



**Scripture
Union**

IT'S TIME TO **ACT**

A guide for **Christians &**
churches who want to reach
the next generation

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THERE IS A MOMENT OF OPPORTUNITY AMONG OUR YOUNG PEOPLE. AND THE CHURCH MUST NOT MISS IT.

Across England and Wales, the vast majority of children and young people are growing up without ever encountering Jesus. That reality hasn't changed – but something else is beginning to.



**WHEN CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE
THAT HOPE JESUS OFFERS,
IT'S LIFE-CHANGING."**

CLARE,
FAITH GUIDE, HAMPSHIRE



We're seeing the early signs of a shift. Many young people, despite pressure, confusion, loneliness and instability, are showing a growing openness to spirituality, meaning, purpose and hope. They're asking big questions. They're curious. They're searching.

And this presents the church with one of the most significant opportunities in a generation.

Whether your church is already actively reaching out to children and young people, or you're wondering where to begin, this moment matters. Some churches are looking to start

something new. Others are ready to strengthen, refine or expand what they're already doing. All have a part to play.

This guide is designed to help your church step into this opportunity with confidence – offering practical steps for those just beginning, and fresh ideas and renewed clarity for those already on the journey. It will help you connect with young people beyond your church walls, and show how Scripture Union can walk with you as you do it.

The moment is here.

The opportunity is real.

It's time to act.

THE PROBLEM:

A GENERATION GROWING UP WITHOUT JESUS – BUT INCREASINGLY OPEN TO SPIRITUALITY

The reality remains:

Most children and young people in our communities have little or no connection to church.

Not because they've rejected faith – but because they've never been introduced to Jesus in a way that feels real or relevant to their world.

“

OUR PURPOSE IS NOT JUST TO BE IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD BUT TO TELL OTHERS THEY CAN BE TOO.”

LYDIA,
AMPLIFY YOUNG
EVANGELIST PROGRAMME

THEY ARE NAVIGATING:

- Pressure
- Anxiety
- Identity struggles
- Loneliness
- An overwhelming digital world

And yet, many are spiritually curious. Children and young people are searching for belonging, hope, meaning and truth – and they are surprisingly open to conversations about Jesus when approached in the right way.

This is not a spiritual emergency. It's a spiritual opportunity – for every church, whatever your starting point.

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Children and young people form beliefs early. They shape their identity early. They ask the biggest questions early.

Whether your church is already running activities or has yet to take its first step, this is a moment to lean in, pay attention and play your part in what God may be stirring among children and young people today.

This guide doesn't assume you're starting from nothing. It simply helps every church – active or aspiring – respond wisely and intentionally to this moment.



THE OPPORTUNITY:

**THEY'RE NOT 'HARD
TO REACH'. MANY ARE
READY TO EXPLORE –
IF WE MEET THEM WHERE
THEY ALREADY ARE**



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE EVERYWHERE:

- In schools
- In parks
- On sports pitches
- Online
- In community spaces
- Hanging out with friends

And while they're rarely in church buildings, many are searching for meaning and are open to conversations about faith.

If your church already has activities for children and young people, this is a moment to build on that momentum, strengthening what you're doing and deepening relationships. If you're beginning from scratch, this is your moment to start small and step into what God is doing.

“

IT'S SO IMPORTANT TO MAKE YOUTH MINISTRY A SAFE, CONSISTENT SPACE WHERE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE CAN BE THEMSELVES.”

**LUCY,
SU MISSION ENABLER**

A SHIFT IN MINDSET

Your church doesn't need:

- A big youth ministry
- A large budget
- The perfect programme

You need:

- A heart for the next generation
- The willingness to show up small
- The courage to try something small
- A long-term commitment to relationships
- A belief that Jesus is already at work

Wherever your church is on the journey, Scripture Union wants to help you take the next step.

PRACTICAL STEPS:

WHAT YOUR CHURCH CAN START DOING TODAY

1. LOOK OUTWARD, NOT INWARD

Instead of asking, 'How do we get young people into church?', ask: 'Where are the young people already – and how can we meet them there?'

Walk your community.

- Observe where children and young people gather
- Listen to local stories
- Notice needs
- Pay attention

This is where mission starts.

2. BUILD ONE AUTHENTIC CONNECTION

You don't need an entire team – you need a handful of willing people.

Practical connection points:

- A weekly walk-around in local parks
- A simple after-school drop-in
- Homework help
- Joining existing community initiatives
- Sports or creative sessions
- Supporting families under pressure
- Showing up consistently in school life

Mission doesn't begin with an event – it begins with presence.

3. KEEP IT RELATIONAL, NOT TRANSACTIONAL

The next generation don't want to be 'reached'. They want to be seen, heard, valued and understood.

This means:

- Listening more than speaking
- Showing up more than once
- Inviting questions, doubts, curiosity
- Being patient
- Letting faith conversations grow naturally

Discipleship is a journey – not a moment.

“
**THE WORLD IS
CHANGING FAST.
MORE THAN EVER,
CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE NEED
TO HEAR GOD IS
THERE FOR THEM.”**

**ROGER,
FAITH GUIDE, WEST SUSSEX**

4. USE WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE

Think simple:

- Volunteers with time
- Community spaces
- Hobbies and skills
- Existing church groups
- Partnerships with schools or local organisations

The most effective mission often starts small.

5. KEEP JESUS AT THE CENTRE

Not through pressure or persuasion – but through stories, scripture, honesty and real life.

Introduce the Bible in:

- Small conversations
- Shared questions
- Short stories
- Moments of care
- Everyday situations

Jesus is revealed through relationships – and through people who reflect him.

BIBLE STUDY

Before taking practical steps, it's important to pause and reflect.

Responding to this moment isn't just about strategy or activity, it begins with prayer, listening and aligning our hearts with God's heart for children and young people.

The following reflection and Bible study invite you to slow down, consider where you and your church are positioned right now and ask how God may be calling you to respond.

Whether you use this personally, in a small group, or with a leadership team, this is an opportunity to pray, reflect and root your action in scripture.



OPENING REFLECTION

Picture yourself standing on the edge of a high cliff, the wind whipping around you, the waves crashing far below. It's a place of breathtaking beauty, but also of danger.

In a dream, Amy Carmichael – a missionary known for her deep compassion – found herself here. She watched as people rushed toward the edge, unaware of the danger ahead. Desperate, she ran back and forth, trying to save as many as she could. Nearby, others sat making daisy chains, content and unmoved by the urgency. Amy called for help, but they remained absorbed in their own world.

When she awoke, God revealed the meaning: those heading for the cliff's edge represented people moving toward a lost eternity without Jesus, while the daisy-chain makers symbolised a complacent church, distracted from the opportunity before it.

It's a sobering image, and one that invites us to ask: Where do I stand?



WE'RE PLANTING SEEDS IN FAITH"

**MEL,
NEW FOREST**

A CHALLENGE FOR TODAY

Amy's vision challenged the church of her day, and it still speaks to us now. While complacency may once have been the enemy, today we face something subtler: relentless busyness.

Our lives, and our churches, are full of activity. We often pour energy into helping people once lives have already been broken, becoming skilled at repair and rescue at the bottom of the cliff. That work matters. But how many are standing at the top, seeking to prevent the fall in the first place?

As the saying goes: prevention is better than cure.

This is the heart of ministry with children and young people. It's about building strong foundations early, introducing them to a God who loves them, showing them a godly example, and helping them discover the life God created them for.

Jesus says:

'The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.'
(John 10:10)

To neglect this moment is to allow innocence to be lost and destiny to go undiscovered.



BIBLE STUDY

(CONTINUED)

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION: MATTHEW 18

Matthew 18 reveals Jesus' heart for children. When the disciples ask who is greatest in the kingdom, Jesus places a child among them and says that greatness begins with childlike humility, and that welcoming a child in his name is the same as welcoming him.

Jesus then speaks with striking seriousness:

'If anyone causes one of these little ones to stumble...'

Is 'doing harm' only about direct injury, or does it also include failing to share the gospel with children and young people who are open and searching?

Jesus ends the chapter with the parable of the lost sheep, reminding

us that the Father is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost. A child placed at the centre of the crowd becomes the clearest picture of God's priority.

A CALL TO ACTION

Children and young people must be placed at the centre of the church's mission.

Imagine children's and youth workers and churches across our country standing together at the edge of the cliff, committed to helping a generation encounter Jesus before they fall.

This isn't about doing everything. It's about being present. It's about responding to opportunity.

**The moment is real.
The question is: Will we respond?**

BIBLE STUDY: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. READ MATTHEW 18:1–14

What do these verses reveal about God's heart for children and young people? How do they challenge your priorities?

2. REFLECT ON AMY CARMICHAEL'S IMAGE

Where do you see your church today – at the edge of the cliff, or focused on activity at the bottom? Where do you see yourself?

3. CONSIDER THE STATEMENT: 'PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE'

What could investing earlier in children and young people look like in your context? What barriers might need to shift?

4. JESUS WARNS AGAINST CAUSING 'THESE LITTLE ONES' TO STUMBLE

What responsibility do we carry to ensure every child has the opportunity to encounter Jesus?



WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE THAT HOPE JESUS OFFERS, IT'S LIFE-CHANGING."

**CLARE,
FAITH GUIDE, HAMPSHIRE**

5. PRAY TOGETHER

What practical changes would this bring? How might it reshape your ministry, priorities and use of resources?

6. PRAY TOGETHER

Ask God for his heart for the next generation – for wisdom, courage and creativity to respond well to this moment.

7. PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Who stood at the edge of the cliff for you in your own faith journey? How might God be inviting you to be that person for someone else?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, thank you for your heart for children and young people.

Forgive us for the times we have been complacent or distracted by busyness.

Give us your vision, your compassion and your courage to stand at the edge of the cliff.

Help us to build up the next generation, to share your love and truth, and to place children at the centre of our churches and ministries.

Amen.



HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE EXPLORE FAITH:

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE EXPLORE FAITH DIFFERENTLY TODAY

Many have:

- No church background
- No framework for Christian language
- Questions shaped by a modern world
- Little knowledge of the Bible

**This is not a barrier – it's a beginning.
They are open, curious, searching.**

“

**IT'S SO POWERFUL,
USING WHAT CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE
NATURALLY ENJOY TO
HELP THEM CONNECT
WITH GOD”**

**HUW,
FAITH GUIDE, WALES**

HOW CHURCHES CAN HELP THEM EXPLORE FAITH

- Start with their questions, not our assumptions
- Share stories of Jesus that cut through complexity
- Create safe spaces where nothing is off-limits
- Let exploration be slow, messy, and honest
- Celebrate every step forward
- See discipleship as a long-term relationship, not a short-term programme

THIS IS WHERE SCRIPTURE UNION CAN HELP

SU supports churches in helping children and young people explore faith:

- In everyday life
- Through the Bible
- In ways they understand
- At a pace that suits them
- With tools that make faith real



“

**THAT FIRST SUMMER,
15 CHILDREN JOINED US.
THE FOLLOWING YEAR,
WE WERE INUNDATED
WITH REQUESTS TO JOIN.”**

**FIONA,
GUILDEN MORDEN**

HOW SCRIPTURE UNION CAN HELP

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS ALONE

Scripture Union walks with churches as they step into mission beyond their walls, offering:

1. PEOPLE

Mission Enablers who come alongside your church with:

- Coaching
- Mentoring
- Guidance
- Encouragement
- Accountability
- Expertise in local mission

2. RESOURCES

Practical Bible-based tools that help churches:

- Build relationships
- Introduce Jesus naturally
- Explore faith with children and young people
- Develop long-term discipling pathways

3. A FRAMEWORK

The Revealing Jesus approach – simple, relational, and designed for churches of all sizes – provides clarity and direction for long-term mission.

4. A LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP

SU doesn't run ahead of you.

We stand beside you.

And we stay there alongside you.

**DISCOVER
SCRIPTURE
UNION**

EVERY YOUNG PERSON SHOULD HAVE THE CHANCE TO DISCOVER JESUS



Your church can help make that happen.

Here's where you can begin or go further:

STEP
1

Pray for the children and young people in your community

STEP
2

Choose one connection point beyond your walls, or deepen an existing one

STEP
3

Gather one or two people who care about the next generation

STEP
4

Take one simple step forward

STEP
5

Connect with Scripture Union for support, guidance and resources



IF YOU WANT TO DRAW CHILDREN INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, FIRST BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM."

ROGER,
FAITH GUIDE

Now is the moment.

This can't wait.

Let's reveal Jesus to the next generation – together.

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**DISCOVER
SCRIPTURE
UNION**

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SEARCHING

Encourage your church to act today. Share *'It's Time to Act'*, pray for local young people, and discover simple ways to journey alongside them, while supporting Scripture Union in equipping churches to bring the good news of Jesus.

**This is a hopeful moment. A significant moment.
A moment the church must not miss.**

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