



USING BIBLES IN CRE

February 2012

We need the Bible to introduce children to God, God's story and God's ways (Ivy Beckwith p126)

Introduction

In 2012 The Bible Society of New Zealand made available a wonderful resource – class sets of CEV Bibles for all Year 5 and 6 students in NZ where CRE is taught, all at no cost. The offer was underwritten by Bible Society donors across New Zealand. Many CRE teachers accepted this opportunity and the 30,000 Bibles were distributed to them.¹ (It is appropriate at this point to pause and thank God for such a remarkable gift²)

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The challenge now is to determine how best to use these class sets. What follows are a number of general guidelines and then a number of suggestions for using the Bibles in CRE lessons. These two sections can be broadly termed theory and practice. You can start with either section. Unfortunately the word theory is likely to put many readers off and they will only want to look at the ideas presented. However, if the maxim that “there is nothing so practical as a good theory” is valid then both sections deserve a read!

¹ The stocks have been exhausted and currently there are no plans to repeat the offer.

² It is also appropriate to give thanks for the vision of Kate Dominikovich, a previous National Coordinator to the CEC, who had the initial vision for this project

PART ONE: SOME THEORY

A challenge

CRE volunteers should aim to:

- encourage children to value the Bible as a dynamic and interesting book
- encourage children to recognize the Bible as a guide to faith and holy living
- make the Bible accessible – use the class set of Bibles³ as often as is appropriate and practicable.

A quote to consider

The Bible meets children today as a book almost about another world, hardly in any respect resembling their own (Gray, J. 1970. What about children? London: SCM Press)

There are a number of gaps between the world of the child (and adults for that matter) and of the Bible that need to be bridged in order for the text to make sense. These include:

- then and now, a history gap
- a collection of books written in various literary styles, a literary gap
- originally written in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic, a language gap
- set in a place distant from New Zealand, a geographical gap
- different customs and culture, a social gap
- unregenerate readers, i.e. a spiritual gap.

What other gaps are there? How can they be bridged?

Some general guidelines

- The supplied Bible is the Contemporary English Version (CEV). The language and vocabulary of this translation is appropriate to the ability of many good student readers⁴
- Remember that as a CRE teacher you are allowed to read from the Bible to your students but this must be done in a way that captures their interest
- Remember also that your students are allowed to read the Bible for themselves
- Give children credit for literacy skills appropriate to their age. For example, by Year 4 many children can use an index, a glossary, and a contents page. Taking time to show your students how to learn and use skills such as these when searching for a Bible book, chapter, and verse is a very important skill.

³ The ideal is one copy per child, but one between two can also work. Check out The Bible Society webpage for resources www.biblesociety.org.nz

⁴ Biblical place names and some other theological words will often require explanation but most 10 year old students with good reading ability should have no great difficulties understanding the text

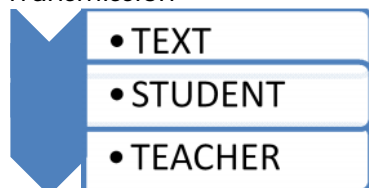
- If you are using the class set with younger students it be helpful to simplify the Bible references by providing page numbers for them, or by placing a bookmark in the appropriate place
- When referring to the Bibles use language that your students will understand. For example, referring to the Bible as the “Word of God” may not have any meaning to a child, e.g. we do not say word of Seuss, or word of Lewis when referring to books by these authors
- When sharing a Bible passage together always explain relevant unfamiliar words appropriately to your students, e.g. what is a sacred tent? (Exodus 38:9). Tent is likely to be understood, but a sacred tent?
- Whether you are using class sets or not it is a very good idea to always bring a Bible when you teach and to be seen using it
- If you are going to focus on a key verse or a memory verses make sure that you teach this in context, e.g. verses from the Psalms attributed to David can be explained with reference to specific events in his life. Try not to carve the scripture text up into units so small that they become meaningless
- Remember that the Spirit of God will speak to the children directly through the Bible exactly as God has done to us, and all the generations before us
- To pre-empt the students who say that the Bible is boring because it all happened so long ago and they can’t see why it should be important to them as it is all history, check your own attitude. Often students will mirror the attitude of their teacher, so if you hint or imply the Bible is boring then the students are likely to pick up on that
- Help your students to realise that the values and attitudes of the biblical characters are timeless, e.g. courage, trust, integrity are all currently relevant
- Curiosity is a great motivator and careful thought can be given to the lesson structure so that this principle leads students into seeing what the Bible says on a given topic
- Realise that a progression is helpful, e.g. the CRE curriculum moves from an understanding such as we go to the Bible to find out about God; an introduction to key verses; finding the way around the Bible; consideration of whether the Bible is real; examining the world of the Bible; viewing the Bible as a road map, to investigating the validity of the Bible
- Above all, the students should find their time with the Bible is enjoyable, in two words have fun!

A point of interest -- did you realise?

One of the key competencies required in the current NZ Curriculum used in state schools is using language, symbols and texts. Use of the Bible certainly can assist in implementing that competency in students.

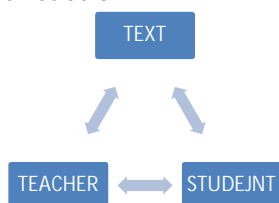
Three models of teaching

Transmission



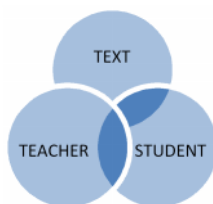
In this model the text is distant to the student, the student is passive and the teacher is the authority

Transaction



In this model the text is available to student and teacher, the students use their skills and abilities in the learning process the teacher is a facilitating authority

Transformation



In this model each part plays a complementary role

Think!

This is not merely a pretty set of pictures – ask yourself which model do you use most of the time? Which is the preferred model? How can the preferred model be used when using Bibles in CRE?

Some required student skills

In order to understand and use the Bible a student needs to be able to:

- physically open the Bible, turn the pages
- be sufficiently developed cognitively to be able to understand what is read / heard
- read fluently

- grasp the ideas being expressed
- know how to find Bible books, chapters and verses

It is also very helpful if a student can read maps with understanding

Some key concepts for students to understand

- The Bible is a special book
- The Bible was written by human authors but God helped them to write what he wanted them to write (2 Tim 3:16)
- The Bible is a special book about God, Jesus and people
- The books of the Bible are not in chronological order – you do not start at the beginning and work your way to the end to get the whole story in order
- The Bible has two main sections – Old and New Testament
- The Old Testament has 39 books
- The New Testament has 27 books
- Thus the Bible is a compilation of 66 books
- The books are written in a number of styles, e.g. poetry (Hebrew poetry), story (narrative), history, proverbs, letters
- The first book of the Bible is called Genesis and talks about the beginning of the world and people
- The first four books of the New Testament are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
- These books, the Gospels, give us details about Jesus' life on earth

Think point:

Teachers of the Bible can no longer point to proof texts and think that people will simply believe it as truth because 'the Bible tells me so' (p125. Ivy Beckwith)

What do you think?

Two frequently asked questions

- Why so many versions of the Bible?
 - Bible translators can choose to focus on translating word for word (a literal translation) or thought for thought (paraphrase style). The English in literal translations can be very stilted and while paraphrase translations can be much easier to understand they can be less accurate. Many translators aim to be somewhere between these two extremes. The CEV is towards the thought for thought end of the spectrum
- Why the CEV?
 - The CEV is written to be heard as well as read. Also it is written in language easy to understand for new users of the English language, e.g. young students

PART TWO: SOME IDEAS TO USE

Bible orientation

If your students have never or seldom handled a Bible you may want to conduct an orientation session. Allow students time to handle the Bible and look through it. Then you could ask them questions such as the following:

- Look at the contents page for the Old Testament
 - How many books in the Old Testament?
 - What is the name of the first one?
 - What is the name of the last one?
 - Which one has the shortest name?
 - Which one has the longest name?
 - Which one do you think was written first? (Often Job is considered to be first)
 - Does any one in your class have a name the same as on the list?
- Look at the contents page for the New Testament
 - How many books in the New Testament?
 - What is the name of the first one?
 - What is the name of the last one?
 - Which one has the shortest name?
 - Which one has the longest name?
 - Do any books have the same name?
 - Does any one in your class have a name the same as on the list?
- If we added the books of the Old and New Testaments together how many would we have?
- What does the word bible mean? (from a Greek word biblios meaning papyrus)
- The Bible can be divided into four broad categories in the Old Testament with parallel categories in the New, what are they?

Old Testament	New Testament
The law (five books of Moses)	The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)
History (Joshua to Esther)	History (Acts)
Poetry (Job to Song of Songs)	Letters (Romans to Jude)
Prophecy (Isaiah to Malachi)	Prophecy (Revelation)

- The chapters and verses we have in our Bibles were not part of the original writing. They have been added since to make it easier to finding our way around the text
- There are a number of writing styles (genre) to be found in the Bible including: story (narrative), poetry, letters, prophecy, laws (commandments), eye witness accounts, history lessons
- If you close the Bible and open it at the halfway point which book are you most likely to find? (Psalms)

Eight potential categories

We are created to receive information (input) and to give it out (output). How the input is received and how the output is delivered can be grouped into a number of categories as indicated on the following table.

INPUT receiving	the person	OUTPUT giving out
listening		speaking
reading		writing
viewing (first hand observation of real things)		moving (as in drama, acting, etc)
watching (e.g. watching a television program)		shaping (as in making a dvd, artwork)

These categories provide a useful set of coat pegs to hang ideas on for using Bibles in a CRE context. Those categories that are in bold are particularly relevant to the use of Bibles in CRE and will be dealt with in turn.

Some suggestions

Some of these suggestions will work better with single classes, some with large groups and some with either. You will need to make a judgement call on this as you select your options

Listening

- When reading from the Bible or telling a Bible story for the students to listen to try to place the event in its historical and cultural setting, e.g. "About 500 years before the birth of Jesus...", or "this is a story that Jesus told to his friends..." By doing this you begin to build up a big picture of what the whole Bible is about and how it all fits together
- Also to assist with listening you can often use maps, timelines and photos to put events in their correct setting
- If appropriate with what you are sharing do some research on the internet or at the library so that you can update your students with the latest Bible related discoveries, e.g. show them some current photographs, e.g. Hezekiah's tunnel. In this way the Bible comes alive. Note that Google is a useful starting point!
- To ask students to listen to a whole story read from the Bible may be inappropriate because of the length of the passage, the language used, or the complications of the plot in the story. In situations such as this it is better to tell the story. However, reading a phrase or some of the spoken words would be very worthwhile. For example, in telling the story of Zaccheus you might say something like, Jesus looked up and spoke to Zaccheus and this is what he said (reading from Luke 19:5), "Zaccheus, hurry down. I want to stay with you today."

You could then ask your students a question such as what do you think Zaccheus did? Having listened to a set of possible responses you could read again from the biblical text, "Zaccheus hurried down and gladly welcomed Jesus" (Luke 19:6)

- Listening while the teacher reads a story from the Bible to the student group can be done in a number of other ways:
 - Reading aloud to the whole group from the Bible while they listen (remembering the caution referred to previously)
 - Reading aloud as above except students are able to follow the reading in a copy of the Bible that they can see (e.g. one Bible each, one Bible between two). Every now and then, you as the reader stop and the students chorus out the next word.
 - If you are teaching a large group you might select say three representatives from each class group present who follow along in a copy of the Bible that they each have. When you stop they chorus out the answer on behalf of their class mates. Each set of students could also take it in turn to respond
 - Reading aloud as suggested above except the students read out aloud the spoken words of a named character, identified by the use of " " in the text
- Listening while a student or students read from the Bible, using any of the variations above. Note the following caution, however.

Note:

It is very important that whoever reads from the Bible out loud for others to hear understands the meaning of what they are reading. Asking students to read when they do not understand clearly not only helps to create restlessness among the listeners but also helps to devalue the text and the reader

Reading

- Check and see if there is a copy of the CEV Bible in the school library. If not then talk to the school librarian and/or school principal and see if they are happy for you to donate one so that students can refer to it and read it outside of your CRE class time
- Maybe make a copy of the Bible available to the class. With the permission of the school it may be possible to have a loan Bible that children could sign up for and so have turns to take it home between lessons
- Initially memory verses need to be read! Be creative and have fun learning these key verses where appropriate⁵

⁵ Remember that visualised memory verses come with Life Choices, years one to three

- If your lesson is at the start of the day or first thing after a school break then aim to arrive early so you can have a copy of the Bible on a desk open at the place where the lesson for the previous week came from. In this way students can check up on your lesson!
- Reading articles that interest your students and are related to the Bible can stimulate a deeper appreciation of the Bible
- Assigning a set of questions, e.g. a worksheet, to answer based on a Bible passage can be very productive and transformational! To do this the students can work alone or be divided into small groups. One example of such a worksheet, The case of the special baby, is included at the end of these notes
- Base part of your lesson around Page A-10, How to read this book

Viewing / watching

- If you have travelled to the Bible lands where it is relevant you might want to share personal experiences and / or photographs, e.g. a picture of you in Hezekiah's tunnel, you seated where the Sermon on the Mount or walking through the Garden of Gethsemane, and relate these to the Bible passage you are teaching from
- Not strictly using the Bible but watching includes watching a biblical drama, a puppet play, a film clip, a movie, a film about a Bible character or Bible story
- Start your story by looking at one of the pictures provided in the Bible

Speaking

All of the variety of ways in which students can be given opportunity to speak in normal lessons can also be used considering the use of the Bible in your lessons. These include

- Talking about what has been read - recalling the facts in the biblical account that you have shared. This can work with small and large groups. In either situation students can talk to a neighbour about what they have been hearing, focussed on specific questions
 - The question might focus on recalling the sequence of events – a knowledge type question, e.g. what happened after the man was let down through the roof?
 - The question might focus on feelings, e.g. how did David feel as he stood before Goliath? This is an affective or emotive type of question
 - The question might be to show using body language, e.g. what facial expression did Zaccheus have when he was asked by Jesus to come down from the tree? This is an action or conative type of question
- Discussing what has been read. This is different from the previous suggestion. The key word in the previous section was recall, and relies on the student remembering what they have been told. Those all tend to be closed questions, with a very limited range of possible answers, often only one. Discussion goes further than that and uses open questions in order

to consider a range of possible answers. By way of example the previous questions are reframed

- The question might focus on recalling a possible sequence of events – e.g. the man who was healed after he was let down through the roof by his friends (Mark 2:1-12) – what do you think he did after he left the house where Jesus was?
 - The question might focus on feelings, e.g. how do you think David felt as he stood before Goliath? Do you think that this changed after he had killed Goliath? In what way?
 - The question might be to show using body language, e.g. what facial expressions might Zaccheus have shown when he climbed the tree, when he was asked by Jesus to come down from the tree, and when he had Jesus at his house?
 - Another significant question that could be discussed is “Why do you think that God wanted this story in the Bible”
 - Further questions include “Which character do you think is most like you?” “How do you think these characters in the story were feeling?” “Have you ever felt this way?” and “When have you felt this way?”
- Some students may be very happy to pray based on what was included in the lesson. Remember that this might be audible or inaudible prayer. An invitation to pray inaudibly removes the problem for those who are shy and for those who may feel ostracised if they do not wish to pray

Writing

The options here are best suited to older students in a single class situation where they have access to pen and paper. These options include:

- Writing an account of what happened. The account could be a diary entry, a newspaper article, the script for a news report
- Writing a diary entry for a biblical character, from that character’s point of view
- Writing a letter to God. The letter may include some praise, sorry, thank you or please⁶ items, based on what was in the lesson and/or read from the Bible
- Students might like to write a prayer based on what was learnt from the Bible. The prayer could have some or all of the elements mentioned in the previous suggestion (PSTP)
- Writing a song – choose a well known tune⁷ and then fit the words to that

⁶ These four words are ACTS, adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication with names that are more student friendly

⁷ “Are you sleeping, brother John” is one example. A tune with short lines (syllables) is generally easier to work with than one with longer lines (syllables)

- Writing a poem. Remember that poems do not have to rhyme ☺. One simple form of poem, known as a cinquain has one word on the first line, two on the second, three on the third, four on the fourth and five on the fifth. The first four lines tend to be full of adjectives and the fifth a summary statement
- If your school is near the sea or there are students in your class who go out in a boat or ferry regularly then why not write a suitable lesson based message with contact details and place it in a plastic bottle. Arrange for the bottle to be thrown overboard somewhere appropriate. Then the group can wait to see if there is a finder and where it was found!
- As an alternative to the message in a bottle the students could write a message and put it in a balloon before inflating it. The balloon could be passed on to another group of students who could enjoy the message contained inside. In fact, messages could be swapped between different groups

Moving

Remember that this word refers to activities such as drama, mime, acting, role playing. Such activities can follow the reading from or listening to the Bible and can include:

- Acting out a Bible story that has been read
- Acting out a story as it is being read
- Acting out the principle contained in a biblical passage / story, e.g. the idea of loving your neighbour as illustrated in the Good Samaritan story that Jesus told. Students can be asked to put it into a contemporary context.
(Note that the acting out could be videoed and then it comes into the category that follows, i.e. of shaping)
- Rather than acting it out puppets can be used to tell the Bible story or the biblical principle that has been learned
- If you want to be really creative, have available a lot of extra time and have school permission then why not have breakfast at a beach while you share the story of Jesus at the beach with his disciples after the resurrection (John 21) or have lunch on a hill while sharing the account of feeding 5000 (John 6:1-13). This might be appropriate at a school camp setting where you are present
- Maybe start with a picture, then examine the text and lead on to an appropriate drama based on the lesson

- The use of the activity sometimes called sword drill can be a fun thing to do in short bursts. Assuming each person has a Bible the idea is to have a race: the students are given a passage to find and the first person to find it is the winner. As an incentive the person who is first could be told that they cannot compete in the next round but they can help decide who is first on that turn. If you are working with a large group then the suggestion is that some students be selected from each class group present to represent their class. If appropriate the score can be kept in order to find a class winner

Shaping

This is another word we do not use in this context very often. It refers to using media, e.g. making videos, doing craft and artwork. Most of these ideas are outside the scope of a thirty minute lesson, but not necessarily . . .

- Making a video, or dvd. Obviously this requires a script of some kind (writing) and some acting (moving)
- Making a PowerPoint presentation. This would be particularly suited to older students
- Draw a picture of . . .
- Draw a visual word
- Create a fridge magnet – make this out of paper or stiff card and glue a small magnet on the back before placing on the refrigerator
- Make a window sticker for the car (but make sure that you have permission before installing the sticker)
- Making silhouettes to retell the story. If the school still has available an overhead projector (OHP projector) then this is an excellent source of light for displaying your silhouettes. The silhouettes can be made from any form of opaque paper, including newspaper, or light card. Some of the students can retell the story or read the story from the Bible while some others manipulate the scenes on the OHP
- Making a simple diorama
- Making a sound recording based on the lesson. This could be a recording of the acting out of the story (see Moving)

Two more Ivy Beckwith quotes

The Bible was given to us to promote a particular way of life growing out of the character of God (p126)

Unfortunately the 20th century modern church's method of biblical interpretation has caused its people to lose a sense of the awe, mystery, scope and majesty of God (p125)

Do you agree with her? What significance do these quotes have for you?

Lessons about the Bible in various curricula

Check out the following CEC endorsed curricula for lessons that focus specifically on the Bible. Even if they do not form part of your regular curriculum you may want to include them into your teaching program⁸

Life Choices		
Year three	Unit one: What is the Bible?	3 sessions plus two related sessions
CRE		
Quest 2: Blue	Unit 5: The Bible: is it real?	2 sessions
Quest 1: Yellow	Unit 5: A book worth reading	3 sessions
Search 1: Blue	Unit 4: My road map	3 sessions
Search 1: Green	Unit 4: A fantastic book	4 sessions
Search 1: Yellow	Unit 3: The Bible	3 sessions
Note: If you are using use one of these units it is probably a good idea to use it early in the year rather than later as a foundation for all that you teach, i.e. rearrange the order of units in the curriculum. Note that Life Choices year three already provides for this but Quest 2 Blue is not usually going to be available until the second half of the year		

Some interesting facts

- More than 1600 years were taken to write the complete Bible

⁸ Be very sensitive about this. Some principals and Boards of Trustees will be happy for you to use other CEC endorsed curriculum for a lesson or two with no consultation required, others may want you to adhere strictly to the curriculum that they have agreed to

- God inspired around 40 authors to write the Bible
- The authors came from all sorts of backgrounds including a tax collector (Matthew: Gospel of Matthew), a doctor (Luke: Luke's gospel and Acts), a theologian (Paul: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, etc), shepherds (David: Psalms; Amos) a king (Solomon: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs), a prince (Moses: Genesis to Deuteronomy), a soldier (Joshua), and a fisherman (John: John's gospel, Revelation)
- The Bible was originally written in the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek languages
- It was not until Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press (around 1436) that Bibles became more widely available
- The Bible continues to be the best selling book – other books are popular for a time, the Bible is consistently popular
- Despite numerous attempts in many countries to ban or destroy the Bible the Bible continues to survive and even thrive

The case of the special baby

HERE IS MY TASK

I am learning to (IALT) be curious about what really happened at the first Christmas

NOW FOR SOME QUESTIONS

Check the evidence in Luke 2:1-21 for the answers. Cross out the wrong answers

QUESTION NO. #1: Where did Joseph go to? (see verse 4)

Jericho Jerusalem Bethlehem Damascus

QUESTION NO. #2: Why did he go? (see verse 3)

to be listed (census) to get a hamburger because he felt like it to see
some friends

QUESTION NO. #3: Why did he go to that town? (see verse 4)

he thought it was a good idea that was his hometown he liked the sound of the
name

QUESTION NO. #4: Who did he take with him? (see verse 5)

his mother his father Mary Elizabeth John

QUESTION NO. #5: What happened when Joseph was in Bethlehem? (see verse 7)

it rained Jesus was born he stubbed his toe he was visited by the king

QUESTION NO. #6: Why was the baby laid on some hay? (see verse 7)

because that was the way they did it then because there was no where else to go – the inn was full

QUESTION NO. #7: What frightened the shepherds? (see verse 9)

a shooting star a loud noise an earthquake an angel with very bright light

QUESTION NO. #8: What was the good news that the shepherds heard? (see verse 11)

there was a new song was on the radio that a new that a baby was born who would be a Saviour no
news

QUESTION NO. #9: What did the shepherds decide to do? (see verse 15)

forget about it check their laptops go back to sleep check it out

QUESTION NO. #10: What did the shepherds tell Mary and Joseph? (see verse 17)

what the angel had told them nothing how their sheep were doing what the price of wool was

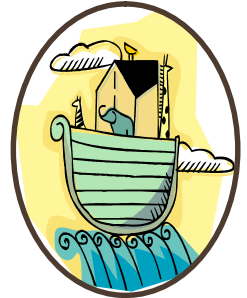
QUESTION NO. #11: What did the shepherds find out about what the angel had told them? (see verse 20)

it was true it was not true it was partly true it was a lie



A final challenge

How do you rate your own Bible reading habits? Remember your own enthusiasm regarding reading the Bible will almost undoubtedly be reflected in your use of the Bible with your students



Incomplete . . .

The ideas listed in this booklet are not yet complete . . . I am sure that you have plenty more ways in which the Bibles can be used meaningfully. If so please email them to me, davidm@cec.org.nz so that they can be added to future revisions

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Prepared by David Mulholland MA EdD
for the Churches Education Commission
PO Box 17178, Greenlane, AKL 1546
New Zealand