



Introduction

Many schools follow a programme of key values throughout the school year. These values can be an important framework for helping to define and validate the work of the school 'beyond the curriculum'. Each value can be used as the theme for collective worship, the focus for classroom reflection and the subject matter for main hall or quiet corner displays.

The Bible has so much to offer in this area of positive personal, relational and community values, and its timeless wisdom can help all schools pass on to the next generation the qualities of life that are most valuable and which, as Christians, we believe are not only God-given but also can be God-energised in our lives.

Preparation

What follows is a series of ideas linked to the value of '**Understanding**'.

It includes: key themes to explore, a key Bible verse to use, key concepts to unpack, ideas for displays and reflective corners, as well as Bible story links with further connections to material on the Barnabas websites.

Development

Key themes to explore

Having understanding - with links to insight, wisdom and a 'deeper thinking' about things

Showing understanding - with links to caring, being compassionate and sympathetic

Being understanding- with links to having empathy, thoughtfulness and awareness

Understanding isn't just about knowledge but about applying what is known and making good decisions with that for the good of others.

Key Bible verse

The Bible uses the word 'wisdom' to cover this whole area of thoughtful, applied knowledge.

The Book of Proverbs, said to have been written by King Solomon, is full of wise insights about life that are based on the love and fear of God. In this book the words 'wisdom' and 'understanding' are usually interchangeable, depending on which translation you take, for example:

'Respect and honour God - this is the beginning of wisdom' (Proverbs 1:7, paraphrase).

See also:



'All understanding comes from the Lord and so do common sense and wisdom' (Proverbs 2:6, paraphrase).

'Happy those who gain understanding' (Proverbs 3:13, paraphrase).

Many more passages from Proverbs could be used, for example, 1:1-7 and 2:1-5.

Key concepts to unpack

Understanding means seeing things from all angles and forming a balanced view. Perhaps a starting point for 'understanding' might be to show some pictures of everyday objects but taken from an unusual angle, preferably from **underneath**. To work out what they are, you have literally to 'understand' them...take a bit longer... and think a bit deeper!

Maybe 'under-standing' could be symbolised by literally standing up and looking upwards...thoughtfully... taking time really to think about people or situations and being ready to see more than what lies on the surface.

An understanding person is usually someone who listens carefully and appreciates all dimensions of a situation.

Understanding has to do with deeper learning and making connections for ourselves and not just from what others have told us. Thus it links with an emphasis on good thinking skills.

Children learn 'understanding' when:

- they are encouraged to work things out for themselves
- they have to weigh up the pros and cons of an argument
- they take time before they give their answers
- they develop thinking skills in subject areas
- they learn how to listen to others with attention to detail

Display and reflective corner ideas:

Include pictures of everyday objects from unusual angles, especially those taken from underneath (see the ideas above).

Put up some thoughtful sayings about wisdom/understanding gathered from the Internet or a reference book, for example:

'People with understanding think without talking; fools do the opposite!'

'The courage to speak must be matched by the wisdom to listen.'

'Knowledge is about having the facts; understanding is knowing what to do with the facts.'



'Knowledge comes by taking things apart; but understanding comes by putting things together.'

(all these quotes are taken from the book *14,000 Quips and Quotes for Writers and Speakers* by E.C McKenzie, Wings Books, 1983)

Key questions to have on the display:

How well do I listen to others? How often do I ask questions? Am I open to learn more every day? How can I really understand someone else? How can I grow in understanding? Who do I admire as having understanding? What can I do today to be a more understanding person?

Have the Bible open at the story of the wise and foolish builders. The wise and understanding man is the one who acts on what he or she hears - see Matthew 7:24-27 .

Bible story links

[Solomon's choice of 'wisdom and understanding' over riches, power and fame. as in 1 Kings 3](#)

Jesus also showed compassion on the crowds before the [feeding of the 5,000](#). He understood (noticed and cared) how needy they were (Matthew 14:14). Understanding needs to lead to doing something.

Finally, Jesus showed compassion in the [story of the death of Lazarus](#) (John 11). He really understands how Mary and Martha feel, and of course he cries.