

TOPIC: Building Biblical Literacy

PRESENTER: Dominique Jacqueline

Dominique Jacqueline has her masters in Religious Education. She has been teaching and leading Christian Studies in Lutheran schools for 26 years, involved in developing Christian Studies curriculum for LEA (LIFE and CSCF). She is the primary author of EQUIP and currently works for LEQ as the lead facilitator of EQUIP.

ABSTRACT:

This session will explore what is involved in being biblically literate and how to deepen one's own and students' understanding of the biblical text in a meaningful and engaging manner. Participants will explore a range of activities and questioning techniques that underpin an effective pedagogy in this area. Conundrums associated with different sectors of schooling will also be addressed. Come and join a lively conversation about the importance of biblical literacy; build your own understanding of what it means for you and your students back in the classroom, and take away some practical ideas that can be implemented in your classrooms.

BUILDING BIBLICAL LITERACY POLL QUESTIONS

- I know the contents of the Bible well
- I struggle with the stories and ideas in the Bible
- I am confident to teach/use the Bible with students

- Presentation was helpful for me
- I will use some of the strategies outlined in the presentation

Building biblical literacy

Wednesday 11 am October 2 2013

Dominique Jacqueline

YES OR NO

- I know the contents of the Bible well
- I struggle with the stories and ideas in the Bible
- I am confident to teach/use the Bible with students

OUTLINE

- Focus on the parable of *The Lost Sheep* in Luke 15
- Share how one teacher seeks to build biblical literacy at Year 3 level
- Embed some biblical literacy principles
- Provide some resources

STEAD research, 1996

There is consensus among theorists that the Bible cannot be taught or used effectively with children unless teachers are well educated theologically and biblically. Furthermore there are no short cuts to effective teaching of scripture to children and no substitute for the hard work of personal exploration through critical study and reflection on scripture prior to the teaching of any text. (p. 75)

One Sheep

LUKE 15 (CEV)



1 Tax collectors and sinners were all crowding around to listen to Jesus. **2** So the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses started grumbling, “This man is friendly with sinners. He even eats with them.”

3 Then Jesus told them this story:

4 If any of you has a hundred sheep, and one of them gets lost, what will you do? Won't you leave the ninety-nine in the field and go look for the lost sheep until you find it? **5** And when you find it, you will be so glad that you will put it on your shoulder **6** and carry it home. Then you will call in your friends and neighbors and say, “Let's celebrate! I've found my lost sheep.”

7 Jesus said, “In the same way there is more happiness in heaven because of one sinner who turns to God than over ninety-nine good people who don't need to.”



What is it all about?

Closed questions about the text

Open questions about the text

Closed questions about life

Open questions about life

Asking questions of the *Lost Sheep* parable

Closed questions of text

How many sheep are there?
How many get lost?
Who finds the lost sheep?
Who told this story?
Where is the shepherd?
Who are Jesus' audience?
In what kind of mood is the audience?

Open-ended questions of text

What did this story make you wonder about?
What is the best thing you like about this story?
Was the lost sheep a bad sheep?
How would you respond if you found a lost sheep?
Would you have left the 99 sheep to save the 1 sheep?
Why is there more happiness in heaven for one person rescued than the 99 others?
Why do you think Jesus chose to tell this story to his audience?
What is this story telling us about God?
What ideas does this parable challenge?
What do you think this story is about?

Asking questions of life

Closed questions of life

Have you ever been lost?
How were you found?
Who looks after you?
How do they look after you?
Do you ever do the wrong thing?
Are you ever scared?

Open-ended questions of life

What did/does it feel like to be lost? Found?
Are there different ways to be lost?
Does everyone get lost?
How does it feel to be cared for?
What other stories are like the Lost Sheep?
How does the story connect with your life experience?
What experiences, relationships have challenged my way of thinking?
What is you are not found?

Brainstorm

List stories, bible passages where sheep and shepherds feature in both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures

<http://padlet.com/wall/sheepandshepherds>

List other lost and found stories in the Bible

<http://padlet.com/wall/lostfoundstories>

Teaching **The Lost Sheep** to Year 3

a teacher's perspective

BIG IDEA

Grace prevails

- Grace is different to what we would have or think it should be.
- Grace is the way God/ Jesus operates. *

WHY this story?

The rebellious sheep especially in Cecil the lost Sheep by Andrew McDonough appeals to this age group as well as encompassing the big idea

PURPOSES

- Engage students in a biblical story and develop biblical literacy
- Relevance and application of story to personal life
- Discovery of hidden meaning both in text and application to life
- Engaging with, listening to, learning from others
- Applying skills from other learning areas to Christian Studies
- Long term that there will transference of the process of discovery to all of life

What is biblical literacy?

- breaking the code of the ancient texts to determine both the original and contemporary meanings of texts and interpret their value for contemporary readers.
- shifting from the baseline of minimally accepted knowledge of facts comprehended literally to interpreting and communicating the literary genres of the texts.
- 'Understanding that through the biblical texts God speaks to us. Although expressed in genuinely human terms by human authors, the Bible understood as Scripture is God's Word for us.' *Welbourne, 2003*
- The basic question to ask of any bit of Scripture is this: *What kind of God is in here trying to get out?* (Joseph O'Hanlon)

Its critical!

A religion, especially a heavily textualised religion such as Christianity cannot be expected to survive if critical biblical literacy is ignored. Without critical biblical literacy of the sacred texts of Christianity there will be a vacuum in Christian culture that contributes to the way Christians make sense of what is new and what is old in their experience of God and their values for life.

(Welbourne, 2001, Editorial)

It reveals me

- The Bible is our identity document: its stories and vision are to shape our sense of who we are and of what our life with God is about (M Borg)
- Who are we? This is placed between questions about the past and the future. We can only know who we are if we have a longer story which looks backwards and forwards. (Timothy Radcliffe)

A pedagogy of biblical literacy for teachers

The writings of Lyotard, Welsch, Rorty, Habermas suggest we need to the following skills and attitudes

- openness, humility,
- respectful listening,
- dialogue which includes critique, justification, challenge, analysis, debate, connectivity between the “stories of postmodernity and the Christian Story”, self-expression.
- a pedagogy that engages the whole person and values the contribution of all in the community.
- allows for new additional possibilities, it can hold several possible interpretations in tension, make room for mystery.

One hermeneutical approach

- **Actually it's three in one.**
- **This combines**
 - **The world of the author**
 - The world **BEHIND** the text
 - **The world of the text**
 - The world **WITHIN** the text
 - **The world of the reader**
 - The world **IN FRONT OF** the text
- **Randolph Tate, Biblical interpretation: an integrated approach**

Another hermeneutical approach

- Reading the Bible in the light of three sets of questions:
 - Questions about the text as *literature*
 - Questions about the text as *history*
 - Questions about the text as *theology*

<http://bibleresources.americanbible.org/node/1125>

LESSON 1

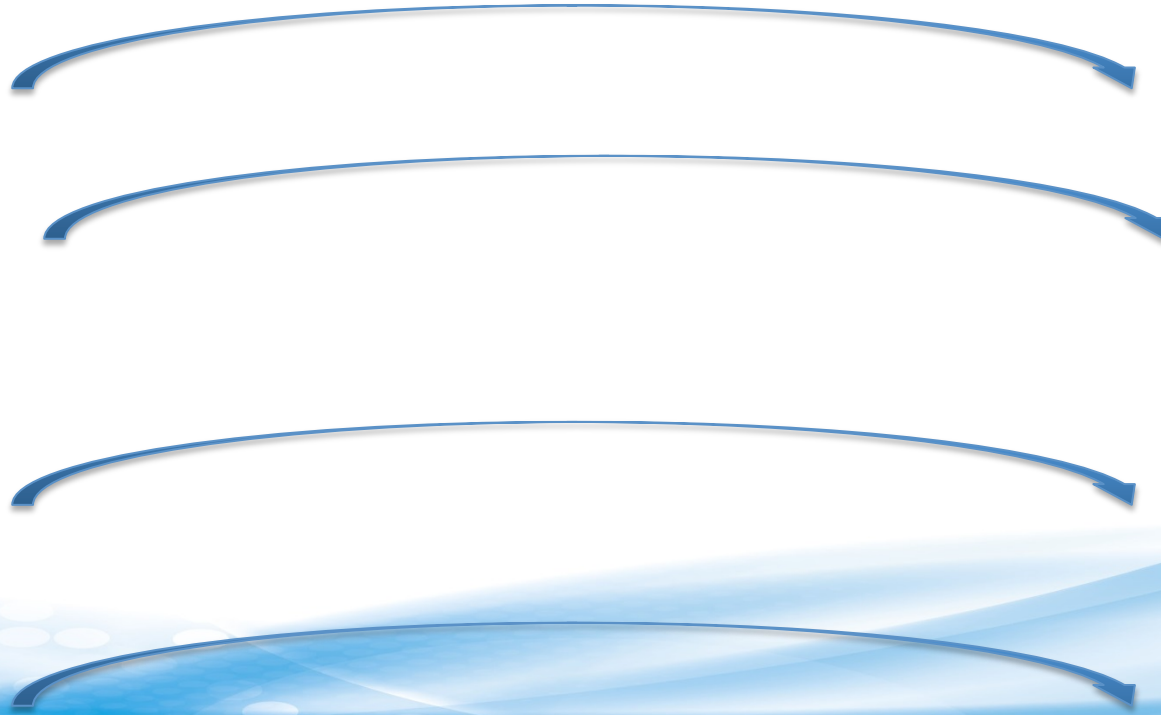
How can I demonstrate to my students that the biblical story is told by a person in a real time and place?

- Talk about what we like about reading, hearing and telling stories (link later to Jesus as story teller)

How can I help students who have little to no knowledge of the Bible have sufficient contextual information or awareness e.g. Place, time, culture sacred text

BRIDGING THE GAP

• Student realities



Biblical text,
concepts

Student context

WORLD IN FRONT OF THE TEXT - worldview of reader

Whatever goals we have for young people, whatever the direction of the journey on which we would like to take young people, we should acknowledge their starting point. In seeking to have a positive influence, we need to begin at the place they are.

(Putting Life Together, Philip Hughes, p. 200)

Student reality

Pitfalls to avoid

- Experience with the biblical text that can be reduced to
 - recall of details of an isolated story,
 - proof texting to illustrate a ‘truth’
- Using the Bible illustrating a moral way of life
- Presenting the Bible so that some may conclude
 - ‘the Bible is only relevant to Christians’ (Stern, 2006) and
 - The bible is essentially a book for children that one outgrows (Copley, 1978).
- Completing the Christian Studies program without students having read one of the books of the Bible or even biblical sagas such as the story of Abraham in its entirety.

The importance of story

Christianity does not offer a road map, but it does have a story ... It is widely agreed that it is by telling stories that we human beings make sense of our lives, with their sorrows and joys. Individually and communally, we live by stories that give shape and purpose to our experiences.
(Timothy Radcliffe)

The importance of story

The practice of biblical faith is first of all recital. The Bible is essentially an open, imaginative narrative of God's staggering care for the world, a narrative that feeds and nurtures us into an obedience that builds community precisely through respect for the liberty of individual Christians. (Walter Brueggemann)

The importance of story

Stories need to be seen as unfolding a relationship in which God is the central player. Stories present reality not answers – rather the stories reveal emerging patterns, juxtapositions, contrasts, the elements placed in opposition to one another. (Professor Nestingen)

LESSON 2

The world behind the text

- Google space, look for Australia; use atlas - see world at night time; why are some lights brighter than others
- Zoom on Australia and then Israel. Establish student ability to locate various places on the map
- Investigate middle east in Atlas; putting Israel in context and introduce Israel as place where Jesus was born and lived
- Look at what the country looks like - diverse images of country side (this will serve as point of contrast with Cecil the lost sheep story by Andrew Mc Donough?)
- Discuss what students know about what farms and farmers are like in Australia and contrast with shepherds at time Jesus - teacher needs knowledge of shepherds and can weave into the lessons - this is good backdrop for Xmas story later in the year + Jesus as the good shepherd



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Google earth

Links to Australian Curriculum

- **Geography Year 3 Level Description**

Places are both similar and different continues to develop students' understanding of

[place by examining the similarities and differences between places within and outside Australia. The concept of place is developed through examining the major natural and human characteristics of Australia the Countries/Places of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and Australia's neighbouring...](#)

History Year 3 Level Description

Community and Remembrance

The Year 3 curriculum provides a study of identity and diversity in both a local and broader context. Moving from the heritage of their local area, students explore the historical features and...

- **General capabilities** – literacy, intercultural understanding, critical and creative thinking

WORLD BEHIND THE TEXT

- - The context of the events recorded – history, society, politics, geography
 - The author's worldview
 - Its purpose, role, influence
 - Its place in the canon – its relationship to other books within the Bible
 - Context of community of faith – its journey and evolution of theology will shape the understanding of text, implications drawn from it

LESSON 3

The world of the text

- Do hang man activity on board of hangman with word **parable**.
- Look at dictionary meaning of parable
- Teach fives things about parables you want them to remember
 - Stories Jesus told
 - Story About everyday things
 - Hidden message
 - Some people say that parable is earthly story with heavenly message
 - What is the message for us?

The biblical text as *literature*

PARABLES

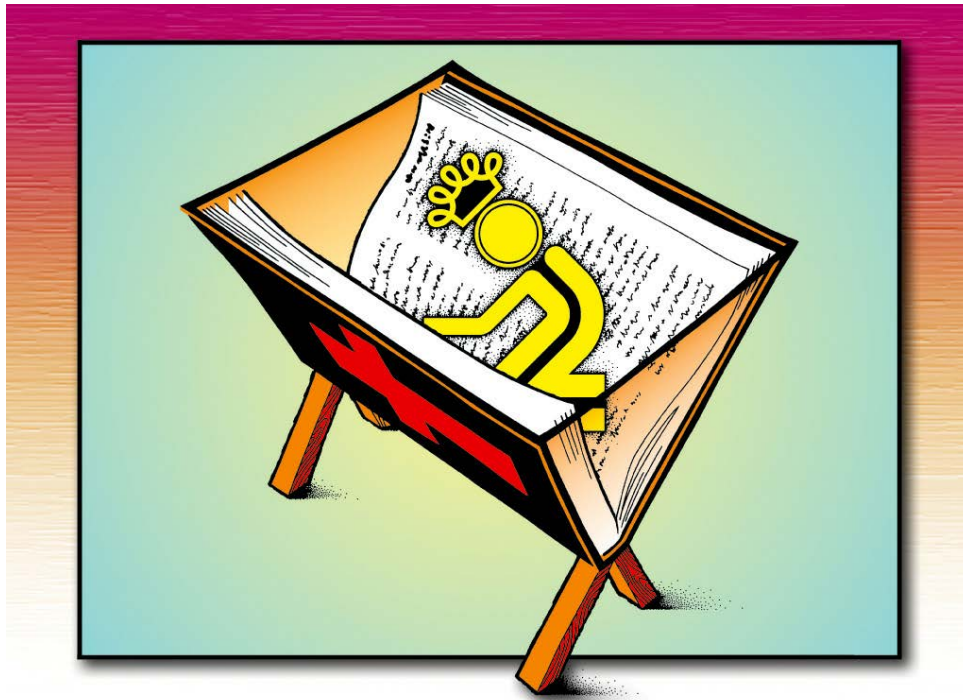
- **We need to interpret/see the parables in the light of Jesus' passion (death and resurrection)**

Purpose is to

- Wake us up to see in life what we have not seen before – challenge our beliefs and values
- make us question our everyday view of life
- draw out a response from us
- Help us question the status quo, the order imposed by tradition, power, class
- stimulate our sense of creativity; arouse our curiosity – make us wonder about the outcome of the story

Parables

- Make use of contrast, repetition, 'rule of three' [eg 3 characters], comparisons, metaphors, vivid images, story ends with a climax
- contain strong earthy images, personal experiences and wise sayings



**‘The Bible is the cradle which brings us
Jesus of Nazareth.’ Martin Luther**

LESSON 4

The world of the text

- Review of 5 things
- Now look at a parable Jesus told e.g. *Cecil the lost sheep*
<https://www.lostsheep.com.au/stories/cecil-the-lost-sheep/>
- Point out that the parable is not the actual biblical account - the author read the bible story and then he thought how to write it for children and this is what is written
- Go over five things
- Read the story

STORYTELLING TIPS

- Be prepared - Read the text– How well do you know the story? Do you know the meaning at the core of the story?
 - Proclaim – read aloud
 - Picture – where are you?
 - Ponder –What do you notice? Observe? Think about? Wonder? See as a challenge in the story?
 - Practice –live it out
- Show respect for the story by being authentic – if God is a character then he needs to be in the story. Do you know the context of the story? Historical? Audience?
- From whose point of view will you tell the story?
- What objects can children either touch or look at as you tell the story?
- How will you involve the children in the storytelling?
- What words/phrases can be repeated?
- What patterns are there in the story?
- Think about beginnings
- Think about endings
- Have fun

LESSON 5

WORLD OF THE TEXT – the text itself – content, genre, language, imagery, construction, textual context,

- Reread and look at illustrations and children are asked to assess the accuracy of illustrations of information they had earlier about Israel's landscape and sheep
- Summarise in 8 dot points the plot of story (this is leading to main elements Jesus told in a story)
- Done as class- any point put forward needs to be justified - students can suggest strategies for this task
- Go back to five things – talk about the everyday things that are in the story. Not appropriate to jump ahead

“Shepherds of Jesus time were considered, by the general populace, generally untrustworthy... Even worse, their work made them ceremonially unclean... because they had daily contact with carcasses of animals and came into contact... with all sorts of unclean animals... So, surprisingly, when the angelic announcement arrives, it comes first to the social outcasts of Jesus’ day.” ~ [Holy Ordinary](#)

<http://bibleresources.americanbible.org/node/1002>

How People Made a Living in the Time of Jesus

Shepherds

Closer to the time of Jesus, when urban life was more developed, shepherds may also have lived in or near villages. They had the right to let their flocks feed in the nearby pastures and would have been hired by landowners who needed help to harvest their fields. When food supplies got scarce near the villages, shepherds would move their herds to mountain pastures in the hot summer, or to warmer valleys in the winter.

A Shepherd's Life

A shepherd's life was not easy. Shepherds spent most of their time outside watching over the herd, no matter what the weather. They often slept near their flock to protect it from robbers or wild animals. The shepherd's tools and weapons were a rod, a staff, and a sling. Each night, the shepherds would gather their flocks into places called "sheepfolds." These could be stone walls made by the shepherds or natural enclosures, such as a cave. Shepherds used their rod to help count their animals each evening when they brought them into the fold and again in the morning when they left for the pastures.

http://www.jesuswalk.com/lessons/2_8-20.htm

In contrast to rabbinical contempt for shepherds, however, Jesus distinguishes between the good shepherd and the hireling (John 10:11-13). He tells a parable of the shepherd leaving ninety-nine sheep in the fold while searching the hills to find the missing one (Luke 15:3-7). Perhaps this is because Jesus, who has fellowship with the despised and sinners, knows and appreciates them as people.

LESSON 6

- Revisit story through drama
- Lost sheep rap
- Read story in Bible, the parable that Jesus told

LESSON 7

- Review what happens in the story
- Use double bubble map - visual for differences and similarities
- Compare and contrast plot of Cecil story and Bible; record on graphic organizer
- Share findings - firstly in pairs then as a whole class; ideas put forward need justification

LESSON 8 +

- Now examine what you think might be the hidden message
Is it about the lost sheep or a shepherd?
Do think, pair share
- Is there only one message or more? (Do not want to give message that there is a right answer)
What might story be saying for us?

The basic question to ask of any bit of Scripture is this: *What kind of God is in here trying to get out?* (Joseph O'Hanlon)

RESPONSE activities

If you were to write the story what things would you include - you can write from different perspectives

Or newspaper article

Possible craft activity e.g. Make a sheep and write the important message for you on the back

What if activity e.g. What if you had been the lost sheep, What is it like to feel when you have been lost, found

Culminating activity

Task was to present the story in whatever way students chose with the purpose of communicating what the story is about.

Presentation was not to include any technology or resources from Google

The outcome was amazing ranging from song on guitar, puppets, dioramas etc.. With lots of collaborative effort.

"But you, **Bethlehem** Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times....

He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they will live securely, for then his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth.
And he will be their peace." (Micah 5:2-3, 5a)

YES or NO

- Presentation was helpful for me
- I will use some of the strategies outlined in the presentation

Wise up and engage students with God's life giving word.

Spiritual development often happens when the horizon of a story challenges the horizon of a listener

STORYTELLING TIPS

- Be prepared - Read the text– How well do you know the story? Do you know the meaning at the core of the story?
 - Proclaim – read aloud
 - Picture – read again and now picture where are you in the story?
 - Ponder – read again. What do you notice? Observe? Think about? Wonder? See as a challenge in the story?
 - Practice – read again and go live it out
- Show respect for the story by being authentic – if God is a character then he needs to be in the story. Do you know the context of the story? Historical? Audience?
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STORYTELLING – FOUNDATION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

STORY REMEMBERED

1. A culture is transmitted and preserved in the telling of stories. Individual stories belong to a larger story which provides a context for interpreting and understanding the story. (Professor Nestingen)
2. As an artefact of the past, we must respect the Bible's pastness and engage with the myriad of questions that beset historical enterprise. But through faith —and it is only through faith—we believe that there are divine words here to be unscrambled into human words. We believe there is a voice within, a still, small voice, the voice of the once and future King. (Joseph O'Hanlon)

COMMUNITY STRENGTHENED

3. The Bible is our identity document: its stories and vision are to shape our sense of who we are and of what our life with God is about (M Borg)
4. Christianity does not offer a road map, but it does have a story ... It is widely agreed that it is by telling stories that we human beings make sense of our lives, with their sorrows and joys. Individually and communally, we live by stories that give shape and purpose to our experiences. (Timothy Radcliffe)

5. Who are we? This is placed between questions about the past and the future. We can only know who we are if we have a longer story which looks backwards and forwards. (Timothy Radcliffe)
6. The practice of biblical faith is first of all recital. The Bible is essentially an open, imaginative narrative of God's staggering care for the world, a narrative that feeds and nurtures us into an obedience that builds community precisely through respect for the liberty of individual Christians. (Walter Brueggemann)

BELIEFS, VALUES, PRACTICES

7. The Bible's final word about God is that he is the one whose steadfast love endures forever. (Joseph O'Hanlon)
8. Stories need to be seen as unfolding a relationship in which God is the central player. Stories present reality not answers – rather the stories reveal emerging patterns, juxtapositions, contrasts, the elements placed in opposition to one another. (Professor Nestingen)
9. The basic question to ask of any bit of Scripture is this: *What kind of God is in here trying to get out?* (Joseph O'Hanlon)

YOUTUBE RESOURCES

The lost sheep

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crU5e35yMfy&list=FLpyK7bkr1v4Rv_R44xCUNWg

Good Shepherd

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6kxu-LlJC8&list=FLpyK7bkr1v4Rv_R44xCUNWg&index=1

WEBSITES

Cecil the lost sheep <https://www.lostsheep.com.au/stories/cecil-the-lost-sheep/>

Link to Christmas story in Luke http://www.jesuswalk.com/lessons/2_8-20.htm

How People Made a Living in the Time of Jesus
<http://bibleresources.americanbible.org/node/1002>

Three approaches to bible reading
<http://bibleresources.americanbible.org/node/1125>

Review of Randolph Tate's approach to biblical interpretation
<http://www.discardedimage.com/?p=325>