



# BACK TO SCHOOL!

**T**ables and chairs are frantically moved; the hum of anticipation starts to rise as the kids are excited at having a break from such awful things as Maths and English. The moment has come; silence. The children all stare at me wondering what is going to happen next. The teacher is staring at me frantically trying to remember what I am here to teach! To his horror I sit on his desk and get very sleepy; “Kids I am here to tell you about some incredibly boring subject, now what was it (yawn), oh yes, it is the Bible (I start to snore). The children are loving this rather unorthodox teaching which confirms their suspicions of the Bible (whatever it is). Suddenly with a jump I leap into the middle of the room and lifting my voice 80 decibels I shout “Boys and girls, I wonder how many of you think of the Bible as some old boring black book? Well, I am here to tell you it isn’t and over the next five weeks we are going to find out what an absolutely fantastic book the Bible is!!”

And over the next five weeks we do just that. By using a variety of means the Bible comes alive to these children in ways that they never dreamed of. Sometimes I will act out the story, sometimes I will get the children to act out the story as if they were there. Sometimes I will use puppets and sometimes I will just sit down and tell them the story in all its blessed



simplicity. What I am talking about here is *Bible Explorer*, a five-hour programme which has been produced by *Walk Thru the Bible* exclusively for primary age children in classes 6 and 7. It is a dynamic, fast-moving programme which majors in getting the children involved. Another feature of *Bible Explorer* or *BX* is that there are a series of hand signs to help the children remember what they have learnt. There is a hand sign for every main character, event and geographical location. There are 77 of these hand signs for the OT alone and I do have to say that it is quite a sight just to see the children do all 77 hand signs by the end of week 5!

*BX is learning.* By the time that they have covered the course they will know the OT or NT better than their priest. *BX is foundational.* What the children learn through the stories covered is the doctrine of God, Christ, creation, sin, faith, salvation, God’s law, the list goes on. *BX is evangelistic.* The children encounter God and his Son in the Bible. *BX is fun.* Often when I walk into a class the children will cheer, “The Bible man is here!” One child told a priest that he never knew that the Bible could be such fun; the priest’s response was not recorded!

Those of you who keep up with what is happening with us here in the West of Ireland will know that the work is hard and slow. It is desperately hard to get people to even listen to the Gospel. So can you understand what it feels like to go into a school and get some thirty kids hanging on your every word for a whole hour?!

At present I am working in four schools which makes a grand total of some ninety kids being reached with God’s Word – kids who wouldn’t have a clue otherwise about the Bible. There is nothing else that I could do the rest of the week that would remotely compare with the effect that I am seeing in that one hour.

I end with a request and a challenge. The request is please pray more school doors open for me. Even with the brave new Irish world that the Celtic tiger has produced there is still a grip that the Catholic Church has on the schools and there is still a lot of opposition to anything to do with the Bible. The challenge: do you have one free hour a week? Then give it to your local school! It could change the lives of a whole generation of kids in your area. That wouldn’t be a bad hour’s work, would it? ■

**James McMaster**