



TASMANIAN
COUNCIL OF
CHURCHES



SCHOOLS SUNDAY TAS

churches celebrating and supporting local schools

17 FEBRUARY
2019

SU 
TASMANIA

GET INVOLVED!

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... an annual opportunity to pray for and support young people at school

Schools Sunday is an initiative of the Tasmanian Council of Churches, supported by SU Tasmania. Schools Sunday provides an annual opportunity for churches to pray for and support young people and the local school community at the start of a new school year. We seek to encourage Christian students and staff in their daily life at school and to challenge them to live out their faith and connect with a Christian group that might be running in the school.

This year on Schools Sunday we encourage you to plan a specific Sunday morning focus on schools. If the date, **17 February 2019** is unsuitable for your church calendar, choose another day, early in the school year, that works better for you.

Schools Sunday is an excellent way to encourage Christian students and school staff members to remember that God is not confined to church, but goes with them to school.

This resource is full of ideas for either a complete Sunday service or a short segment within a regular service. Use what will best suit your congregation and your situation. Message, prayers and activities are included.

The theme '**Read, Listen, Do**' explores the Bible story of Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-39.

In this resource you will find:

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The Tasmanian Council of Churches (TCC) is a fellowship of Christian Churches in Tasmania committed to the promotion of Christian unity. The TCC is an autonomous body with policies decided by the six Member Churches.

www.tcctas.org.au/



SU Tas (Scripture Union Tasmania) is part of a worldwide Christian movement which operates in more than 130 countries. SU Tas has worked in Tasmania for over fifty years through camps, missions, outdoor programs, resources and school chaplaincy services.

www.sutas.org.au/

Use some of these ideas to plan your own Schools Sunday service.

SCHOOLS SUNDAY SERVICE IDEAS 1

ON THE DAY

- Find out which schools are represented by people in your congregations (children, grandchildren, staff) and make a list on a whiteboard.
- Break the ice by asking what people's favourite class was/is, one favourite project when at school/currently, talk about their favourite teacher and why.

SINGING

- Invite your school choir to present several items.
- Ask your Children's Ministry group and/or youth group to present an item/s.
- Revive some old Sunday School songs.

BIBLE READING

Acts 8:26-39 (see message on pages 6-11)

- Invite teens or children to read the Bible.
- Dramatise the reading with different people reading the different parts.
- Download PowerPoint pictures of the story from www.freebibleimages.org.uk and display as the Bible passage is read.
- Purchase a cartoon version of the story. One is available to download from www.kids.com/au (preview at www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQLQIEiRjvA).
- If your church has wifi, play one of the Bible story videos of Philip and the Ethiopian which are available for children on YouTube, such as www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2D72x1dMwU.
- Spontaneous Drama: as you read the story from the Bible invite everyone to join in with actions for certain words. Indicate what these are, miming the actions. (NB: If you choose to read from a version other than the Good News Bible or Contemporary English Version, you will need to check that the words below are in the version that you are using.)
 - official – salute;
 - reading – make hands into a book shape;
 - carriage (GNB) or chariot (CEV) – place hands in front as if holding reins;
 - water – make a wave motion;
 - good news – show thumbs up;
 - understand – tap head with finger;
 - Spirit – point up.

SCHOOLS SUNDAY SERVICE IDEAS 2

Use these further ideas to plan your own Schools Sunday service.

USING TESTIMONY

- Invite someone who is actively involved in a school to share a ministry story (chaplain, lunchtime Christian club leader, Christian teacher, student leader).
- Invite a school chaplain to bring a message and share about their work in the school. You might like to interview them instead.
- Invite a school volunteer or a parent helper to share briefly about their role in the school.
- Invite a young person to share a personal story of their friendship with Jesus. How were they welcomed into that friendship and/or their church?

FELLOWSHIP TIME

- Share a morning tea or fellowship lunch afterwards to help make the day more special.
- Use this time to raise funds for schools work.
- If you have invited your principal, chaplain or school choir use this time to connect with them.

OFFERING

- Take up a special offering that will go toward your local ecumenical schools work, local chaplain or an organisation that works in schools.
- Invite children or teens to take up the offering and lead offering prayers.
- Take an offering and support an aid organisation working with children.

Here are some ways to pray for local schools in your church's district, town, or suburb and the children in your congregation who attend there.

PRAYING

What to Pray

- Invite a chaplain or people from the congregation already working in schools to share prayer points for their school/s and pray for them.
- Invite children to write a prayer for their school and read these out on Schools Sunday.
- Use the prayers on pages 14 and 15.

How to Pray

- Invite the children to lead prayers or invite members of the congregation representing different age groups to lead prayers.
- Invite to the front those who work or volunteer in schools, lay hands on them and pray for them.
- Invite the congregation to list prayer points for schools/education then form small groups and spend some time praying through the different topics.
- Give different members of the congregation one of the topics below asking them to write a prayer to pray on Schools Sunday.

STUDENTS

- Beginning school for the first time
- Starting at a new school
- Experiencing learning or relationship difficulties
- Student leaders and Christian students

SCHOOL STAFF

- In your congregation
- Principals and teachers
- Support and administration staff

FAMILIES

- Wise parenting
- Christian families
- Those experiencing relationship difficulties
- Those serving the school as volunteers

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

- Federal Minister for Education
- Tasmanian Minister for Education
- Departmental staff, curriculum and policy makers
- National Schools Chaplaincy Program

MESSAGE OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Use this outline
as a basis for
a message.
PowerPoint slides
are available
to enhance the
message.

WELCOME

As we gather together we would like to assure those of you involved in the life of a school - whether as a child or an adult - that we, as your church family, are praying for you. We have an amazing God who is with us no matter where we go and what we do. But more than that: if we are a friend of Jesus then he is not only with us, but helping us as we go about our daily life.

Proverbs 8:32 says: 'Now then, my children, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways.'

At the start of a new school year, we are thinking today about how we can do just that - listen to God and keep his ways.

This would be a good time to pray or sing.

MESSAGE

One of the nice things about summer is going away for a holiday or on day trips and travelling to different places.

Did any of you go on holiday over the summer? Or go on a day trip to somewhere different?

Share your own experience of car journeys or play one of the following 'car journey' games.

Word Tennis. This game is about listening to words people say and not repeating what has already been said. Someone chooses a category such as 'musical instruments', 'pizza toppings', or 'cartoon characters' and begins by naming something in that category. Play continues around the group until someone repeats something which has already been said; at this point that person chooses a new category and begins a new game.

I Spy. An old favourite. Play begins with someone saying, 'I Spy, with my little eye, something beginning with...' The player chooses something and states its initial letter (or colour, for non-readers). The other players look around, find an object which starts with that letter/has that colour, and make a guess. If they guess right, they become the next person to begin.



Bible Reading: Acts 8:26-39 Use one of the suggestions from page 3.

READ!

MESSAGE OUTLINE

Have you ever been on a long journey by plane, by boat, or by car? I wonder how you fill in the time? Perhaps you play one of the games we played earlier, or watch a DVD?

Today's Bible story is about someone going on a long, long journey – not by car, like we do, but by chariot!

This man was an important official who had been to the Passover Festival in Jerusalem and was now on his way home to Ethiopia. It was a very, very long way: about 4,000 km.

What was he doing to pass the time on his long journey home? He was reading from his Bible! Let's listen to the words he read, which were from the Old Testament. They are words from Isaiah 53:7-8.

Bible Reading: Before the service, prepare a young person to read **Isaiah 53:7-8** in your preferred version.



I wonder how many of us read the Bible on a long journey, like he did?

You see, the Ethiopian official loved God. We know that not just because he was reading the Bible, but in the fact that he had gone all the way to Jerusalem to worship God. (v27,28).

The Ethiopian was reading the Bible – but he was struggling to understand it. Bible reading is something that many of us struggle with. The Ethiopian must have been very good at his subjects at school, as he was responsible for taking care of Queen Candace's money. However, he didn't understand what he was reading in the Bible. It was a message from God given to the prophet Isai-ah, promising that Jesus would come. He didn't understand because he didn't know Jesus had come, died on the cross and risen.

And yet God knew his heart: God knew he wanted to find out. And so, God sent someone to help him make sense of it: he sent Philip. Just like at school we need teachers and others to help us learn and grow, God sends us people to help us understand the Bible. I wonder who those people are in your life. We should be grateful to them!

Once it was explained to him, the Ethiopian suddenly understood. The passage he was reading was all about Jesus. When God helped the Ethiopian to understand what he was reading, his whole life changed. He came to trust in Jesus.

... How can I
understand unless
someone helps me?

So Philip...
explained the good
news about Jesus...

Reading the Bible and 'learning about God' is not the same as academic learning at school. It is not simply about learning facts – it is more about friendship with God through Jesus. The Bible reveals who Jesus is. The Bible helps us understand God better and grow closer to him as a friend. A bit like spending time with friends at school, the more time we spend with God reading the Bible, the better we will know and love him. As we thought about at the start of our service, the Bible helps us to listen to God and keep his ways.

Philip read the Bible – and knew it well. When the official asked him a question, he was able to 'begin with that very passage of Scripture' and explain what it meant.

This Bible story challenges us, whatever age we are. Like the Ethiopian, are we brave enough to admit we don't understand a passage, and ask for help? Like Philip, are we brave enough to share what we do understand with those who don't?

It is important to engage with the Bible and learn what it says, not just for our own benefit, but to help others. There are lots of ways we can do this:

- ▶ We can read the Bible **on our own**.
- ▶ We can read the Bible **as a family**.
- ▶ We can read the Bible **with our friends**. Mention whatever is available locally such as Bible study groups.

And just like the Ethiopian read the Bible and was changed, the same thing still happens to those who read the Bible today. The Psalmist wrote, 'Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.' Generation after generation have discovered that to be true! God uses the Bible to give us guidance and direction for our everyday lives.

ENCOURAGE BIBLE READING

MESSAGE OUTLINE

Testimony: Invite someone to share their story: perhaps they once had doubts or questions and found them answered as they read the Bible or as someone helped them to understand.

Questions that encourage Bible engagement: Encourage Bible reading with four simple questions:

- ▶ **Where?** Think what works best. It won't be in a chariot, but perhaps in our room, at the breakfast table, in the park, in the school library!
- ▶ **When?** We are all different. Find a time that suits you best! Morning works well for some people, others prefer lunchtime, after school, or before bed. Personally.... (share what suits you).
- ▶ **What?** A good place to start is one of the gospels such as Mark, or the book of Psalms. Make sure you have a modern Bible translation too. There are lots to choose from. (Hold up examples, including a Contemporary English Version (CEV) which is the most suitable for children.)
- ▶ **How?** Read in a way that suits you. There are traditional printed daily Bible reading notes which are useful in explaining a passage and applying it to everyday life. (Hold up printed samples for children, such as Tiddlywinks, HotShots, or Snapshots, and adult versions such as Daily Bread and Encounter with God).

If you prefer to read online, try Wordlive (www.wordlive.org).

Read on your phone or tablet with apps, such as Daily Bread. The Youversion Bible offers several child-friendly Bible translations and has a Bible App for Kids. The Daily Bible Devotional is aimed at teenagers and students.

If you prefer, you can also listen to the Bible through Bible Gateway.

Pray: Use Prayer Option 1

OPTIONAL QUIZ TO INTRODUCE LISTEN!

Using YouTube or a sound effects app, play one of the following games. Both require careful listening – a theme that will be drawn out in the next teaching point.

Guess the theme song: Select six well-known theme tunes from TV shows and play a few bars. See how many people can listen carefully enough to be able to identify them. Use both adult and children's shows such as Doctor Who and Peppa Pig.

Sound effects: Find the six following sound effects online and play them to the congregation.

- ▶ Thunder
- ▶ An elephant
- ▶ Footsteps
- ▶ A galloping horse
- ▶ A phone ringtone
- ▶ A siren.

Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or about someone else?

After listening to each one, tell everyone that you are going to ask six questions and they should identify which sound is the answer.

- 1) What sound would I hear if something big and grey was coming towards me? (an elephant)
- 2) What sound would I hear if someone wanted to talk to me? (a ringtone)
- 3) What sound would I hear if a police car was coming? (a siren)
- 4) What sound would I hear if a storm was coming? (thunder)
- 5) What sound would I hear if someone was coming down the corridor? (footsteps)
- 6) What sound would I hear if a horse was coming towards me? (galloping)

Alternatively, play each clip one by one and pause to ask a question relating to that sound. For example, 'Something big is making this sound. What is it?'

LISTEN!

MESSAGE OUTLINE

Philip was listening to what God was saying. He listened to God speak through his angel, verse 26.

Philip was busy. He wasn't sitting around twiddling his thumbs. He was telling people about Jesus in another place. And yet when the Spirit of God told him to go immediately to the Desert Road (verse 26), he listened and obeyed – even if it seemed strange. When God said, 'Go to that chariot and stay near it', he did.

Philip listened to God. By being open to listening to God and doing what he said, Philip was in the right place at the right time, ready to help the Ethiopian. Convinced that God had put him there to help the man, Philip then became brave and asked him, 'Do you understand what you are reading?'

Listening to God happens as we read the Bible – when a verse stands out, challenging us to change the way we think or act. We listen as we pray, when someone comes to mind to pray for. We listen when God brings into our mind a Bible verse that helps, encourages or strengthens us. God also gives the Holy Spirit to prompt and direct us: it was the Holy Spirit, not Philip's own thoughts, that told him where to go to meet the man! (verse 29).

Philip not only listened to God, he also listened to the Ethiopian. He asked the Ethiopian if he understood what he was reading. He sat beside the man, waited, listened and responded. He helped him with his questions. As a church we want to say thank you to those who also sit, wait, listen and respond to our own children and young people, and help answer their questions. We value what you do.

Philip has lots to teach all of us about listening. Like Philip, you and I need to listen before we speak. We need to help others find God – not by telling them what to think, but by helping them to find out for themselves in the Bible. At school, at home, at work: do we listen to others? Or are we always rushing to talk, ignoring the fact that our friends might have questions, or need help?

Each one of us, whether a child, a young person or adult, we all have a part to play in helping others follow Jesus – in church, perhaps at school, or at work – we can listen to friends who have questions and help them find faith in Jesus.

The Spirit told Philip to catch up with the chariot.

Philip ran up close and heard the man reading aloud from the book of Isaiah.

OPTIONAL QUIZ TO INTRODUCE DO!

Play 'Do this, do that!' – a version of Simon says. Do an action for people to copy, and as you do so, say either 'Do this!' or 'Do that!' If you say, 'Do this!' everyone does the action, however if you say, 'Do that!' then they don't do the action. The person who does the action is out and must sit down.

It is great to read, great to listen – but most of us love to do things! How many of us get called a fidget, because we can't sit still?

Here is the good news: God doesn't want us just to read the Bible – he wants us to do something about what we read. He doesn't want us just to listen to him – he wants us to do something in response! That is what makes following Jesus such a great adventure. I am sure Philip didn't wake up that morning thinking 'Today I am going to meet an Ethiopian and tell him about Jesus!' When we follow Jesus, an adventure begins.

Listen again to find out what the Ethiopian did.

Bible Reading: Acts 8:34-38

The Ethiopian read the Bible, he listened, and then he did – he discovered the importance of knowing Jesus and that through trusting in Jesus' death on the cross, it is possible to be friends with God. The good news of Jesus' life, death and resurrection challenged the Ethiopian to do something. Right there in the middle of the desert he began following Jesus and was baptised as a sign of that. (v34-38)

Perhaps you have read and listened but haven't yet chosen to do anything about it. Is today the day to do something, and choose to follow Jesus?

Or maybe for you, following Jesus began a long time ago. The adventure continues! Will you do what Jesus asks you to do? No matter your age, if you are a follower of Jesus you can make a difference as you do what he asks you to: sharing Jesus, showing his love, and serving others.

One thing we can all do is to pray and keep on doing that. As a church family, we want to pray for everyone in our school communities at the start of a new school year so let us do this together now.

Pray: Use prayer option 2.



Look! Here is some water. Why can't I be baptised?

CONCLUSION

MESSAGE OUTLINE

We have been challenged today to **Read! Listen! and Do!**

Reading the Bible and listening to God made Philip brave and courageous and doing what he was asked meant that someone else became a follower of Je-sus. Reading the Bible made the Ethiopian ready to listen and do something about what he heard.

Who do you most connect with in this Bible story?

Are you like the Ethiopian man, wanting to know more and understand better what you read in the Bible? If so, do something about it! Seek out a Bible study group, read the Bible with a friend, or speak to someone you trust.

Or are you like Philip? Are you keen to do what God asks of you; keen to help others engage with God? What part can you play in helping others follow Jesus and understand the Bible?

Like Philip and the Ethiopian, we need to come to the Bible not just to hear stories, but to listen to God and act upon what we hear. From what we have heard today, is there an encouragement to take away, a warning to take notice of, an example to follow, or a challenge to apply?

...he was very happy
as he went on his
way.

PRAYER OPTIONS

Use the prayers below as a guide for integrating prayer into your church service.

Your Word...
a lamp to our feet
a light to our path.

PRAYER OPTION 1

Father, we want to praise you for your Word, the Bible. Thank you that it is God-breathed; thank you that it is living and active, and that it stands forever. Thank you that it is like fire and like a hammer – it challenges and refines us. Thank you that it is like honey and like water – it refreshes and nourishes us.

Lord, we pray that you will teach us how useful your Word is in our everyday lives, as it provides a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Help us to be taught and changed by it, like the man in our story was. Help us to see when it is showing us where we are going wrong and help us to see when it is showing us how we should live. Teach us to love your Word. Amen.

PRAYER OPTION 2

We suggest that representatives of the church family are involved in these and invited to take part beforehand.

You may like to invite primary school children to come forward at this point and hold a battery tea light. If there are a small number of children, you might ask each of them to name their school as they light it in turn. Otherwise, ask the children to stand holding their tealights while one of them reads aloud the following prayer (identify an older child who can do this prior to the service, and give them the following prayer).



SCHOOL PUPIL: Lord God, we thank you for our schools. Thank you for all the teachers, the school staff, every pupil and family who belong to our schools.

Thank you that schools are where we can learn, grow bigger and wiser and develop to our full potential, becoming the best we can be.

Thank you that we go back to school with you, Lord God, for you are always with us. Make us aware of your presence -- in the classroom, in the play-ground, wherever we go. Guide our footsteps, like you did with Philip. Help us to listen to you and keep your ways.



PARENT/GRANDPARENT: Thank you, Lord God, for every Christian who is part of a local school – pupils, teachers, parents, helpers, volunteers who come in to encourage, support and enrich the school life.

As a church we pray that each Christian will be salt and light where you have placed them. Help all of us to encourage, support, value, and pray for our schools.

Bring your influence to bear in the education and nurture of our children and young people. Lead schools to be places of positive learning. We pray for the school leadership and management, that you will bless them with wisdom, integrity and vision.

PRAYER OPTIONS

Protect and guide key areas of Christian witness: particularly our school chap-lains. Make your light to shine in (name your local schools).



YOUNG PERSON: Lord God, we ask you to help Christian students and staff to live out their faith day by day in their school community, and that their words, thoughts and actions will point to you. May the truth and reality of you and your ways be evident in the lives of your people.

Help us, as students, to work hard, give our best to learning and to be a posi-tive influence on school life. Help us, as your children, to give our minds, hearts and wills to you. Teach us to read the Bible for ourselves, to listen to your voice and to do something about what we hear.

Thank you for everyone who encourages, strengthens and challenges us to live for you. Most of all, thank you that you sent your son Jesus as Saviour of the world to live, die on the cross, and rise from the dead. Thank you that your Holy Spirit is with us day by day, giving us your peace and your power.

Thank you that with you as our Father God, we can trust you to be with us each day, wherever we are: in school, at work, at home, with friends and family, when we are on our own.

We thank SU Scotland for much of this content.



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SUNDAY** TAS



**Your word is a lamp that
gives light wherever I walk.**

Psalm 19:105



**Your word is a lamp that
gives light wherever I walk.**

Psalm 19:105