

TECHNIQUES FOR LISTENING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

From the 2024 Growing Faith Research Projects





TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Technique #1: Photography
2. Technique #2: Video Interviews
3. Technique #3: Focus Groups
4. Technique #4: Surveys
5. Technique #5: Interviews
6. Technique #6: Workshops



Technique #1

PHOTOGRAPHY

Researcher: Dr. Carolyn Edwards and Alison Keddily

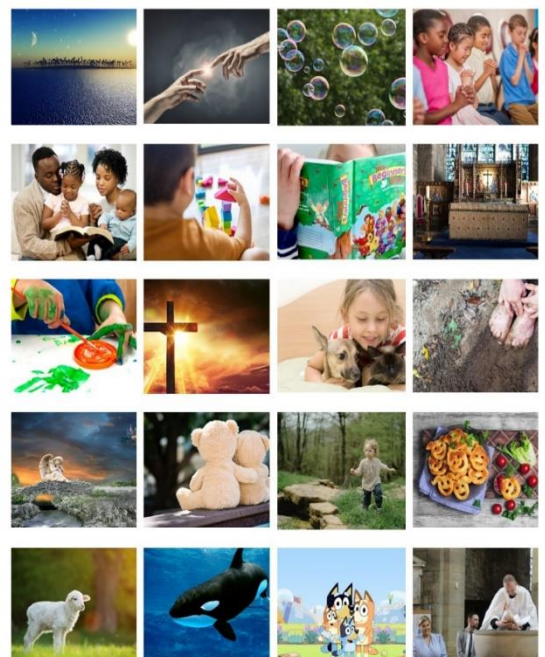
Method:

- CYP in pre-school took photos of things that helped them think about God or Jesus at home, church, or outside.
- In interviews, they were shown their photos and asked questions like "which is your favourite?" to start conversations about faith.
- CYP used these images to talk more about their own faith experiences.

Why you might want to use this in your context:

This method works well with pre-school children, as shown by Carolyn Edwards and Alison Keddily because using their own photos helps start conversations about faith in a way that's visual, relatable, and easy for them to understand.

Some of these photos were used in this research project to prompt conversations about faith.





Technique #2

VIDEO INTERVIEWS

Researcher A: Claire Barber

Method:

- Each child reflected on the different activities they participated in during their time at Happiness Club.
- In the interviews, they were asked to share their thoughts and feelings about these activities.
- They also discussed their overall experience at the club, giving insights into what they enjoyed or found meaningful.

Researcher B: Mark Harrington

Method:

- Groups of pupils were initially interviewed about praying and their experience with it at school.
- The same group was re-interviewed later to evaluate how the new resources they used influenced their understanding and practice of prayer.
- During the summer term, schools watched a series of five collective worship videos that focused on different aspects of prayer.

Why you might want to use this in your context:

These methods are effective because they prompt primary school students to reflect on their own experiences. Claire Barber's approach encourages them to discuss activities they've enjoyed, making it easier for them to share their thoughts. Mark Harrington's method goes further by following up on the impact of prayer, helping to track how their understanding evolves. Both approaches foster meaningful conversations about faith in a way that's engaging and appropriate for their age.



Technique #3

FOCUS GROUPS

Researcher A: Sarah Rittman

Method:

- CYP showed their feelings by standing at different points between "agree" and "disagree" on a spectrum.
- CYP could share their views without speaking or writing if they preferred, but could explain their position if they wanted.
- Everyone could write, draw, or talk about how they meet God, with support for those who needed it.

Researcher B: CYM

Method:

- Held two-hour interactive focus groups to talk about faith, church, and roles as worship leaders.
- Used videos, hands-on activities, and discussions to help think and reflect.
- Created a supportive space where everyone's views were welcomed, encouraging open talks and a deeper look at faith.

Why you might want to use this in your context:

These methods work well because they use interactive techniques to involve participants. Sarah Rittman's approach lets people show their opinions physically, making it easier for them to share. CYM's method uses videos and activities to encourage deeper thinking about faith. Both methods create a welcoming space for open conversations and exploring faith.



Technique #4

SURVEYS

Researchers: Emma Coy and Jane Whittington

Method:

- Developed a survey with Headteachers' input to ask CYP about activities that made them feel close to God.
- Given to groups like school councils or worship groups, with help from an adult.
- Made sure the wording was clear and easy for the CYP to understand.

Why you might want to use this in your context:

Surveys work well because they get honest feedback from people of all ages. Emma Coy and Jane Whittington's survey asks about activities that make people feel close to God, using clear questions and familiar groups to make it easy to share. This approach gets real insights into faith in a straightforward way.



Pupils from St Peter's Church of England Aided Junior School, Farnborough, who took part in this research.



Technique #5

INTERVIEWS

Researcher: Karen Beal

Method:

- Held interviews and collected written or drawn responses.
- Recorded sessions, took notes and photos, and had follow-up meetings to go over key points.
- Organised and ranked statements from earlier research to discuss their importance.

Why you might want to use this in your context:

These methods are effective because they collect detailed feedback from all ages. Karen Beal's approach with interviews, written responses, and follow-up meetings helps you explore key points thoroughly and gain clear insights.



In this research, students were asked about what would make them feel more included in the church family, and able to participate more fully in worship.



Technique #6

WORKSHOPS

Researcher A: Karen Beal

Method:

- Used a Graffiti Table with prompts for CYP to write or draw their thoughts about church.
- Used Play Doh for CYP to shape what church means to them and explain it.
- Used Skittles in containers for CYP to show agreement with statements about their church experience.

Researcher B: Alaisdair Campbell

Method:

- Blob Pictures: Circle the blob that shows how you feel about moving to Secondary School or how you felt when you moved.
- Jesus Images: Put a button on the Jesus image that best represents your view and explain the picture.
- Talk about worship memories at school and write down responses on flipchart paper.
- Rank a list of things by importance and place a button on your top priority.
- Use emoji faces to show how you feel about moving to Secondary School or how you feel now and write on a Jenga block what makes you go “Wow!” if you don’t have a faith.

Researcher C: Fiona Tweedie

Method:

- Have one-to-one or group Zoom chats to create timelines of important faith events.
- Run workshops where young people look at the anonymised faith journey data and discuss common themes and differences.
- Find the main themes from these discussions to understand shared experiences.



Why you might want to use this in your context:

These methods let young people easily share their thoughts. Karen Beal's activities use Graffiti Tables and Play Doh to express ideas visually. Alaisdair Campbell's use of images and ranking helps them reflect on feelings about church and school. Fiona Tweedie's Zoom chats and workshops encourage them to discuss faith journeys and find shared experiences.



Images from Alaisdair Campbell's workshop with students in transition.

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