

PRESCHOOL LEADER'S 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 story. Families will have the opportunity to talk around 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 preschool 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 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 PRESCHOOLERS

Each lesson for preschoolers includes several components. Some of these parts are essential for the efficacy of each lesson and the use of other parts of the curriculum is at your discretion which may be dependent upon your time frame and teaching/learning format.

The Bible Story

The stories for preschoolers are designed to engage the young child in the story through movement, simple songs, and other uses of the five senses. It is important to use these activities in the stories because they will help the young children enter into a Bible in a way that will engage their attention and aid in retention of the story.

The Teaching/Learning Activities

Each preschool lesson includes two teaching/learning activities other than the Bible story. The first is called "Come Together." Each of these activities is designed to capture and focus the child's attention on the theme and the Bible story of the day. No matter what your time frame, it is important to use the "Come Together" activities. They help the children to ease into the lesson time and separate from what they were doing prior to the class beginning. These activities require little or no supplies.

Each lesson includes several "Explore More" activities. These are to be used after the Bible story has been told. These activities are designed to help the young children enter into a part of the Bible story in an active and creative way. You do not need to do all of these activities. You may choose to do one that is most appropriate to your group, meeting space, and volunteer's abilities. If you have time and space to engage the children in more activities you are certainly free to do so.

Please be aware that many of the "Explore More" activities require supplies and/or advance preparation. Be sure to plan accordingly.

SKITS

An age-appropriate skit illustrating the point of the Bible story is included with each preschool lesson. The script can be used as either a live drama or as a puppet show. The use of these skits is dependent upon your time frame and volunteer staff. If it is possible to recruit a drama team for your preschoolers, they could be responsible for presenting the skits to the preschoolers each week. The proper place to insert the skits in the lesson will be discussed later. If you choose to use the skits during your teaching/learning time with young children remember to help them connect the theme of the skit back to the point of the Bible story. Young children may be unable to do this on their own.

USING THE STORY IN DIFFERENT TEACHING/LEARNING FORMATS

We realize that churches use a variety of classroom teaching/learning formats. *The Story* curriculum is designed with enough flexibility to be able to work in most of those formats.

All Age Preschoolers Together

Your church may not have enough preschoolers to create separate age-level groups. You can use *The Story* curriculum with your preschoolers as long as you remember a few things. There is a world of difference between the abilities of a two year old and a five year old, so as you look over the learning activities you may need to pick and choose according to the average age in your group. Or, you may find that you need to adapt the activities slightly in order to make them fit the developmental abilities of your group. If your group is mostly made up of younger preschoolers you might choose to do only one of the “Explore More” options because it takes them longer to complete activities. You also might want to allow some free playtime with a group of very young children.

Feel free to experiment as you try to discover the right mix of activities for your particular group. That’s OK. You’ll get it right. Just remember, if you use the skits it is recommended they be added to the lesson time at the end—perhaps before the “Going Home” activity.

Even if your group of preschoolers is small you should always plan to have two teachers or a teacher and a helper with your group each week. If you have teachers and helpers who job share, make sure they know each other and talk with each other about issues of classroom management. This consistency in the classroom is important for all preschoolers’ sense of safety and trust and will ensure an environment that is conducive to their spiritual development.

Age-Level Graded Preschool Classes

Your church might have enough preschoolers to divide them into age-level groups: 2’s & 3’s; 4’s & 5’s or even classes for 2’s, 3’s, 4’s, and 5’s. *The Story* curriculum may be used in this type of preschool classroom format. You may need to think about simplifying some of the activities for the younger preschool groups.

Your teachers may walk through the lesson with the preschoolers the way it is laid out in the curriculum, choosing to use one or all of the “Explore More” activities. If you use the skits it is recommended they be added to the lesson time at the end, before the “Going Home” activity.

Learning Center Model

In this model your volunteers have different kinds of responsibilities in the classroom. Each volunteer has only one job to do during the lesson. This model will work with the two formats discussed above. You may have volunteers who have the responsibility of being shepherds or guides with the preschool children. Their major responsibility is to be with the children—talking with them, playing with them, and helping them with their learning activities. The shepherds would also be responsible for the “Come Together” and “Going Home” parts of each lesson. Your other volunteers have the responsibilities of storyteller, “Explore More” activity leader, and skit leader (if you choose to use the skits). So the storyteller tells the story each week. The “Explore More” activity center leader leads one or all of the “Explore More” activities each week. And the skit leader works to pull a team together to present the skits each week.

If you have all your preschoolers together in one group as described above, volunteers might double up on some of the jobs. For example, your storyteller might also be the person who produces the skits each week or leads the “Explore More” activity. One of your shepherds or guides might also be the “Explore More” activity center leader.

If you have age-level graded preschool classes this model will work differently. Each age level group will have its own shepherds or guides who stay with the young children for the whole meeting time. They are there to greet the children as they arrive and see that they are properly picked up when it is time to go home. They sit with the children during story and skits, helping to keep order and the children's attention focused on the activity. They are also available to remove a child from the group if that should become necessary. Your activity center leaders move from group to group leading them in their particular learning activity on a particular schedule. This may mean that some children do the "Explore More" activities before they hear the story. Young children do not think and learn in a linear way so as long as connection is made to the point of this lesson you can involve them in activities in any particular order. However, if you really feel they need the story before they are involved in any of the other activities simply start your time together with all your preschoolers in one room so they all hear the story at the same time. Then rotate your activity leaders through the various age levels. The other option is to recruit more than one storyteller for each week.

Large Group/Small Group

This is a teaching/learning format that involves the young children in both large group and small group activities. Your volunteers either help lead the group in large group activities or are responsible for leading a small group of preschoolers in other activities. As the children enter your meeting space they immediately sit down with their small group leader. It is at this point the small group leader leads them in the "Come Together" time as a way of focusing the children on the point of the lesson. Then the large group leaders might take over. It is time for "Hear the Story." The storyteller leads the large group in the day's Bible story. After the Bible story, the children return to their small groups where their small group leader leads them in one or all of the "Explore More" activities. When those activities are finished the children might move back into the large group for the skits. The "Going Home" activity is best done in the small groups as the children wait to be picked up by their parents.

USING THE PARENTS' PAGE

Christian parents do 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 lots of 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 includes a "Living the Faith" activity. This also 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 AUTHOR DAY

To inspire the children and their families to participate in *The Story* campaign, here is an exciting launch event idea. It is sure to generate interest in what the families will be participating in within their church as well as home.

Meet the Authors Day is an event when the church is visited by Bible characters that have written books of the Bible. During this event, Bible authors will tell about their lives, answer questions that have been drafted by staff as well as questions from the children, and even autograph pages from the Bible book they wrote. Small groups will rotate between the many authors, listening and participating in the presentations. Equipped with the knowledge that these are authors of the books of the Bible that they will be studying throughout the coming church year, children are sure to be attentive and want to know more.

Get volunteers to participate in the presentation. Adjust the 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” that 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 well in advance and give them time to prepare what will be needed. This could take a week or two of meetings. Sets, costumes, and scripts need to be prepared.
 2. Have a dress rehearsal, making sure you give sufficient time for each presentation and allow transition time 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?

Preschool 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 that God used to communicate his Word to us and to the people of Bible times.

- Talk about the names of the people. Are the names a little unusual?
- Talk about the main ideas of the writings.
- Choose one author and have the children draw a picture of him or her, labeling it with the name of the character. Talk about this one message.
- Have the children design and draw thank you notes for the Bible characters or have one large card folded and ready for the class to decorate and sign.
- Have volunteers pretend to be an author and tell the class what they remember about the one they choose.

THE STORY FOR LITTLE ONES: PRESCHOOL 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.

It is suggested that you send home a letter to the parents of the children in your group to familiarize them with the curriculum program and its highlights for their child's age/grade level. If you think it necessary, be sure to include the fact that the curriculum uses as an additional resource the storybook Bible, *The Story for Little Ones*. If your church does not provide a copy for your class, it may be helpful and fun for children to have one onhand at home.

The letter on the following page, or a version of it, can be cut and pasted onto church letterhead or whatever you might use to send home communications 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 all of you and your families! Welcome to The Story for Preschoolers! We are pleased and honored that your child is with us and going to be participating in The Story for Little Ones 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 so that your child will be made completely aware of God's message in each one 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 homes. Share your own love of his Word with your child, talk about what you are learning in your adult classes, allow your child time to freely talk about and ask questions about what is being learned. Be sure to encourage sharing of the activity sheets or have your child tell you the Bible story that has been highlighted each week. Even allow him to teach you movements and responses he has learned in class to help bring the stories to life! Look for the weekly Parents' Page. Read and do some of the activities that will be a part of the Parent Page sent home 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

Be prepared before your class begins! That is a very important rule for any teacher of any subject, but teaching faith can be extra challenging. There are questions that can be asked that do not have easy or immediate answers, but children, especially young ones, demand answers. Formulating a lesson plan can help in this.

Seasoned teachers as well as new ones can find a plan very helpful. Information from the 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 preschoolers, you already know this ... young children are very literal and they want answers!

- Be sure to stick to facts. Ask questions that are about the facts and details of the story you are teaching on a given day.
- Relate things right back to them; children 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. Dance, sing, clap, shout, and whisper the words and ideas so that your class can more easily remember the details.

THE STORY FOR LITTLE ONES: PRESCHOOL 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):