where two or three are gathered...'

*On 'Mission in a conflict region': 'Easily the strongest and most interesting image. There is an immediate attractiveness about the group of faces, not all of whom are smiling. The composition is good, colours are bright and exposure acceptable.' 'The effort taken to reach this remote area reflects SU's desire to reach children no matter where they are.'*

*On 'Where two or three are gathered...': 'Composition and exposure are very good and the colour and textures are particularly vibrant and interesting.' 'This photo delivers a sense of the need for SU movements to be dependent on God for the work to be effective; the most creative of all the entrants; intriguing.'*

#### Joint Runners-Up:

**Joseph Litofe** (SU DR Congo, working with LivrAfrique) for his picture called simply 'Spirit of SU' and **Tom Riley** (Director of Development, SU USA) for 'SuperKids Beach Mission – children hear the message of God's love for them'.

*On 'Spirit of SU': 'This photo communicates an important aspect of the team spirit of SU. Leadership staff, helpers, volunteers and the night watchman all make SU what it is.'*

*On 'SuperKids Beach Mission': 'The classic SU beach mission photo! I think this well communicates decades of seaside outreach started in Wales with those famous words, "God is love".'*

### Remember you can receive your personal copy of Catalyst

Write to Sue Stott (a1admin@su-international.org) to ask to receive *Catalyst* directly by email which will include a direct link to a PDF file. Please say if you would like the English, French or Spanish versions. If it is difficult for you to download PDF files, please let us know and we will endeavour to send you a print copy.



"Okay, 4-year-olds! Let's polish off the Book of Leviticus."

### Thanks!

Thank you again to everyone who sent news and comment for this and the previous edition. Some of the items you sent may have appeared in *SUI News* rather than *Catalyst*.

Thanks to...

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Lucia Cheung  
Matthew Wong  
Pankaj Kumar Sahu

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### Over to you again

*Catalyst* is planned as a resource that helps us to exchange ideas across the SU movement. Please feed back your comments, questions and suggestions for future editions to [catalyst@su-international.org](mailto:catalyst@su-international.org)

Our next photo competition invites you to send digital photos on the theme of **'The Changing World of Teenagers'**. Entries should be sent to [catalyst@su-international.org](mailto:catalyst@su-international.org) **Closing date is 30 November 2007**. Your digital pictures should be in one of these formats: .bmp .jpg or .png. File size must be between 2 MB and 250 KB. Only ONE photo per entrant, please! Please include a caption for the photo and the full name and address of the photographer and his/her SU movement.