

Leadership



Sunday in a Box: Top 10 off-the-shelf instant Sunday kids activities

At least for some Sundays of the year, running a separate kids program is not viable for many churches. Here are some options for making those Sundays the easiest and most precious Sundays for your whole community, without wearing anyone out.

Ministry with human beings in twenty-first century Australia takes stuff. We are material girls and boys, and we live in a material world. And the stuff of faith cannot be extricated from this context. And so ministry means stuff.

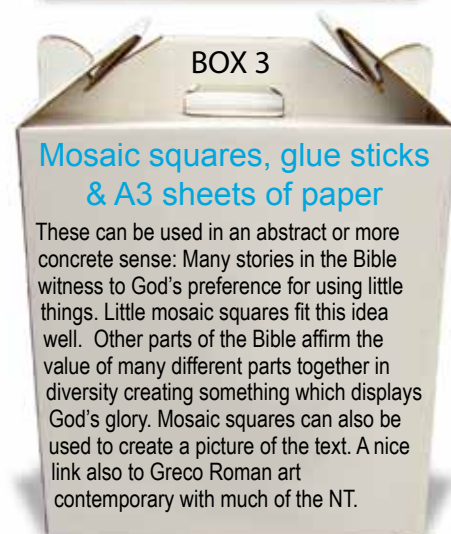
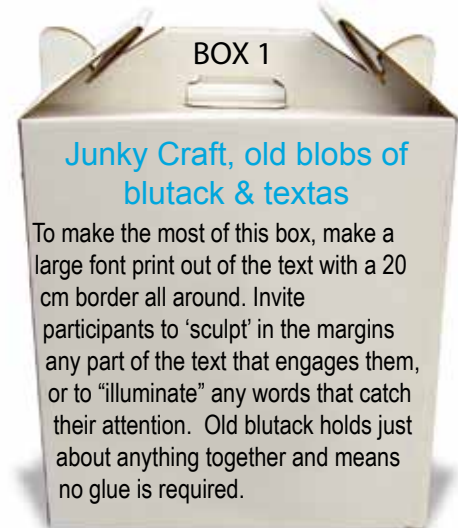
Perhaps you haven't noticed how much 'stuff' it takes to do your regular Sunday gathering. If you are a grown up and planning a worship service, there are probably some things that you can take for granted. There will be seats, perhaps, bibles in the pews, or a screen to display text on. There are powerpoint files with song words or hymn books to sing from. A lectern or music stand. Some churches have sound systems worth 3 years of the youth pastor's salary (or 20 years of children's ministry budget!) and some churches have pipe organs worth 10 years of the Senior pastor's salary!

For grown ups lots of the stuff is already there - installed.

One of the comments I hear from smallish to medium sized churches is that children's ministry takes so much energy. And this is true, because often we need to set up a whole separate space for kids, and the 'stuff' is not there. And in small to medium sized churches, this great expending of energy is sometimes for 20 children and on other weeks for 3. Don't get me wrong : that energy is completely worth it for 3 kids...but I wonder why we would knock ourselves out, just to expel anyone from worship, rather than provide simple resources that empower and equip their inclusion.

Here are my top 10 ideas to create an instant medium for children to participate in opening the Bible in the gathered community.

Keep these 10 boxes in a cupboard that you can pull out at a moment's notice, set out on a picnic rug in the church (anywhere except up the back) or on some tables, gather your children and a few friendly mentors and work the Word with them as the service progresses. Keep the Bible (well hopefully several copies) open around you for checking back in on what it's about as you go. Your children will be engaged, they will soak in the sense of the preaching, the culture of your community, and provide points of connection with the whole people of God.



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BOX 4

Portable Whiteboards, whiteboard markers & paper towel

Make a set of portable Whiteboards by laminating A3 sheets of White paper. Gather a collection of different coloured white board markers. Give each child a Whiteboard and let them doodle their way through the service – or give them some challenges. Write a 'challenge' on your whiteboard and flash it at them during the service. For example:

"The preacher is talking about the fruit of the Spirit. Keep count of how many times she says FRUIT and draw a different kind of fruit for each time."

"The Bible passage is encouraging us not to be afraid. Draw 5 things that you are scared of."



BOX 6

Coloured plasticine & plastic plates

A centimetre square bit of 3 different colours of plasticine can go a long way. It can make a meal that Jesus went to, plants growing in a parable that Jesus told, a whole army of Philistines heading for the hills, or a row of statues that Ehud is sneaking past...

Provide a plastic plate for working on to keep the plasticine out of the carpet.

Take some photos – even experiment with a bit of 'stopmotion' animation to get some action and see the text come to life.

BOX 7

Jigsaw puzzles

Simply getting the brain puzzling is a wonderful activity to accompany any opening of the bible. Trawl your cupboards or the op-shops for some good old fashioned Jigsaw puzzles. A range of difficulties is worth collecting. Find some general scenes that might relate to a range of texts: a battle, countryside, cityscape, lake or sea, food...

BOX 5

Coloured paper scraps, crepe paper, scissors, glue sticks, stickers, textas & Fridgebox

You're obviously not going to be able to fit the fridgebox in a box in the cupboard, but they are readily available in the recycle hopper behind most whitegoods and furniture or Hi-Fi stores.

A Fridge box is a great group project: and it can be turned into...a boat, a house, the inside of a big fish, a prison cell, a cave...

Clue up your people to imagine the setting of the text, and set about creating a 'backdrop' for the action.



BOX 8

Soft wire & beads

Pick some key words from the text and have a go at forming the words in wire. Some beads for colour may appeal to the more arty types, while bending the wire may be enough for the more technically oriented.



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Marie biscuits, arrowroot biscuits, milk coffee biscuits, icing mixture, food dye & assorted lollies

These ingredients will all keep forever in the cupboard, and with the variety of biscuit shapes, icing colours and lollies, almost every biblical topic can be visually enhanced in some creative way – and add to the colour and sweetness of morning tea!



Lego & some Brick Testament pictures for inspiration

A good general collection of Lego goes a long way. The Brick Testament demonstrates that with a bit of imagination lego can construct lots of biblical texts. Encourage plenty of latitude and creativity; allow different aspects of the text to take shape in different ways by different sculptors.

