

# Doing Dwelling in the Word with children.

Use in conjunction with '**Introducing Dwelling in the Word**'.

A key part of Partnership for Missional Church is **Dwelling in the Word**. The process of Dwelling in the Word with children is the same as the process for adults. There are however some things to be aware of when facilitating Dwelling in the Word with children.

The basic process is the same. Scripture is read, twice. The invitation is to notice what you notice and then get into pairs and listen to you partner and say what you noticed. Listen carefully, you'll be asked to feedback what you heard, not what you said.

Many children will already be familiar with the concept of talking with a partner and feeding back what they heard from their experience in school. Schools call it different names including; 'talk partners', 'learning partners', 'carpet buddies', 'think, pair, share'. Asking the children if they do something like this in school will provide helpful information as to their experience and potentially put them at ease if the process feels familiar or similar too something they already know.

## **Dwelling in the Word with children only**

- Consider where the Dwelling will happen and the set room appropriately ensuring there is space for movement.
- Give consideration to the version/translation of the Scripture you will use. Ensure the language is accessible. Don't be afraid to use different versions on different occasions. The CEV, The Message and the International Children's Bible should be accessible for most children. Don't use 'storybook' versions that are over simplified and/or leave out most of the text.
- Don't be tempted to shorten or sanitize the parts of Scripture that you find difficult and therefore assume the children will find difficult. Presume God's Spirit is at work in them and they will notice what they notice.
- If you are familiar with the practice of Godly Play consider using the specially written Godly Play Way of Dwelling in the Word - see additional notes and documents.
- If you are 'Dwelling' within the children's group on a Sunday morning, give thought to whether the dwelling is the whole or part of the session - see note below on using Dwelling as your whole session.

## **Dwelling in the Word with children and adults together. The above bullet points apply plus;**

- Consider where the Dwelling will happen and the logistics of people getting into pairs and fours.
- Encourage adults and children to mix together and give permission for families to 'split up' or 'be together', whichever more helpful (probably dependent on the age of the child) and will enable everyone to participate.

- It is important to hear the children's voices during the feedback time but speaking to a large group may be very intimidating (for adults as well as children!). For children to speak, they need to feel safe. Giving a time warning to help them organise and prepare what they would like to share could be useful. Having a trusted leader or grown-up that the children know well could also be helpful to facilitate the feedback time.
- Remember 'practice makes perfect!' Don't allow the congregation to 'give up' on Dwelling if it seems hard or sticky to begin with. Everyone needs to practice it regularly so it becomes part of 'who we are' not just something 'we've been told to do'. Enabling children and adults to practice Dwelling in the word in their own groups as well as together will be important.

### Getting Ready

- In preparing the service, meeting or group consider what you can leave out to allow plenty of space for **Dwelling in the word**.
- Have the **Dwelling** passage together with simple written instructions printed on a sheet for everyone.
- Do practice introducing **Dwelling in the Word** beforehand, be particularly aware of the language you use to introduce it, especially when children are present (see below).
- Do read the passage twice and have two different people doing the readings. Neither of these needs to be the person introducing it and could be a child or young person (remember to ask for a volunteers and respect offers and choices).
- Do make sure that anyone leading the service or leading **Dwelling in the Word** are engaged participant in the **Dwelling** and side-line observers.

### Dwelling in the Word with children as a 'Sunday Group Session'.

If you usually have a relatively short Sunday group session time (20-40 minutes), you could consider using Dwelling as the basis for the session.

- ❖ Greet the children as you usually would, find out how their week has been.
- ❖ Introduce dwelling as suggested below.
- ❖ Ask for two readers or one and tell the Godly Play version of the passage
- ❖ 'Listen, pair, share'
- ❖ If you have time after the sharing either continue conversation about the noticings and wonderings or you could offer a choice of activities.
- ❖ Pray together before you transition to activities.
- ❖ Ask the children to keep wondering about the passage and what they've heard in the sharing. Invite them to choose how they would like to respond to the story or the noticings and wonderings. Have paper and pens/pencils, some craft materials, a box of lego and have some bibles or storybook bibles available. Give the children the choice of what they do. It is ok to explain to the children that this is 'not a running around or ball game time - that comes at the end of church, this time is for us to keep wondering about God and the bible passage'.

- ❖ This way of working does not need lots of setting up nor lots of space. A rug or cushions to sit on the floor is fine. A table for craft may be helpful but is not essential – children are often happy working on the floor and gives them the opportunity to find their own space if they need it.
- ❖ If it's your practice to offer drink and snack do so and enable the children to serve each other.
- ❖ End the session as you normally would.

### **Godly Play way of Dwelling in the Word.**

Notice that using this method is still 'Dwelling in the Word' not a 'Godly Play' session, although there are similarities and both practices share important principles;

- We believe in the innate spirituality of all persons and that God and the child can and will be communing together in this process.
- We acknowledge that a child's cognitive and linguistic abilities are what they are and the child may struggle to find words to verbalise their noticing. We must be patient, resist the temptation to speak for them and thank them for whatever they share.
- We trust the process and that whatever the child contributes is valuable of itself.

The Godly Play technique of 'wondering' may be helpful in enabling the children to share what they noticed. Using questions like; I wonder what you liked best, I wonder what you particularly noticed in the story today, I wonder what part of the story is about you.

Remember that silence and 'going slow' is an integral part of Godly Play and should be employed in this method of Dwelling.

Participants can be encouraged to 'announce the kingdom' and tell each other where they have seen God at work in the process or been particularly blessed.

See additional sheet on *Creating Luke 10 Godly Play way of Dwelling* and *Luke 10 Script*. Adults have found this method very accessible and meaningful too. It is not 'just for children'.

### **Introducing Dwelling in the word**

- ❖ We are going to listen to a bible passage together.
- ❖ As you listen, notice the part that catches your attention or you like the best.
- ❖ The passage will be read again.
- ❖ Look around for a someone you don't usually talk or hang out with. Go and sit with them. In an all age setting add 'Parents, you can accompany your smaller children if you/they want to. Children in primary school and above can choose who they want to talk with'.
- ❖ Listen to that person as he or she tells you what caught their attention or what they liked best. Listen really carefully and remember what your partner says. You will be asked to share what you heard your partner say.

- ❖ In turn tell the other person what caught your attention or you liked the best and if you can why, while they listen carefully and try to remember what they hear you say.
- ❖ Join with another pair and tell this pair what you heard your partner say, not what you said. Listen as the others in the group share what they heard.