

# Teaching 8 – 11s

The special challenges of pre-teens.



## Introduction

### Profiling 8-11 year olds

#### Brief Case Study

Describe a “typical” 8-11 year old...

### 8-11's: Physical, Social, Emotional and Intellectual Development

(See sheet with table)

### Why is teaching pre-teens worth the challenge?

#### Church Stats

- Age of conversion
- Church attendance

#### What does the Bible say?

*We are all sinners, saved by grace* (Romans 3:22-24)

*To live God's way, we need Jesus from the Bible* (2 Peter 1:3-4)

### Creative Solutions

#### Practical ideas

- ★ Separate ages 8-9yrs (Yr 3&4) and 10-11yrs (Yr 5&6)
- ★ Split boys and girls for discussion time and games
- ★ Work in pairs or groups vs. putting a single child on-the-spot
- ★ **“Hands-on” lessons with a variety of learning styles** — audio, visual, sensory  
*e.g. 1 Kings 18 - Water and fire experiment (interactive introductory activity)*
- ★ **Increase interaction with Bible text:**
  - Read passage in sections and stop for children to draw story scenes
  - Assign children to read “voices” in passage *e.g. Mark 4:35-41 “Calming of the Storm” — disciples, Jesus, narrator*
  - Print out key verses to be read by volunteers
  - Write a drama sticking close to Bible text (Biblegateway - Good News, CEV versions use easier language)
  - Fastest team to order a set of Bible pictures according to Bible passage
  - Table on flip-chart paper with questions and Bible references to find answers
  - Audio Bible (Bible Gateway), children can follow along in Bibles
  - Print out passage very large (A2+) and underline/circle/circle parts to explain
  - Memory verse challenges *e.g. Mark 1:15 - groups to come up with a rap or actions for verse and present to class*
- ★ **Weave hobbies/interests into lesson.** Make sure it's something familiar to most kids.  
*E.g. 1 Kings 18 - Elijah and prophets of Baal = football game. God's club vs Baal's club, Baal scores 0 and God has the victory!*
- ★ **Use real-life scenarios for application** *e.g. Acts 5:17-42 persecution of the apostles. “You are in an RE lesson and your teacher tells you that the Bible is made-up and Jesus is not God. In two's/three's act out how you might respond 1. badly or 2. boldly!”*
- ★ **Introduce a question box/book for “white rabbits”** (“*Why did God make us if he knew we would sin?*” “*What happens to babies when they die?*”...). Set aside one Sunday lesson to answer key questions or chat to individual child and parent if it feels urgent.

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- ★ **Have fun and keep it relaxed!** Keep a list of good games (not necessarily Bible related) e.g. *Mafia, Dobble, Zip Zap Boing, Two truths and a lie, Pictionary, Dodge ball, Rock-paper-scissors, Who am I? (post-it notes on forehead)*
- ★ **Give girls time to chat.** Grow a relationship by getting to know “normal” interests e.g. *What did you get up to this weekend? Have you chosen a secondary school?*
- ★ **Get active with boys** e.g. *Discussion time with a ball — person holding ball answers Q*
- ★ **Allow eldest to serve/have responsibility.** Show them they have a role to play in the church family e.g. *operate PowerPoint or music, fetching drinks trolley, setting up equipment.*
- ★ **Speak to children in a more adult way.** Be honest and share struggles/joys of your walk with Christ, address class challenges more openly e.g. *acknowledge Yr 6's readiness to move to older group, discuss being a role model to younger children.*
- ★ **Initiate conversations with parents.** Be humble enough to receive negative feedback e.g. *When are lessons discouraging/boring? Why has Lewis stopped coming to Sunday school? What is it like for Jane to be a Christian at school?*
- ★ **Agree on rules for the class** and welcome their input e.g. *Classes writes and decorates rules on a big sheet at start of Sunday school year*
- ★ **Start an 8-11s club** to grow Christian peer group and evangelise non-church friends e.g. *Dangerous Club*
- ★ **Resources:**
  - Free Bible Images - <http://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/>
  - Max7 - [www.max7.org](http://www.max7.org)
  - WhatsintheBible (DVD)
  - Distant Shores Illustrations - <http://pub.distantshores.org/resources/illustrations/sweet-publishing>
  - The Bible Project - YouTube or [www.thebibleproject.com](http://www.thebibleproject.com)
  - Wild Video - <http://wild.biblesociety.org.au/video-library/video-library/>
  - Biblegateway - <https://www.biblegateway.com>

### Scenarios

1. Amy has not been in Sunday school for the last 4 weeks. You discover that she has remained in the main service with her mum. After a conversation with mum, you learn that some of the girls have been nasty to her and exclude her from their clique before and after church.
2. The boys in your class have been increasingly disruptive. During the lesson they refuse to open their Bibles, make a mockery of the Bible drama and giggle through discussion groups and prayers. Stern warnings and sending them out the class has little effect. Leaders are increasingly frustrated and express this to you.
3. James has autism and finds it difficult to read the Bible or answers questions. The only time he is engaged is during a craft or construction activity. In the same group, we have high achieving Olivia who answers almost every question and is in need of a challenge.
4. David is a leader for the 8-11 year olds group. He is very godly and sticks to his Sunday commitments. His lesson plans are thorough, but are a bit dull and involve long periods of sitting and listening. The children manage 10 minutes before they get restless. Most of the lesson is spent trying to get their attention and contain poor behaviour.

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Physical	Social	Emotional	Intellectual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Growth spurts at different rates towards adolescence</li> <li>● Girls tend to mature faster than boys</li> <li>● Steady increase in large muscle development, strength, balance and coordination</li> <li>● Increase in small muscle coordination</li> <li>● Very active, with a lot of energy</li> <li>● 8-9's frustrated by activities beyond them developmentally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Generally see adults as authority</li> <li>● Follow rules out of respect for authority</li> <li>● Loyal to groups, clubs, gangs</li> <li>● Identify with individuals of the same gender</li> <li>● Prefer to work in groups in cooperative activities</li> <li>● Problem solve with a negotiating style, compromising with peers</li> <li>● Girl relationships complex-bullying, excluding, gossip.</li> </ul> <p>10-11ss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• View themselves in terms of the way that others respond to them</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Don't want to be singled out or viewed as different</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Accept parent/family beliefs</li> <li>● Admire and imitate older youth</li> <li>● Developing decision-making skills</li> <li>● Beginning to question authority</li> <li>● Need involvement with caring adult</li> <li>● Find comparisons with others difficult to process</li> <li>● Girls more able to analyse their thoughts and feelings;</li> <li>● Boys have shorter and shallower discussion</li> </ul> <p>8-9's</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vent anger by teasing or criticizing</li> <li>• Find it very hard to accept constructive criticism</li> </ul> <p>10-11's</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● more balanced until hormones kick in;</li> <li>● question Christianity; ask big questions (what about other faiths? authority of scripture)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Academic abilities vary greatly</li> <li>● learning difficulties more obvious e.g. dyslexia, reading and writing</li> <li>● Increased attention span, but many have interests which change rapidly</li> <li>● Learning to use good judgment</li> <li>● Judge ideas in absolutes, right or wrong (not much middle ground)</li> <li>● Interests in collections and hobbies</li> <li>● Bible knowledge advanced if family attends regularly</li> <li>● able to understand abstract concepts better (can grasp big doctrines e.g. Christ's substitution, God's sovereignty)</li> </ul>
<b>Implications</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Active learning: Plan activities that allow them to move about (not limited to sitting/listening)</li> <li>● Vary activities — don't rely solely on sports, general physical activities are important as well (constructing, puzzles, making things)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clarify and enforce reasonable limits</li> <li>● Plan plenty of time to be with same gender</li> <li>● Avoid competitions between genders</li> <li>● Group activities are important</li> <li>● Split up cliques at times</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide correction quietly — one-on-one</li> <li>● Give positive feedback and look for successes</li> <li>● Avoid generalized praise</li> <li>● Provide safety net of an adult that will maintain boundaries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “hands-on” activities</li> <li>● Help youth form groups/clubs with common interests/hobbies</li> <li>● Vary the activities to engage rapidly changing interests</li> <li>● Move beyond Bible story to understanding and application</li> </ul>

- “9- to 11-year-olds: Ages and stages of youth development”, Posted on January 7, 2013 by Jangle Stewart, Michigan State University Extension, [http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/9\\_to\\_11\\_year\\_olds\\_ages\\_and\\_stages\\_of\\_youth\\_development](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/9_to_11_year_olds_ages_and_stages_of_youth_development)
- “Children are Caterpillars” on Childhood Development, TNT ministries, Rory Bell