

'Anchoring boys souls'

1. How do we present this message.

My job here is just to communicate with you some of the ideas of how we go about presenting this powerful, life transforming message.

I'm studying my Diploma of Education through a Christian University, and they have this wonderful motto, which we share:

"I teach LITTLE by what I SAY

I teach MORE by what I DO

I teach MOST by what I AM"

We believe in the power of role modelling and for us it really starts with who we are.

Our Staff team is made up of Stephen our chaplain, Chris our Head of Biblical Studies, Mark and I, the two youth ministers and then a number of great Christian teachers.

We love and believe in what we teach. We also love and enjoy each other's company, expressed most clearly in our weekly staff prayer breakfasts, where we are regularly bringing each others needs, our boys and our school before God.

Then that sets a firm foundation for us to love the boys we teach. We really do love them, and there is a Bible verse that I'd like to share which I believe so clearly captures what we're trying to do:

1 Thessalonians 2:8 'We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.'

I hope it becomes evident the way in which we share this Gospel message and our lives, as I briefly outline some of the different ways we teach.

Our first and primary means of engaging our boys with the Bible is through weekly full school chapel. Dr Langford, who invited us to present this seminar, called me into her office one morning after a Christian magician had been to speak and she said "It's amazing, I look around and the boys are actually listening. It's not just homilies or lip service, it's an active message."

A normal chapel service involves singing 2 hymns, a bible reading, a short and punchy 7 minute Bible talk, and some prayers for our boys, our school and any current events or issues.

We find that if we speak to the boys for more than seven minutes they begin counting the number of bricks on the wall behind us. At a training day earlier in the year, a sociologist discussed with us, that if children and adolescents have a maximum attention span of about 5-10 minutes, then how is it that Pixar can hold their attention for 90 minutes in films like Toy Story?

The answer: they tell them ten 9 minute stories, that make one big meta narrative.

That's what we aim to do in Chapel - tell them short but punchy messages which add up to the big story of God's.

As we look back over this **last term at Chapel**, we've had a great term in which brave Christian staff members have got up and shared times in their lives often through sickness or personal hardships when they have most remembered God. It's been an enriching time.

Our Biblical Studies classes, from yrs 7 – 11, is where a lot of the spiritual battles are forged. It's in Biblical Studies classes where year 7 atheists dispute the historicity of the Bible; it's there that the boys can ask the questions: "Sir I have a "friend", and he and his girlfriend, well does God think it's a sin to...?"

It was in our Biblical Studies classes just last term, that Chris our Head of Biblical Studies invited **5 brave young women** from his church to come along to a Year 10 class at the end of a unit on relationships, to explain to the boys what girls really look for in a man. The boys were shocked to discover that big arms didn't actually matter.

Then we have our voluntary Christian groups. These groups provide great opportunities for boys to put their Christian faith into action. On the screen there are the focusi for how we seek to empower each year group:

Year 7 –forging strong Christian friendships

Year 8 – fundraising to serve our sponsor child

Year 9 – Junior group leadership

Year 10 – King's /Tara [Girls'School] Camp leadership

Year 11 – Senior leadership

Year 12 – teaching and speaking about the bible

Highlights of this has been

- watching our Year 8's raise \$600 for our Crusader sponsor child through their own initiatives of bean guessing competitions and selling ice cream and creaming soda spiders at lunch time.
- Listening to a Year 9 give a 5 minute multimedia presentation on why Science doesn't disprove God which neither I nor Rev could totally understand.

About 10% of our school attend these groups weekly. These are lunch time Crusader groups for junior and senior day boys. And if the Bible won't get them there, then the meat pies certainly will.

And in the evenings we run our Midweek Fellowship groups for boarders. The senior group meets in Rev's home. We had a beautiful moment just the other day, where a Year 12 student from China said to us on his third last night of school that Midweek fellowship was the only place he really felt at home.

Next an exciting new initiative are our house prayer groups, in which boys meet weekly over the Bible and a packet of Tim Tams. These are student led groups for years 8-12, and they meet to pray for one another, their mates, their house and their housemaster. One group is classic, meeting every Thursday recess in the middle of their house area, 5 – 10 of them sit there praying whilst footy's fly above their heads. We thought it was social suicide, but they just love it.

As youth ministers, Mark and myself are freed up to meet one to one to read the Bible and chat with some of the senior Christian students throughout the day. This has provided really valuable mentoring opportunities, chatting man to man about real life issues. I essentially just share all the stupid mistakes I've made in my life with these boys, in an attempt to prevent them from doing likewise. Surprisingly the issues I faced as a teenager are exactly what our Year 12 boys are facing today, only dressed up in iPhones and skinnier jeans.

From a school sense, a lot of what we try to achieve is **captured by our annual event: Christian Focus week**. It's here that we just get as many young Christian uni students as we can, this year 4 of them were old boys. We dress them up in red t-shirts, call them **the God Squad** and send them out to chat with the boys and give the boys an opportunity to explain who they are and where they stand with God.

We've found it to be a great success because a number of boys each year in the process of explaining what it is that they believe about God realise they don't actually know what they believe and so we are able to win an audience with them.

Finally, one of our biggest blessings is that as a school we have a Church that meets on site, aptly named "Church@Kings". Inviting the boys along to Church is great way to teach them that as Christians they are part of something bigger than what they see here at King's.

And at Church@King's , they can mix with adults, families, other boys' grandparents, and our families, - again just another opportunity to do life with them.

Here's a photo of one of my favourite little guys holding my little baby boy.

I remember in my first year here, the then departing Head of PE shared a quote with us all from a leading AFL coach and it's always stuck with me:

He said: **'Remember: these boys don't care what you know, until they know that you care'**.

In summary as a Chaplaincy Team, we really are just seeking to love and honour our God and love and honour these boys. And we really will try anything and everything as we attempt to **anchor their souls into that life giving, life changing and life empowering message of the Bible.**