



Start Up Manual

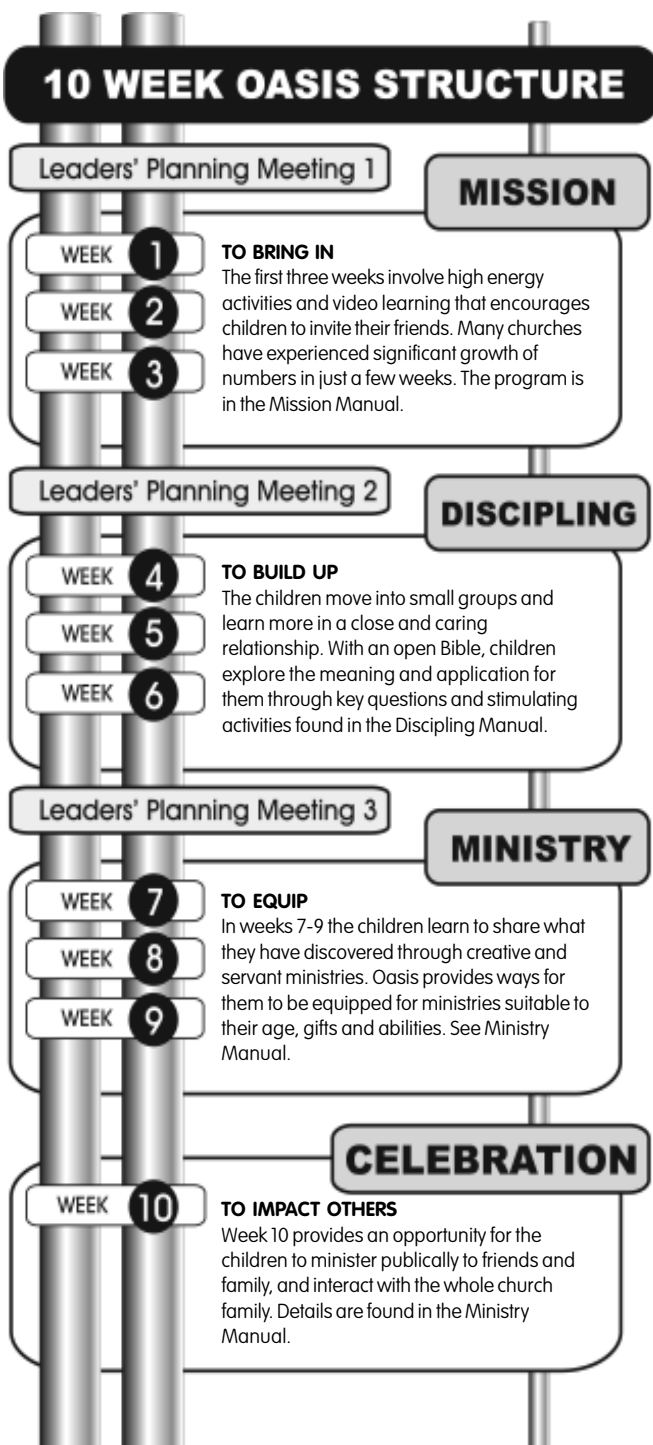
**Oasis is
fresh,
fun,
contemporary,
Bible based and
educationally sound
Children's Ministry Programming
for ages 7-11 years.**

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6 STEPS TO SUCCESS

Step 1 – understand the Oasis strategy

This is a unit of ten weeks. Study the diagram below and note how each part is different. Each week is an hour-long program.



Step 2 – familiarise yourself with the program activities

LEADER'S MANUAL

Thumb through the manual, noting the various helps provided for you. The manuals are in Acrobat format on the CD, so you can print from a computer instead of photocopying them for each leader. Listen to the songs to get a feel for their impact on the children. Use the CD or live musicians. Watch the leaders' and children's segments on the video tape.

MISSION MANUAL

The first three weeks are especially designed to attract and enthruse new children. The fully timed program is there along with supporting training for your leader's meeting on video. The Bible message is presented on video. Keep the activities moving along. Each leader should move into their activity the moment the previous leader has finished.

DISCIPLING MANUAL

The Discipling Weeks require the children to have a Bible each. Read the Main Purpose and Outcome statements for each week. Take note of special activities that leaders need to be aware of and prepare for.

Notice that at the end of Week 6 there is discussion in preparation for the Ministry weeks.

MINISTRY MANUAL

Read the Explanations, Purpose and Outcomes for each ministry. Note that the ministry preparation begins in Week 6 in each small group. Each discipling group may do a ministry, or the children can leave their discipling group and form new groups for their ministry elective.

Step 3 – recruit enthusiastic leaders

Leaders who will commit themselves for all ten weeks are highly recommended for establishing trust and confidence with the children that will enable them to grow in the Lord. Show new leaders how Oasis differs

from other children's programs. There is a role for everyone in Oasis leadership.

Discipling groups in Weeks 4, 5 & 6 require a caring leader for every six children. On page 6 is a list of leader's roles for the large group activities. Allocate a leader to each task according to each person's abilities, experience and interest. Explain to young leaders what you expect of them and show them what to do. If you have a large number of children then invite others to assist in the Ministry weeks.

Step 4 – prepare the leaders

This is not optional if you want to see a spiritual harvest among children. Oasis is not just Bible teaching, but interaction with leaders whose lives are continually growing and overflowing as they experience God's redeeming love.

Set dates for the three leader's meetings as soon as possible so that all can attend. Meet at least a week before Week 1 and between Weeks 3 & 4, and Weeks 6 & 7. To get the best results, allow at least one and a half hours for each meeting. Use the Leaders' Meeting agendas to ensure you get the most out of the videos and Bible studies.



Step 5 – provide an exciting setting

The stylistic theme helps to make this unit memorable for the children. The stylistic theme or style is chosen to complement the Biblical theme. Some themes are from the everyday world, others draw on the imaginative and adventurous themes that children love.

Your exciting setting can be made up of posters and pictures, music and sound effects (e.g. Ocean noises for "Peter" or Jungle noises in the "Bible", "Paul" or "Joshua" units), costume areas for the children to dress up and/or leaders in costume.

Every group that uses Oasis has different limitations on the way they set up. Some have to pack up each week and prefer to use posters and costumes. A great way to keep the theme in children's minds may be to invite the children to bring props or wear costumes. Others can keep their settings for the whole term and have been able to set up enormous and amazing props for that time.



Step 6 – set up 'In the Shade'



A way to ensure pastoral care happens when it needs to for children in your church! 'In the Shade' is a special place where children can go when they want to talk with someone who cares. Make this place known to the children, and each week invite them to go at any time during the program and sit, laugh, talk and pray with this person. Each week, tell the children that they can go to 'In the Shade' if they are too tired to participate, or sick, or finding it hard to keep up with the others, or have something important to share or some other need. When that need has been met, encourage them to join the large group again.

Set up a large beach umbrella, or potted palms, and two or three chairs in a corner of the hall. This location should be in full view of other leaders. Confidentiality and genuine care is the key. Appoint someone to be there for the whole unit. An older grandfather or grandmother with a love for children would be ideal. They must be carefully selected and approved by the church leadership.



The Mission Program

Designed to attract unchurched kids, it involves 3 weeks of high energy activities and excitement.

Entry Video

The Entry Video is a bright and flashy introduction. It creates excitement and expectation, and shows the children that Oasis is worth coming to. Join the countdown when it begins, whispering the last few numbers, until everyone is quiet at the end. The Entry Video will often go straight into a welcome and introduce the theme for the day. Preview the video tape at the leader's meeting. The little Oasis logo at the end of each segment tells you when it is finished.

Buzz Words

Buzz Words are called out to signal to the children that they should do an action. Buzz Words engage the children in the program, and assist in keeping control of the group by refocusing the children every now and then, or as required. The leader should be confident in both demonstrating the Buzz Words and in using Buzz Words during the program where appropriate.

Challenges

Both the Physical and Creative Challenges are integral to the learning process. Through participation the children will experience first hand and not simply be told, some aspect of the unit theme. Challenges provide active intervals in the program and help to build community.

The Words

"The Words" is another name for learning memory verses over a period of eight weeks, with a review in Week 9 in preparation for the Oasis Celebration. Some learning activities require the Bible verses to be up on the OHP or on cardboard. It will be helpful each week to thoroughly review the verses without these aids. Explain any difficult words or concepts if necessary. The children will learn The Words easier and better if they understand what they mean.

The Mega Word

From the words of Scripture come a special story and message each week called the Mega Word. This is the Bible story. In the first three weeks the main message comes from the video, while in weeks 4-6 it will occur within the small group time.

Songs

These are related to the theme. Overhead transparencies of the words to each song and printed music score with guitar chords are provided in each unit pack.

The cassette and CD includes an instrumental track of each song, for those who wish to use recorded music but without vocals.

We would encourage you to play the music as background music at reduced volume during Launch Pad, Physical Challenges and at the end of the Ministry Electives. It will help reinforce the learning through the words.

Life Story

A life situation told by the leaders to introduce the concepts of the Mega Word. The goal of Life Story is to raise interest in the Mega Word and get the children thinking about its application.

The Chat

The Chat is a talk to God. There is no problem labelling our communication with God as *prayer*, though we think that it would be good to help children understand that God wants us to talk to him anytime and the idea of a "chat" with God seems appropriate for children.

In weeks 1-3 the leader normally prays on behalf of everyone, being sensitive to children who may not be familiar with prayer. The discipling weeks encourage all the children to pray in the small groups.



The Discipling Program

Disciples are people who are learning to act more like Jesus at home and school. They have a concern for others and not just for themselves.

They are learning to rely on God for inspiration, motivation, guidance and ability.

In the Discipling Weeks 4-6 half of each session is spent with a leader in a cell group of approximately 6 children. Cell group relationships are more like a family than a school.

Children's Cell Groups

Definition – A small group of children bonded together around a leader, for mutual care, support and prayer, questioning and discussion.

Cell groups aim to lead children into an ongoing relationship with God through Jesus Christ, a relationship which is real and positive for each child and appropriate for their developmental stage and physical age. The Oasis group will be more concerned with what kind of people the children become rather than simply rote learning Bible knowledge.

Leadership Style

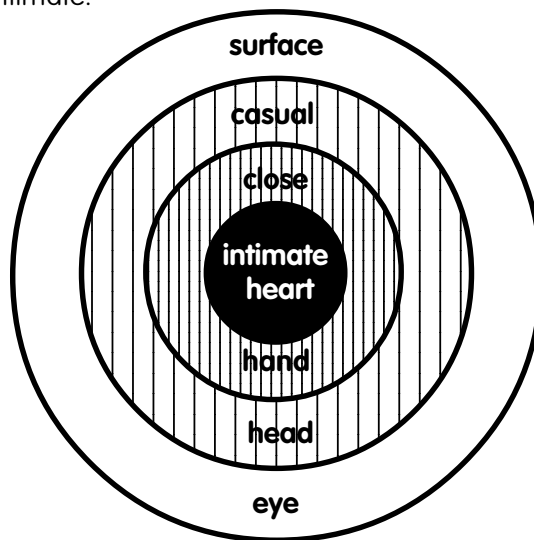
What makes cell groups unique is the leadership style. Cell group leaders are –

- **kinsfolk** act like a family member;
- **role models** show how a Christian person lives;
- **facilitators** make it easy for children to learn about and follow Jesus, pray, and care for others;
- **pastors** who care for children in times of crisis;
- **friends** who are loyal and keep secrets; and
- **equippers** help the children to discover gifts and learn skills for ministry to others.

Cell group leaders therefore need to like children, be relaxed and flexible, have a quiet authority, are able to enjoy life and have fun.

Ministry Through Relationships

The depth of relationships may be pictured as a series of concentric circles that progress from surface to intimate.



Surface relationships: These are the 'masses,' the people we 'see' from day to day, children to whom we can potentially minister.

Casual relationships: We know some facts about these children and value their personhood and worth.

Close relationships: We are close enough to these children to know their feelings, hopes, and needs. Common goals and projects are shared.

Intimate relationships: Understanding the heart of specific children, with a mutual commitment to each other.

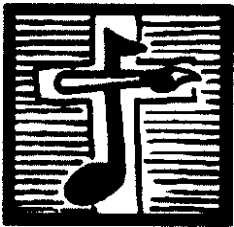
As we relate to others, whether Jesus Christ, our fellow leaders or the children we disciple, we seek to move toward the centre.

Oasis use of video



Video is used because of its unique ability to communicate simply and easily to leaders and children. There are segments for the leader's meetings and the children's sessions. The video has been broken into segments that introduce creative ideas, people and stories that might be difficult for you to recreate. In the Mission part, the MegaWord (Bible story) is told on video.

Children of today's culture want proof that faith in Jesus works. Presentation of Bible truth accompanied by the evidence of contemporary people who they look up to will encourage them to believe. For this reason the Discipling part often has stories of modern believers for whom faith in Jesus is important and a vital part of their lives. Animated video spots may be used to connect Biblical truth to life situations.



The Ministry Program

The electives in weeks 7-9 give children opportunity to learn to minister to others. These are not 'busy' activities to keep the children occupied. They are designed to use and develop their talents and giftedness. Their involvement in creative and servant ministries is a vital learning and commitment time. Leaders have the opportunity during these weeks to discuss how the Biblical theme is being expressed in what they are doing. It is also a preparation for the Oasis Celebration.

Multiple Intelligences and learning activities for children

Oasis is based on a model of teaching that suggests that everyone has strengths in different intelligences (or learning styles). A learning style, is *the way we learn best*. A variety of activities are provided, appropriate to the strengths children will have in different learning styles/intelligences.

In each of the Ministry Electives, we suggest the type of intelligences a child will use to participate in, enjoy and do that ministry well. However, all children should be given the opportunity to be involved in any ministry. In the safe environment of Oasis they may discover and develop gifts and talents in themselves that have so far laid dormant.

The intelligences or 'learning styles' are:

1. WORD INTELLIGENCE

Children strong in this intelligence will enjoy playing with language, using big words, trying biblical words, tongue twisters, and singing songs with catchy or unusual words.

2. LOGIC AND MATHS INTELLIGENCE

Children strong in Logic and Maths intelligence love patterns and categories, finding out how things are alike and different. They enjoy experimenting, often asking 'why' questions, board games, tangram puzzles, brain teasers and number puzzles, naughts and crosses. They will respond to projects that require step by step instructions.

3. SPACE AND VISION INTELLIGENCE

Children with strengths in Space and Vision intelligence usually enjoy art and design, map work, photography and making creative posters, banners and charts. They will tend to be good visualisers, able to imagine what something looks like and then be able to draw it. They love craft activities, and usually produce an acceptable and good product at the end.

4. MUSIC INTELLIGENCE

This intelligence reflects sensitivity to the pitch, timbre, timing and rhythm of sounds. These children enjoy and may be good at remembering melodies, singing, playing musical instruments or creating music. A strongly musical child loves making music and is fascinated by sounds they can make. They will learn new songs readily and will have a great sense of rhythm and pitch.

5. BODY INTELLIGENCE

This intelligence involves using the body to skilfully perform sequences of movement, communicate ideas and emotions. They are usually very active, well-coordinated or graceful and enjoy physical movement or making and manipulating objects. These children usually enjoy and may be good at sport, games, gymnastics, dance or drama.

6. PEOPLE INTELLIGENCE

This intelligence is the ability to understand and empathise with other people's behaviour. Children with strengths in People intelligence tend to enjoy working with others, performing in front of others, negotiating and caring about others. They love to be with people.

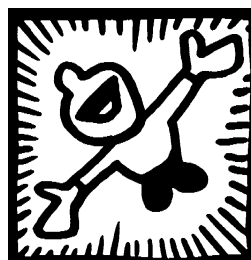
7. SELF INTELLIGENCE

Children with strengths in Self intelligence tend to reflect a lot on their own learning, feelings and behaviours. Since this is the most private intelligence, it requires evidence from language, music, or some other expressive activities. These children will talk about their feelings, what they are good at and what they would like to get better at. They may keep a diary or journal of daily life, with references to what they understand God is doing in their lives.

8. NATURE

These children want to be out in it! They learn much from nature, and are stimulated to understanding and exploration by exposure to it. Taking Jesus' farming parables outside is a good example of how to switch on nature learners.

9. SPIRITUAL/MORAL/ETHICAL



Searches for the spiritual, has an awareness of spirituality. They readily apply reason and compassion to a need. They care about justice and appreciate opportunities to show care and concern for others.



How Oasis uses the Bible

Scripture exercises its authority in our lives when it is heard, read, learned, thought about, and obeyed (Dt 17.18–20; Acts 17.11).

Because God’s Spirit inspired it (2 Tim 3.16), we can believe it, obey it, and let it judge our lives. The Bible rebukes us when we sin, encourages us in difficult times, matures us in our relationship with God, and proclaims the good news of the gospel to and through us (Ps 19.7–11; 2 Tim 3.14–17).



The Bible in Mission

In the **Mission** weeks, where the emphasis is on reaching unchurched kids, we want the children to have an exciting and interesting experience with the Bible. What you see is eight times more compelling than what you hear. Video is used because it enables you to introduce creative ideas, people and stories that would be difficult for individual local church groups to recreate.



The Bible in Discipling

In the **Discipling** groups, there are various activities to help you and the children bring the Bible into contact with your daily lives. The activities give every child an opportunity to talk and be involved. You, as leader facilitate rather than dominate their interaction with the Bible.

Children may also do role plays or life sculptures to help them enter into the experience of the story, so that it transforms their lives and not just be head learning. Sometimes there may be a writing or drawing activity to help them feel their way into the story and its meaning for them.



Extra Help

Some units have special activities that help children become familiar with finding their way about the Bible.



Stories

The Entry Video segment is often a contemporary situation similar to the Bible story, in other video segments children hear from people who are discovering the message to be true in their lives.



The Words

Thoroughly memorising a Bible passage related to the theme over nine weeks is regarded as a better option than isolated verses without a context.



Asking the right questions.

Adults often want to tell children the facts, explain what they think it means, and to prescribe the application so that every one hears everything about the passage.

The children’s response is often, “We’ve heard that story before!” They are already bored with the facts, and have not discovered the answers to the things they want to know today. Oasis has moved away from that teacher-who-knows-and-tells model.

When Jesus taught he often told stories and asked questions. He sometimes began a teaching time by asking leading questions.

We believe that God the Spirit speaks to children through the narratives of the Bible. We want to help them hear his voice. The use of questions is to enable children to go through the exploratory and application process for themselves. The search enables a child to move toward commitment. You the leader also respond honestly to the questions, providing a model for the children.

By developing children’s skills in finding answers, you help them understand that Bible study is a dynamic process. It is a living word that constantly speaks to their changing situation, experience, and life needs.



Sharing what is discovered—Ministry

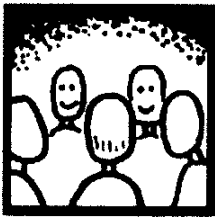
Dawson Trotman, the founder of The Navigators, once said, “*Thoughts disentangle themselves when they pass through the lips and the fingertips.*” Children’s literacy skills are usually not up to writing down the insights they receive from the Bible. They can more easily share verbally. This encourages them to think about what they are reading. Because insights are not personal property, but are for the good of all, children are encouraged to help build each other up.



The goal is changed lives

The Bible was given to change lives; to help leaders and children know the God of the Word, and become more like Jesus in attitudes, thoughts, speech, actions, and values (James 1.22).

“*What are we going to do about it?*” is where both leader and children need to arrive. Making their own choices about what they have to do. Leaders too should be ready and willing to talk about how they are handling the various situations in their life, and where the Bible is challenging them to do something about it.



Leader's Roles and Tasks

Oasis is a team approach, with a place for both experienced and new leaders. Smaller teams may need to assign more than one

task. Children and teenagers may do some of these roles. Allocate leader's tasks at each Leader's Meeting, take gifts and experience into consideration.



Launch Pad leaders

Arrive early to set up registration tables, name badges, banners, runs game, etc. Welcomes children and parents, making sure each child receives a name badge and fills in the registration slip. People with an outgoing manner will fit well here.



Master of Ceremonies (M.C.)

The M.C. guides the program, asks relevant questions that relate to the theme of the day, and lovingly assists other leaders and children.



Video and audio operator

The Video leader's job is to cue, start and stop the video and or audio at the right time. The timing of the videos and music is quite crucial.



Physical & Creative Challenges

These are two different roles. Each understands how the challenges contribute to the outcomes, and prepares any equipment or resources needed.



Song leader

Learns the songs and teaches them to the leaders at the first of their leaders' meetings. Teaches the children over the first three weeks according to instructions in the Manual. Words and actions are on OHP transparencies in the Oasis Pack.



Musicians

Be sure to thoroughly learn the music. Children could be invited to assist, eg. with percussion.



Buzz Words leader

Buzz Words are fun ways of refocusing children's attention or moving them to the next activity. This leader uses them as directed in the program.



The Words leader

Leads the activities for learning memory verses. Learns them thoroughly before the first session. Has any aids prepared as directed in the Manual. All leaders should memorise The Words.



The Mega Word

The Mega Word is told on video in Mission. In Discipling it is taught in small groups.



Life Story leader

The Life Story is a testimony or story about people who found the Bible helpful and/or life changing. Prior preparation is essential. Tell or read it well for maximum impact.



The Chat (Prayer) leader

One who practices prayer and can use language that is contemporary and understood by children.



Discipling leaders

These people will explore the Bible story or verses using questions and activities that will help the children discover the meaning and application for themselves. All leaders may be involved in leading a group of children in the Discipling weeks. Two leaders per group of children is ideal. One leader to six children is an ideal ratio. Worksheets may be printed from the CD or copied from the manual.



Elective Ministry leaders

All the necessary instructions are included in the Oasis Pack for servant and creative ministry groups. Any materials required should be purchased or obtained well in advance. Be sure to read and prepare for the activity or elective.



Assistants

Young people, parents and other suitable people may certainly help leaders in any of the above roles, and should be encouraged to do so. Oasis presents a great opportunity for people to learn to minister to children, families and friends without having full responsibility from the beginning.



Launch Pad

Launch Pad begins 10–15 minutes before Oasis starting time, and is made up of the following elements.

Welcome Table

This table is used as a focus for parents and children to come to when they first arrive. Staff the welcome table with sufficient number of people to be sure that each child and parent receives personal greeting and attention. Older children could be appointed and shown how to welcome children and integrate them into the group.

Registration

A registration form will assist you in keeping track of children, for ongoing contact and visitation. The children need to feel that they are missed when not at Oasis, without pressure or guilt being laid on them. The attitude of leaders to the parents of children is important. They are entrusting you with their children, for whom you will be responsible during the Oasis time. After all, you are relying on them to let their children come, hear and experience the joy of knowing Christ.

Badges Table

When new children have registered, the children then go to a table to make a badge. Children leave their badges behind for use next week.

Letter to Parents

Providing parents with adequate information about the group will help them feel comfortable and supportive of your group. Provide a letter on the first week giving an overview of the program and theme, an invitation to any special event, and the Oasis Celebration. A master that you may copy or adapt is in this manual.

Offering Box

God loves us to give our money to His service. Children ought to be taught about giving to God and given the opportunity to do so. You will need to decide what purpose your weekly Oasis offerings are to be used for, or who is to be supported from these gifts. Children will own the offering if they are brought into the decision making process in some way. We suggest that a money box, with a poster stating where the money is going, be placed on the registration desk for children to place their gifts. It is an important part of our Christian lives and one that should be modelled by the leaders, so be sure to put in your own offering too. If you are sponsoring a child

overseas then have an up-to-date photo and information and letters on display.

Room Setup

It is helpful to set up your room well before the first child arrives. The room must reflect what you want to see happen during the Oasis program time. It must be exciting and friendly. Allow adequate time for having any props, or materials ready and especially the audio and video equipment set up and tapes cued to begin at the exact starting point.

Make an Oasis Banner

In this manual you will find an Oasis master that can be made into a transparency to make a backdrop to be hung up on the wall. The backdrop needs to be huge, colourful, and easily visible. Project the transparency onto a very large sheet or other cloth, trace the illustration on to it. Paint it in bright luminous colours using acrylic paints. Spray cans and masking tape make it easier. Tape the transparency to the OHP in case it moves during tracing.

Prayer Preparation

Oasis is well-designed and you may be a very experienced children's worker, but a commitment to prayer is essential to its success. Pray at the three leader's meetings, during the week between sessions, and in the meeting room before the children arrive. Pray for the Holy Spirit to move the hearts of children towards God.

Game

Oasis begins the moment three or four children arrive. The purpose of the game is to keep the children actively involved as others come. The other purpose is to integrate children into the large group in a fun way. Finish a few minutes before the official Oasis starting time so children can catch their breath before the program commences.



Church and Children

Partnership with Parents

Oasis is an important part of the church's ministry with children. The church leadership needs to make sure that children are being adequately pastored, especially in this world where children are often facing huge problems long before they can even understand them, let alone be able to deal with them.

Children always require an advocate in the church and community. Someone who will speak up on their behalf.

In The Shade (see page 3) is one step Oasis leaders can take to provide pastoral care. The appointment of a children's pastor or children's deacon to act on a voluntary basis would also fulfil the following functions.

- **Keep records** of all the children who come under the care of the church and to make sure that every child has at least one Christian adult who cares and prays for him or her.
- **Be alert for crises** in the families of the children where special counselling is necessary; such events as accidents, death, separation, divorce, or moving to a new area.
- **Be a backstop for the Oasis leaders** who may find personal or emotional problems in the lives of the children, which they do not feel equipped to handle.
- **Be a support to the Oasis leaders** when changes or difficulties arise in their own lives.
- **Be a channel of communication to the church leadership** with what is happening among the children with suggestions of what the church can do to help.

This is no small task and should be entered into by church leaders with the same intention and thought as the appointment of any staff or lay leader.

Oasis is more than an exciting, fun-filled Bible teaching program. It is about the nurture of children so they become whole persons who are looking to the church, the Bible, Christian leaders, and the Lord for guidance and support.

Consistent personal visitation and involvement in the lives of children tells them and their families that Oasis leaders care deeply about them. It builds trust so that they will listen to what you have to offer them.

Visitation helps prevent children from becoming isolated from Christian influences and forges connections between their family and church.

Here are some suggestions

- Make friends with a new child's parents as soon as possible after the child joins Oasis. Use the Oasis Letter to Parents to explain what you are seeking to do for their child. Non-Christian parents have allowed their child to attend Oasis so they may be sympathetic to spiritual nurture, but do not assume this to be the case.
- Let the parents see that you are genuinely interested in their child. Attend a sports event or concert where the child is participating. Celebrate their birthdays and other significant events.
- An informal meeting with the parents when the child is not present gives you a chance to talk about special needs or problems.
- Support the decisions parents make about the child, unless the parents are involved in abuse, or other harmful practices to the child.
- Never talk to others about family information heard from a child, unless someone is in danger of serious harm.
- Inform the family that you are praying for their child and family. Be open and available to families in times of crisis.

The Oasis Vision

To have, in every church, a team of enthusiastic, empowered and competent children's workers, who are effectively nurturing an increasing number of children to personally know, love and walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.