

LATER ELEMENTARY LEADER GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION TO *THE STORY*

Your church is embarking on a wonderful adventure. Children, youth, and adults will enter into God's story, the Bible, in new and life-changing ways. The Bible is, after all, a book of stories. The Bible is a book of stories where God is the main character. The Bible is a book of stories given to us by that same God in order to transform our lives.

As you move chronologically through the Bible, children, youth, and adults will engage creatively and interactively with each story, walking away with one point to remember from each. Families will have the opportunity to talk about the same Bible story each week, and everyone in your church who participates will have a basis of discussion with other members of your church. Each week a different Bible story will come alive for all ages in your congregation.

This curriculum was developed to allow for maximum flexibility. You can use it for mid-week programming or Sunday programming, but it is not necessarily limited to use at those times. The curriculum will work in a variety of teaching/learning formats and time frames.

This guide will introduce you to tips for using the children's curriculum in a variety of educational formats and will help you to use the parts and pieces of the curriculum to their best advantage for your particular setting and group.

Entering into God's story in creative and meaningful ways is an important piece of the spiritual formation of children, youth, and adults. This curriculum is a wonderful tool for introducing your church members to the amazing stories of God's entry into the lives of men and women and reminding them that God is in the midst of their lives, too. Godspeed on this adventure.

THE STORY AND LATER ELEMENTARY AGE CHILDREN (GRADES 4–6)

Later elementary-age children find themselves in an in-between state. While emotionally they still may feel like children, they have an outside sophistication that belies that. They have a desire to be thought of as older and mature but don't yet have the inner resources to cope with all that comes with that hoped-for maturity. If they have a sense that they are being asked to participate in something that younger children are doing, they may fight against it. The *The Story* Later Elementary curriculum is written with these "tweens" in mind.

While this curriculum can be used in a variety of teaching/learning formats it's important, if at all possible, for these children to be separated from the younger children.

The Bible Story

The Bible stories are designed to be told interactively. They are designed to help the children enter and engage in the Bible story in a creative and active way. Make sure the story is told the way it is written in order to provide the best experience possible for the children. After the Bible story is finished, the children are directed back to the other "Hear the Story" activities to help them debrief the Bible story together.

The Learning Activities

Each lesson begins with the "Come Together" learning activity. This activity is designed to focus the children's attention on the point and the facts of the Bible story.

After the Bible story is told the children are invited into the "Explore More" activities. These activities engage the children in the Bible story in creative and interactive ways. The lesson plan offers several "Explore More" activities. You may choose one activity which best suits your group and meeting space or you may choose to do all of the activities. Please be aware that many of the "Explore More" activities require an abundance of supplies, so please plan your use of these activities ahead of time so you have plenty of time to gather the supplies and prepare the activity.

SKITS

Skits emphasizing the theme of the Bible story are included with each lesson. Generally, it's good to use the skits after the children have heard the Bible story. Older children love to perform in skits so, if you have time, you might want to gather a group of your older-age children during the week to learn the skit in order to present it to the rest of their group. Or you might recruit a skit team to present the skits each week to the younger children.

USING THE STORY IN DIFFERENT TEACHING/LEARNING FORMATS

One Room Schoolhouse (all grade-school ages together)

Unless you have a very small group of children or small group of older elementary-age children, avoid using this format with older children. Generally they resent being put in a class with younger

children and may act that out in unacceptable ways. Directions for this format in the Early Elementary guide will offer you suggestions for involving older children in this type of format.

Age-Graded Classrooms (1-2 teachers per room)

In this format you have a group of 6–10 older elementary age children in a room with one or two volunteers. With this format, all the activities are done with the whole group at the same time. Begin with the “Come Together” activity. Move to telling the Bible story using *The Story Elementary Trading Cards* and involve the children in the discussion that goes with it. Then move to the “Explore More” activities. If you choose to use the skits, integrate them into the other lesson activities in the places that seem to fit best for your classrooms.

Age-Graded Classrooms (2 or more age-specific classes with their own teachers, in one room)

You may have enough children in specific age groups to have, say, a first- or second-grade department (12 or more kids of the same age in one classroom) where kids are divided into smaller groups, each with their own teacher. There may also be someone in the classroom who oversees these teachers and classes, such as a department leader.

With this type of setting you have some choices in how you facilitate the lesson plan. You may do the “Come Together” activity either in the separate groups or as a large group. Some of the “Come Together” activities require more floor space than might be available to each smaller class. You might choose to sometimes do this activity in the large group and sometimes in the small groups depending on the activity itself. If you choose to do the activity in the large group it could be led by a teacher or the department leader.

Many of the Bible stories require movement by the children as part of hearing the story and this may require lots of classroom space. We recommend doing the Bible story in the large group setting. This could be led by the department leader or one of the other volunteers who has a talent for storytelling.

After the Bible story the children would form into small groups and complete the “Explore More” activities. Depending on your time frame, the classes may do one or all of these activities. If you choose to do only one of the “Explore More” activities you may allow your teachers to choose which one they would like to do with their particular group or you may choose the one activity for the whole group.

If you choose to use the skits, plan to have them performed after the “Explore More” activity as a way of reinforcing the point of the Bible story. Bring the children into the large group for the skits.

After this send the children and volunteers back to their small groups for the wrap-up activities.

Learning Center Model

With this teaching/learning format the children are divided into small groups who are guided by a small group leader. The small group leaders are in charge of shepherding their groups through all of the activities. The other volunteers are the Activity Center leaders. These volunteers are responsible

for the various parts of the lesson. They lead the story time. The small groups move from space to space as they move through the parts of the lesson plan. If you use this format, it might be best to have the groups do the “Come Together” activity and the Bible story at the beginning of your meeting time in the larger group of children. Then have them move through the Activity Centers. The skits become their own activity centers. If you have a lot of children and use this format, you may need to double- or triple-up on activity leaders and activity space.

Large Group/Small Group

In this teaching/learning format the children are divided into small groups led by a small group leader. All the small groups meet in one large meeting space. Large group leaders lead the whole group of children in some of the learning activities and the small group leaders lead their group in some of the activities. If you use this format with your younger-age groups, it might be best to separate out the older elementary-age children into another room so you can use the curriculum especially written for them and their interests. Then, the “Come Together” activity might be done in a combination of large groups and small groups with the small group leaders turning to their small groups with the discussion questions. Another large group leader may be the Bible story leader who leads the large group in the telling of the Bible story. The children turn back to their small groups and the small group leaders to enter into the discussion questions around the story and to use *The Story* Elementary Trading Cards. The “Explore More” activities are entered into within the small groups. The skits are another part of the large group time and are best done toward the end of the meeting time.

USING THE PARENTS’ PAGE

Christian parents want to nurture their children in God’s stories in the Bible but often they feel they don’t know how to do it. *The Story* curriculum includes a Parents’ Page for each lesson, which offers parents ideas for interacting with their entire family around the week’s Bible story.

Each Parents’ Page offers ideas for how to use these pages in the family. The points for the Bible story are included and families are given “Table Talk” questions that can be adapted for each age level. These questions can be used to explore the Bible story at the dinner table, in the car, or at other times when the family is together. Each Parents’ Page also includes a “Living the Faith” activity. This might be a game, art project, or other fun activity the whole family can engage in around the Bible story. And, lastly, these pages include an “Extra Mile” activity for those families who still crave more learning activities around the week’s Bible story.

Families do not have to do all the activities in the Parents’ Page. Some weeks they may only get to the “Table Talk” questions while other weeks they may find they have time to do more of the activities and spend more time engaging with the Bible story.

LAUNCH ACTIVITY IDEA—MEET THE AUTHORS DAY

Inspire children and their families to participate in *The Story* campaign with an exciting launch event—**Meet the Authors Day**. This event will generate interest in what families will participate in and learn at church and at home.

Meet the Authors Day is an event that brings Bible characters who wrote books of the Bible to your church. During this event, Bible authors will tell about their lives, answer questions, and even sign autographs. Small groups will rotate between the many authors, listening and participating in the presentations. Equipped with the knowledge that these authors wrote the books of the Bible they will be studying throughout the year, children are sure to be attentive and want to know more.

Get volunteers to participate in the presentation. Adjust the following roles based on how many volunteers you have. You may need to have fewer teams or each team can just include an author and stage manager.

BASIC STEPS FOR PLANNING:

1. Set your date and location, making sure you have sufficient time and space for small groups of children and adults to visit each character and participate in a story and Q&A time.
2. Get volunteers or other staff to participate in the presentation. Each team needs members to do the following responsibilities:

The Author

- Knows 3–4 different “stories” he can tell about his or her life

Understory Character

- Prepares a 1–2 minute “story” concerning their involvement with the author/character. Obeying God’s will, thanking God, or beseeching God should be paramount.
- **Possible Ideas:** David’s great-grandmother Ruth, pregnant Sarah with Abraham, the mother of the baby saved by Solomon, the three sailors who threw Jonah overboard, the gospel writers, Paul’s convert Lydia, or Cornelius

The Stage Manager

- Is responsible for everything that goes on “the stage”
- Makes sure that all costumes are secured
- Controls the conversational flow and the props for the stage
- May address the central actor, the understory actor, the facilitator, or the crowd

The Facilitator

- Controls the people who are around the area—asks if they want an autograph, do they have questions, etc. Communicates to stage manager.
1. Choose these teams in advance and give them time to prepare sets, costumes, and scripts. This could take several weeks or meetings.
 2. Have a dress rehearsal, making sure you give sufficient time for each presentation and transition from each station. People will be rotating from author to author.
 3. Create excitement and buzz about this great event.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR THE AUTHORS

- What parts of the Bible did you write?
- How long did it take you?
- What language did you use when you wrote?
- Tell us about a time when God showed you something about himself.
- Of all the important things God had you write in our Bible, what is one important message you want us to know?
- Do you think your message from a long time ago is still useful for us today?
- Was it hard to get people to listen and understand that you were working with God to help them?
- How did you feel when you first realized that God was going to use you as a helper to his people here on Earth?
- Did you want to help God right away or was it hard to obey his Word and message?
- Did your family understand the reasons behind your work and writing?

LATER ELEMENTARY EXTENSIONS

When you gather into your classes/age groups, be prepared for the children to have questions and comments about meeting the Bible authors. Discuss with them the importance of knowing something about these great and wise church leaders whom God used to communicate his Word to us and to the people of Bible times.

- Have the children work in pairs to write two or three more questions to give to the author(s) of their choice. Pass these questions on and when the author revisits the classes, have the questions addressed.
- Talk about the experience of meeting these authors. Why is it nice to meet people like this? What can you learn?
- Discuss other Bible story authors whom the children would like to meet and why. Design invitations for a particular author. Write questions that you might ask the author.
- Are there people today who are the equivalent of these Bible-time authors? Name them and explain why they would be considered similar. Do people today need the guidance that God gave through the original authors of the Bible? Why?
- Pair up the class or form small groups. Have the children write an introduction paragraph or two for a book that is filled with messages from God specifically for children today. Share with the class.

THE STORY FOR KIDS: LATER ELEMENTARY PARENT LETTER

Parents should be well aware by now that *The Story* campaign is taking place within your church. They should already understand that church leadership would like the involvement of everyone in the church family, from the youngest to the oldest.

Send home a letter to the parents of the children in your group to familiarize them with *The Story For Kids* curriculum and its highlights for their child's age/grade level. If you think it necessary, be sure

to include the fact that *The Story For Kids: Later Elementary* uses the book *The Story for Kids* as an additional resource. If your church is not providing that for your class, it may be helpful and fun for children to have it on hand at home.

The following letter, or a version of it, can be copied and pasted onto church letterhead or whatever you might use to send communications home to members. Be sure to encourage parental involvement in the children's program and follow-through at home. These two things are key to the formation of their child's faith as they move forward in the campaign.

Dear Parents:

Blessings to you and your family. Welcome to The Story for Kids! We are honored that your child is participating in The Story for Kids Curriculum.

As you may know, this program has thirty-one lessons—thirty-one beautiful messages of God's love and care for his children. Each lesson is designed to make your child completely aware of God's message through the Bible verses, Bible points, the stories, and various activities.

While we as a class explore God's Word, we encourage you to extend that exploration to your home. Share your own love of his Word with your child, talk about what you are learning in your class, allow your child time to freely talk and ask questions about what they are learning. Be sure to encourage your child to share Activity Sheets or to tell you the Bible story that has been highlighted each week. Even allow him to tell you about some of the discussions that have taken place and continue them at dinner or family reflection time. Look for the weekly Parents' Page. Read and do some of the included activities each week.

This is a family experience. God is the all-loving Father; we are his children. As The Story unfolds for all of us here at _____ share the experience with your child. We have been blessed with this incredible story! Let's help make our children incredible and faith-filled storytellers.

God's blessings,

LESSON PLANNING

Prepare in advance for your class. When you prepare in advance, you will be more comfortable with the material, which will allow children to get the most from the lesson. Children can ask questions that do not have easy or immediate answers. In your preparation, try to prepare for questions your class may ask. If you do not know the answer, do not make up an answer. Share with your class that you do not know, and either look for the answer together or find the answer after class.

Seasoned teachers as well as new ones may find a lesson plan very helpful. Information from the teacher lesson pages can be summarized into keywords and a glance at the plan will help if you get

distracted. A lesson plan is also helpful for the volunteers or helpers in your classroom, so they are as aware as you are what the intentions are for the day's lesson.

As a teacher of elementary-age children, you already know children are very literal and want answers but the older they get the more they want to stretch their imaginations and challenge you as the teacher with their ideas and questions.

- Later elementary children can think beyond the facts and details to understand that there is more to the story than what they can see. Challenge them by asking questions that make children think and that possibly don't have a right answer. Help them to distinguish between the facts of the story and the assumptions we make.
- Challenge older children to apply the Bible point or verse to their lives by analyzing the verses and thinking about how the verses could apply to their daily lives. Children can rewrite verses or points in their own words or perform Bible stories as skits, songs, or raps. Challenge children to evaluate the choices made by Bible characters and to think about how different choices could have affected the outcome.
- Relate things right back to them; children, no matter what age, are naturally egocentric and love it when things are related back to them.
- Take into consideration that there are many learning styles. Some children love to listen to stories being read, others love moving around and participating in the telling. Still others want to be creative and draw or sculpt Bible characters or ideas. Make use of the variety of options that are provided in the lesson pages. And be sure to add your ideas onto your lesson plan template.
- Review, review, review. Go over the Bible point and verse many times. Don't stick to just the activity options that are here, but be creative. Dance, sing, clap, shout, and whisper the words and ideas so that your class can more easily remember the details. This works for students of every age.

THE STORY FOR KIDS LATER ELEMENTARY LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE

Week _____

BIBLE POINT TO TEACH:

General Goal(s):

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

STEP-BY-STEP PROCEDURES:

Come Together

Hear the Word

EXPLORE MORE

SUGGESTIONS FOR INDEPENDENT/AT HOME PRACTICE:

CLOSURE (SKIT?):

ADAPTATIONS (FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES):

EXTENSIONS (FOR GIFTED STUDENTS):