

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND INSTRUCTION FOR SEVENTH
AND EIGHTH GRADE RELIGION SURVEYING THE OLD AND NEW
TESTAMENTS: WALKING THE PATH OF OUR SALVATION

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the curricula and instructional methodologies used in seventh and eighth grade classrooms in teaching religion. With the middle school years being a transformational stage of development as seventh and eighth graders develop cognitively, physically, socially and spiritually, the religion classroom is an ideal place to implement curricular and instructional strategies which exploit these opportunities for both intellectual and spiritual growth.

By evaluating which components of a curriculum and which teaching techniques may be used to achieve appropriate spiritual and intellectual goals, this study demonstrates suitable ways to determine the material to be taught, the methods of teaching and methods of evaluation. Based on the findings in these areas, the author developed a religion curriculum surveying the Old and New Testaments to be completed over the course of two years entitled “Walking the Path of Our Salvation.”

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INTRODUCTION

The seventh and eighth grade religion teacher faces a great challenge. When it comes to teaching math or science or literature there are certain standards and expectations that must be met. Federal regulations demand standardized testing to assure that students acquire a specific level of proficiency to meet the requirements necessary for advancement. But knowledge of the Bible does not show up as a testable item on the ACT or SAT. When it comes to the content of religion class, it is the Lord who decides what is to be taught—his Word. He wants his children to know the sacred Scriptures, but which parts of them? How does a teacher decide what a student should learn in God’s Word? This question has surely been asked not only in recent decades gone by but also throughout the history of the Church. The first people to wrestle with this question were Adam and Eve. In New Testament times, the Lord Jesus gave this command to his followers: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”¹ How much of “everything” do we need to teach our students? Furthermore, how do we teach it? To state those questions in another way: what kind of a Bible study religion curriculum will accomplish the spiritual and intellectual goals for seventh and eighth grade students? A Bible study religion curriculum that covers the entire Bible in two years and is designed carefully and specifically for this age group will reach these goals.

Because there is no current seventh and eighth grade religion curriculum which takes students through a systematic study of each book of the Bible and because great value can be gained through such an approach, the author set out to develop a curriculum that seeks to accomplish the spiritual and intellectual goals for seventh and eighth grade students. When students read selections from the whole Bible, one book at a time, they will be exposed to all sorts of new blessings and all kinds of new challenges. The students will have the opportunity to see that God’s love in Christ is what holds the Scriptures together. They will be able to *walk the path of our salvation* from Genesis to Revelation and see the beauty that God has woven in the tapestry of his Word. This curriculum development was accompanied by an investigation of appropriate methods of instruction that will promote more effective and relevant learning. The goal of these methods is to make God’s Word as real and important to students as possible. Not

¹ Matthew 28:19

only is such a curriculum utilized with such methods feasible, it can and has been successful and well-received by teachers, parents, and students.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Considerations in Constructing a Curriculum

The WELS has sought to attain these spiritual and intellectual goals in a number of different ways. In an interview conducted with Professor emeritus David Kuske, he explained what religious instruction was like in years gone by. To describe the state of uniformity across the Synod, he quoted a passage from the book of Judges: “‘Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.’ Some schools used a red Bible history book (*Children’s Bible History*), some schools used a curriculum from other synods, but most schools just did whatever they thought was right. For a lot of schools, that wasn’t right.”² Undoubtedly, the Word of the Lord was heard and edified thousands of souls, but there was a need to improve the curriculum and instruction in the classrooms of our Lutheran elementary schools.

Survey of Curricula

During those “days of the Judges,” there was another course used in WELS that took a holistic approach to the study of Scripture. In 1977, Julian G. Anderson presented the Wisconsin Synod with a course entitled, “The Story of Jesus the Messiah.” Aimed specifically at sixth, seventh and eighth graders, this curriculum consisted of 32 lessons from the Old Testament, 32 lessons from the gospels and 32 lessons from Acts and the Letters. This course took strides forward in presenting the whole Bible to students by giving them a glimpse of how the books of the Bible fit together and how the Scriptures point to Christ. Although many souls surely benefited from “The Story of Jesus the Messiah,” the course was only used for a short time and only in some places. As it disappeared from circulation, it seems that Anderson’s whole Bible approach to religious instruction for young adolescents went out with it.³

It was the South Atlantic District that memorialized Synod to develop a new, integrated curriculum that would span the grades of pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. This

² David Kuske (Professor emeritus of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary). Interview by author. Jackson, WI, October 20, 2011.

³ Ibid.

curriculum became known as “Christ-Light” and it has benefitted the Wisconsin Synod greatly. It added needed structure in the religion classrooms of our Lutheran elementary schools. For the first eight grades, pre-kindergarten through sixth grade, this course of study rotated between Old and New Testament history, focusing on the central stories and presenting Jesus Christ as the focus of the Bible. The premise was that one year the students would study the New Testament and then the next year they would handle the Old Testament. Every time, students would expand their horizons a little farther and dig a little deeper into the texts that were selected for study.

Once the students reached the seventh grade, they were exposed to a different aspect of the Scriptures. “The premise was that they would have gone through the Old Testament and New Testament Bible history stories three times. Seventh and eighth grade really was topical and concentrated on catechism.”⁴ The topics presented in seventh and eighth grade range from things of a topical nature such as “What Is Truth” or “How Can I Get Along Better...” to Bible studies of books such as First and Second Peter. These studies allow teachers or even students to choose what they would like to cover in upper-grade religion class.

Even with this vast improvement, a tremendous upgrade from what most teachers were doing before, Professor Kuske did not believe Christ-Light accomplished all the goals he had set for it. “I think from first through eighth grade it did really accomplish what it was intended to do. Ninth through twelfth, I don’t think it really accomplished what the South Atlantic District was aiming at and I think what a lot of people in Synod were hoping would happen.”⁵ Christ-Light has not been implemented in any of our Lutheran high schools. Professor Kuske admitted that things needed to be revised and had been revised both in the primary grades and in the high school curriculum. The next revision of “Christ-Light” will become available upon establishing the Bible translation that our Synod will use for future publications.

Another resource that is used in some Lutheran elementary schools and many Sunday schools is Concordia Publishing House’s “Growing in Christ.” This curriculum follows the lectionary of the church year. In a three year cycle, the students cover Genesis through Esther once, the book of Acts once, and the gospels three times. The sequence is chronological,

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

alternating between the Old and New Testaments. This curriculum has many advantages with its systematic approach to the study of Scripture.

A forthcoming curriculum from Concordia Publishing House aimed at grades six through eight, "One in Christ," makes use of both a chronological approach to Scripture while also interspersing a topical approach. The Concordia website makes this claim: "Grade 6 and 8 materials contain 100 Bible stories that take students chronologically through the Bible. Grade 7 is a thematic level that emphasizes biblical themes that explore the elements of the Six Chief Parts of Christian Doctrine. These levels emphasize reflection, discussion, and application to help students grow in discipleship as they study God's Word and apply it to their daily lives."⁶ When this curriculum becomes available in the spring of 2012, its strengths and weaknesses will better be understood and the feasibility for its use in WELS schools can be determined.

With all these curricula that are good, is there a need for creating a new course? Won't these Bible study religion curricula accomplish the appropriate spiritual and intellectual goals for seventh and eighth grade students? While there are many blessings and benefits that these courses of study have given to God's Church, there still is an element missing from several of the aforementioned curricula. Most Bible study material is front heavy on the first books of the Old and New Testaments, specifically Genesis, Exodus and the gospels. Such a wealth of material—treasures from God's Word—is recorded in those books. Truly, they are worth a great amount of time and a great amount of attention. However, it stands to reason that God had a reason in giving us all sixty-six books. Too often, students of the Bible dismiss the idea of studying the whole of Scripture and when they do, they leave certain treasure troves untapped.

Christians today are not familiar with the Psalter, they cannot distinguish between a major and a minor prophet and there are certain books of the Bible whose names they cannot pronounce—let alone give a short synopsis of the themes and events presented in the book.⁷ Lutherans are not the only Christians struggling with a correct understanding of the purpose and

⁶ "One in Christ," Concordia Publishing House. Accessed November 26, 2011.

<http://www.cph.org/t-topic-OneinChrist-grade6-8.aspx>

⁷ Collin Hansen "Why Johnny can't read the Bible: most Americans--including scripture-loving evangelicals--cannot name the disciples, the ten commandments, or the first book of the Bible: but that's not our biggest biblical illiteracy problem." *Christianity Today* 54, no. 5 (May 1, 2010): 38. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed November 26, 2011).

place of the Scriptures in our lives. Gary Burge explains his struggles in “The Greatest Story Never Read:”

I have had friends tell me that a working knowledge of the Bible does not matter. The Christian faith, they argue, is a matter of faith and the Spirit—not reason, not theology. Christianity is not about the recitation of facts about the Jesus of history; it is about knowing the living Christ, the Jesus of the church who indwells his people today. The facts of the Bible are the stuff of academic exercises, reserved for the doctors and leaders of the church.⁸

This Baptist theologian points to a very Lutheran solution when he speaks about having a working knowledge of the Bible,

The reformation was at the least a reminder of what is the ultimate source of authority in Christian thought and life. Throughout the sixteenth century, Luther argued passionately that the Scriptures are not only the sole basis for faith, but they are accessible to every person, even commoners. Hence, a person possessing a sound understanding of the Old Testament and New Testament could tap spiritual wisdom more accurately than any bishop. The Scriptures were a divine resource, Luther urged, a guide to truth unavailable anywhere else. To disregard this resource—to neglect the Bible—is to remove the chief authority on which our faith is built.⁹

When it comes to reading Scripture, we read through a vast terrain, a beautiful landscape. There are rivers and mountains and valleys and plains. It is true that all of Scripture is important, but not all of Scripture has the same level of importance. A reader will be blessed to go through the chronologies of the lives and histories of the people of faith in the past. A study of the precision of counting and accounting for all the items in the temple or tabernacle brings God’s attention to detail to light. However, it must be said that—while all Scripture is valuable—not every Scripture holds the same value. Some books more than others present a clearer picture and a sharper focus of God’s plan of salvation. But if students are never given the opportunity to study the whole of Scripture formally, they will not be allowed to see the full beauty of the landscape that the Lord presents in his Word. When one opens the book of Joel, locusts pour off the pages, depicting God’s judgment. The tender story presented in the book of Ruth sheds light on the hope of the coming Savior written in the same time period as the dark and gruesome days of the Judges. Accompanying Paul on his missionary journeys on the book of Acts puts students

⁸ Gary M. Burge "The Greatest Story Never Read : Recovering biblical literacy in the church." *Christianity Today* 43, no. 9: 47. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed November 26, 2012).

⁹ Burge, Gary M, *The Greatest Story Never Read*, 47

in the same boat with one of the world's greatest missionaries as he goes with the gospel. The Pastoral Epistles help all students of God's Word to grow in reverence and respect for the Word and those whom God has called to be ministers of it. Ezekiel and Revelation give us glimpses of the glory that await all believers in heaven. The Bible has so much to offer; this religion curriculum simply seeks to present some of the lesser-known jewels contained in the Bible.

While it may be readily admitted that a curriculum of this nature, a curriculum which takes an isagogic approach to the study of the Bible, which must certainly take some of the high-points of Scripture at a very fast pace has its flaws, there is also a flaw in leaving entire books of the Bible untouched. Every book of the Bible is profitable, relevant, and worthwhile both for the student and for the teacher. The less frequently read books of the Bible do not need to be treated like they are obscure or occult. Professor emeritus Darwin Raddatz describes how even the message of the minor prophets has relevancy in classrooms today, "Never has the message of the Minor Prophets been irrelevant but never more relevant than today."¹⁰ "The Minor Prophets are now laid bare for intensive study by people who are not language experts. This should prove a great blessing for the devotional life of the teacher and also for the devotional life of his children."¹¹ While there are certainly limitations to an isagogic, whole Bible approach to the study of Scripture, the benefits outweigh them.

But what is the motivation behind designing a new curriculum? It is not simply to advocate change just for the sake of change. "The primary motivation for improving Bible curriculum is to increase its impact on students."¹² God's Word always has an impact on its hearers; he wills it to transform their very lives. His Word impacts people by saving them, rescuing them from the shackles of sin and freeing them for righteousness, by changing their status in God's eyes from enemies to children. The effect that God's Word has on the lives of its readers is eternal; not only does it give the hope of heaven but it offers and gives eternal life itself. As the religion teacher undertakes the task of wielding that Word of God he will seek to present the Bible in ways which promote spiritual and intellectual growth, having an eternal

¹⁰ Darwin Raddatz, *The Minor Prophets Cry to the Christian Teacher Today* (WLS essay file, October 22, 1982), 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹² Kenneth O. Gangel and Howard G. Hendricks, eds., *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Teaching* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), 52.

impact. Since a religion teacher surely desires that a Bible curriculum increases its impact on students, we would do well to examine what is happening in the lives of those students.

The Learners

At this point in the lives of the learners, students are bursting with energy at one moment and having trouble staying awake in the next. They seem to eat from the moment they get home from school until they are ready to go to bed.¹³ The bodies of seventh and eighth graders are undergoing substantial changes at an alarming rate. Fifth and sixth grade desks will not get the job done, the C team basketball jerseys just do not work anymore; boys are becoming men and girls are becoming women. Words like “growth spurt” and “puberty” and “hormones” litter the literature that treats the topic of adolescents’ physical growth. More so now than at any other time in a person’s life, young men and young women are dissatisfied with their body’s appearance.¹⁴ The very nature of the rapid changes of the adolescent body leaves the door wide open for the stability and consistency which comes from the changeless Word of God.

The physical changes that are taking place in their bodies illustrate the radical changes that are taking place in the mind. A young adolescent’s way of thinking changes drastically as students move from the concrete to the formal operation stage of intellectual development.¹⁵ The concrete operational stage is marked by the emergence of logical thinking. Normally a child reaches this stage between the ages of seven and eleven years. The child can now coordinate part-whole relationships dealing with concrete things; however, the child still cannot process abstract or conceptual ideas in sequence¹⁶. The formal operations stage is typically reached at the age of eleven and continues throughout adulthood. During this stage the person moves through puberty into adolescence. The comprehension of concepts extends to ideas that are represented symbolically and theoretically. The ability to formulate hypotheses, trace ideas to conclusion and to handle difficult operations that deal with ideas and concepts rather than with

¹³ Dave F. Brown and Trudy Knowles, *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know*, 2nd ed. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2007), 23.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁵ Steve Fortosis and Ken Garland. "Adolescent cognitive development, Piaget's idea of disequilibrium, and the issue of Christian nurture." *Religious Education* 85, no. 4 (September 1, 1990): 632. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed February 21, 2012).

¹⁶ Jean Piaget, *The Psychology of Intelligence* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950), 147.

concrete matter¹⁷. Furthermore, they are beginning to see the big picture in life, to plan for the future and explore the past to search for answers in their present lives. This growing ability to think about the hypothetical presents new opportunities for students to engage their minds and promotes growth and diversification in the way they think about the life of sanctification.

Their growing mental capabilities open up a whole new world of possibilities when it comes to putting an appropriate learning experience before them. “Young adolescents need meaningful, challenging learning experiences in order to develop and sustain cognitive growth processes. Cognitive processing won’t improve or develop as well if students are consistently taking notes or memorizing dates without opportunities to make genuine connections between content and experiences.”¹⁸ Keeping up with the challenge of keeping students challenged makes this an exciting time to be a teacher. Furthermore, seventh and eighth graders are as curious as they are ambitious. “With their developing capacity for abstract thinking, middle school students are curious about life and highly inquisitive about everything life has to offer. They challenge principles that don’t fit their view of the way things work.”¹⁹ The religion teacher has an optimal opportunity to push students to new levels as they present many new and different approaches to learning in order to maximize the student’s potential. For example, challenging students to read from new locations in the Bible and evaluate secondary sources based on the Scripture they read engages their intellect in an intriguing way. Having students lead discussions and give presentations fosters opportunities for them to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the abstract concepts presented in the Word of God.

As the students undergo physical and mental growth, their emotional development also hits a new plateau. With their new God-given capabilities, students begin to search for who God has made them. For some students, the search for identity is more than difficult; it can be traumatic. Students also are developing socially as they strive for a sense of balance between social dependency and a desire for independence. For as much as they want to be part of a group, adolescents want to be someone themselves. They may imagine that there is an audience constantly watching their every move. This constant vulnerability leads to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem and worthlessness, as Johnson states, “The emotions of

¹⁷ Ibid., 151.

¹⁸ Brown and Knowles, *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know*, 27.

¹⁹ Ibid, 34

adolescence—whether worthlessness, rebellion, turmoil, disappointment, outrage, anxiety, guilt or shame—are strong. Even though these emotions are not foreign to children, their new intensity and the way they tend to gang up on a teen make adolescence a period of relative emotional instability.²⁰ Their own thinking, which has developed the capabilities of hypothetical conceptualization, at times cannot manage to break through the barrier cast in their mind’s eye of what they see as reality and objective reality.²¹ In other words, although students of this age are struggling to figure out who they are and where they fit in this world, it can be difficult for them to see themselves and life in general from another perspective, especially God’s perspective. Since the old Adam and the new man are constantly at war with one another in the lives of all believers, young adolescents constantly need to hear the reassuring voice of Scripture as they wrestle with the questions of who they are and who God has made them. Here the teacher is blessed with opportunities to form and mold the life of a student by leading them to Christ’s deep and changeless love. In “Walking the Path of Our Salvation” students accompany the God who demonstrates his faithful love from the beginning of time until its end as they read about salvation history in the sacred Scriptures. The selected chapters in this curriculum constantly point students to Christ.

In terms of the spiritual development of seventh and eighth graders, most students have been exposed to the truth of the Bible even before entering the school for formal study. It is increasingly true, however, that some students in the seventh and eighth grades have not been brought up in a Lutheran elementary school throughout the entire course of their education. Yet for the majority of students, the teaching they have received has focused on the works and words of Jesus as they are recorded in the gospels, many lessons from the Old Testament, perhaps a study of the book of Acts and possibly a few of Paul’s Epistles. In general, they have gone back and forth between the Old and New Testaments on a path that has all kinds of merges, U-turns and even a few rough patches. Without a doubt, there are many books of the Bible that are still completely unmapped for them. Such a disjointed view of Scripture may hinder students from understanding the Bible as a unified whole. Furthermore, ignoring sections of Scripture may promote both ignorance and apathy toward the Word. This may also give the impression that the

²⁰ Rex E. Johnson, *Youth Education in the Church: Middle Adolescence* (Chicago: Moody, 1978), 137.

²¹ Brown and Knowles, *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know*, 27.

Bible may be read selectively, thus confirming the tendency that middle school students have to hear and read selectively. While repetition is the mother of all learning, presenting new material in a logical, systematic way will broaden their scope of Scripture and the knowledge of God's Word.

Another contribution to the spiritual development of seventh and eighth graders is the addition of catechism class. This new course of study takes them through a systematic examination of the doctrines presented in Scripture. Learning the Catechism also exploits the developing minds of these young adolescents as they tackle abstract concepts such as universal atonement and the two natures of Christ and as they memorize the basic truths of the Christian faith. Since the Catechism is taught concurrently with a religion course, this tandem teaching experience affords an excellent opportunity for leaps and bounds of growth in wisdom, knowledge and depth of insight into the treasury of sacred Scripture. When looking face to face at that gruesome image of the cross that Scripture thrusts onto its pages as students study vicarious atonement, they could make connections that they had not seen before, being barraged by imagery from the Old Testament—the Passover lamb, the Day of Atonement, the Bronze Serpent—and hearing the words of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah ring out from the recesses of their minds, “He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities.”²² Students could reap tremendous benefits if they learned these truths of Scripture not only in a catechetical way, but also from the context in which they appear in Scripture. An opportunity to read through the entire Bible while simultaneously undertaking a systematic study of Christian doctrine as it is presented in the Catechism will give focus to both materials and enlighten the learner.

With the development of seventh and eighth graders, there is a perfect storm which converges upon their growing bodies and their growing minds, their ability to reason and think abstractly, their inquisitive nature and the desire for a challenge, their search for meaning and identity in life, and the foundations of Scriptural truths which have been laid in their lives and upon which they continue to build. Young adolescents face a multitude of changes throughout these years, and these changes have a significant impact on the rest of their lives. The religion

²² Isaiah 53:5

teacher is blessed to have the distinct honor and high privilege of engaging these curious and ambitious minds with the Word of the Most High.

All of these factors contributed to the development of “Walking the Path of Our Salvation,” a Bible study course that is intended to teach and challenge this particular age level by merit of its nature and content. It is not different from what currently exists simply in order to be different, but rather to provide for the unique needs of seventh and eighth graders. With this in mind, “Walking the Path of Our Salvation” is a curriculum designed to introduce seventh and eighth graders to the whole of Scripture, every book of the Bible, so as to present to them a broad scope of God’s Word over the course of two years. The aim of the course is not to teach children to know the endless lists of genealogies, to recite the ten plagues in order and to know where every item is located in the tabernacle, not to be able to arrange the twelve sons of Judah in chronological order from memory or to have an acute understanding of biblical geography. The goal of this course is to make the Bible the people’s book as student and teacher alike walk the path of salvation from Genesis to Revelation.

The Goals of the Curriculum

With such drastic changes in so many areas of their lives, seventh and eighth graders are able to accomplish all kinds of objectives they had previously been unable to attain. With this in mind, the religion teacher must establish objectives which correspond with the students’ capabilities and provide appropriate learning opportunities, challenges and goals. While goals for a religion course could be infinite in number, there are several goals which hallmark Lutheran and biblical theology. Not all of the goals presented are unique to a whole-Bible approach but they are nonetheless essential for students of the Word and incorporated in the curriculum “Walking the Path of Our Salvation.” Seven goals are listed which focus on the knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures and the application of those Scriptures to their daily lives as the students walk with Jesus on the path of their salvation.

1. The students know sacred truths of Scripture from every book of the Bible.

Christians today live at a time when the Word is more accessible than ever. A person can carry around the whole Bible on an iPad, on a Kindle or even on a cell phone. One can download the entire text of the Bible from the Internet, choosing from hundreds of translations.

A person can carry any one of those translations with her or him and fit the whole thing on a square-inch iPod shuffle and listen to it at any time of any day. The early church fathers must have longed for these days. In Luther's day, the Latin Bible was chained down in the library, inaccessible to the common man both because of its scarcity and the people's illiteracy. The times have certainly changed.

While it is true that the Bible is more accessible than ever before, that does not mean that people are more knowledgeable about it than they were in the past. Recent surveys suggest that "Fewer than half of all adults can name the four gospels. Many Christians cannot identify more than two or three of the disciples. According to data from the Barna Research Group, 60% of Americans can't name even five of the Ten Commandments."²³ However, this is not just true about the general public. Even students studying for the public ministry show more and more symptoms of biblical illiteracy. In an article touching on this topic, Gary Burge writes in "The Greatest Story Never Read" concerning incoming freshmen at Wheaton College in Illinois,

The Bible has become a springboard for personal piety and meditation, not a book to be read. These students very likely know that David killed Goliath, but they don't know why he did it or that Goliath was a Philistine or who the Philistines were. When asked to complete a test in which a series of biblical events must be placed in order, our students returned surprising results. One-third of the freshmen could not put the following in order: Abraham, the Old Testament prophets, the death of Christ, and Pentecost. Half could not sequence: Moses in Egypt, Isaac's birth, Saul's death, and Judah's exile. One-third could not identify Matthew as an apostle from a list of New Testament names. When asked to locate the biblical book supplying a given story, one-third could not find Paul's travels in Acts, half did not know that the Christmas story was in Matthew or that the Passover story was in Exodus.²⁴

These figures are simply staggering. A question that the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod must contemplate is this: would WELS students do any better?

If a student has attended a Lutheran elementary school from kindergarten through 6th grade, that student has had great exposure to the Word of God. Their parents have trained them up in the fear of the Lord and in the knowledge of God through their own instruction in the home and by giving them opportunities to further study the Word of God in a Lutheran elementary

²³ R. Albert Mohler. *The Scandal of Biblical Illiteracy: It's Our Problem*. Accessed November 29, 2011. <http://digital.library.sbts.edu/handle/10392/2545>.

²⁴ Burge, Gary M, *The Greatest Story Never Read*, 45.

school and Sunday school. They have had both formal and informal opportunities to grow as God's children. They have repeatedly heard and reheard, read and reread the gospels. They have studied the happenings that took place at the beginning of time and also taken a look at what will happen at the end of time. Throughout their course of study God's Word has shaped them, molded them and fashioned their minds and lives. While there are always greater depths that can be mined in the Scriptures, there is also a greater breadth of the Bible which can be explored. With the minds of seventh and eighth graders as capable as they have ever been, it is practical to consider expanding their horizons and giving them a fuller view of the Scriptures. The way that a person becomes fluent in reading is to read. In the same way that a child grows in the ability to read is by reading, so the only way that a child can grow as a student of God's Word is to study it.

But what is the point of studying every book of the Bible? There are a number of different reasons why a comprehensive study of the Bible which includes every book is beneficial. It was the Lord's will to give sixty-six books of his inspired Word. Every book has a message that is relevant, practical and engaging. Furthermore, although the individual books of the Bible were written and recorded throughout a period consisting of thousands of years, the end result is a beautiful tapestry woven tightly together. It is not coincidence that Scripture records that man's world begins in the Garden of Eden and ends in God's Garden. It is not happenstance that the end of the book of Revelation plagiarizes from the beginning of the book of Genesis. The Holy Spirit shows how he has woven the threads of the Scriptures together into the most beautiful piece of literature known to mankind. It is a disservice to Scripture when it is only ever presented as patchwork.

Lutheran theology teaches the biblical doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, that Scripture alone interprets Scripture. Since this is the case, students that only have a narrow view of Scripture will not grasp the fullness of this doctrine. Generally speaking, the minor prophets and their voices which cry out have been neglected. The pastoral epistles and the insight they bring in dealing with struggles in churches and the Church have been overlooked. They have either been left as proof passages for the Catechism or completely in the dark. If students are becoming less and less biblically literate, teachers who chose their course of study must share in that responsibility. It is wise to be diligent in exposing children to the exposition of the Scriptures in

order to expand their biblical horizons. When the whole Bible is taught, students will see for themselves and investigate on their own that the message from Genesis to Revelation teaches salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

Lastly, many students that attend a Lutheran grade school will not go on to attend a Lutheran high school. They will go to schools where Christianity is not accepted in name or in practice, places where their faith will be tried and tested. Certainly students of our schools ought to be trained to be students of the Bible as they go out into the world. Students need to understand that they do not need to have a theological degree to read the Word of God and make sense of it. Sometimes, false teachers will refer to less familiar sections of Scripture to validate their teachings. A familiarity with the whole Bible will present young Christians with the consistent voice with which Scripture speaks and also alert them of false teaching grounded in more obscure sections of God's Word. Often unbelievers will challenge a Christian's fundamental knowledge of the Bible as being shallow since it may be based on things which they had not read for themselves. "Walking the Path of Our Salvation" can help to answer that accusation by guiding young Christians through God's Word and enabling them to better defend their Christian faith. Certainly, students ought to be knowledgeable about the Bible but, even more, to know with certainty that the whole Bible declares that Jesus is their Savior and the Savior of the world.

2. The students recognize that every book of the Bible points to Christ.

What is it that students will see when they read from every book of sacred Scripture? They will see that Jesus Christ is the *Kern und Stern*, the heart and core, of every one of the sixty-six books. He is what is at the center of it all. Martin Luther points out what the reader will encounter when he opens up the Scriptures: "Here you will find the swaddling clothes and the manger in which Christ lies, and to which the angel points the shepherds [Luke 2:12]. Simple and lowly are these swaddling cloths, but dear is the treasure, Christ, who lies in them."²⁵ That is why Jesus said to those learned in the Law of Moses, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify

²⁵ Luther, M. (1999). Vol. 35: *Luther's Works*, vol. 35 : Word and Sacrament I (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). *Luther's Works* (236). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

about me.”²⁶ Jesus sets the goal for the religion teacher himself. One objective of Bible study must be to show the students how the Scriptures testify about Jesus in every book of the Bible.

The Christ-Light curriculum describes how essential this aspect is:

There is another progression that is vital to the nurture of young Christians. This progression is the development of God’s plan of salvation through the Old Testament into the New Testament. Scripture’s focus is Christocentric; that is, the focus through the whole Old Testament is on the promised Messiah, and in the New Testament, the focus is on Jesus, the Son of God, who came to redeem us and whose second coming we eagerly await. This progression needs to be reflected in the chronological arrangement of biblical material at every level.²⁷

Martin Luther goes so far as to say that a study of Scripture without Christ as its center is not only a waste of time but also removes every eternal benefit that Scripture has to offer:

“Therefore, he who would correctly and profitably reads Scripture should see to it that he finds Christ in it; then he finds life eternal without fail. On the other hand, if I do not so study and understand Moses and the prophets as to find that Christ came from heaven for the sake of my salvation, became man, suffered, died, was buried, rose, and ascended into heaven so that through him I enjoy reconciliation with God, forgiveness of all my sins, grace, righteousness, and life eternal, then my reading in Scripture is of no help whatsoever to my salvation.”²⁸

That is why a goal in this course is to walk the path of our salvation through sacred Scripture with sinners and saints and see how all lives of all people of all times intersect with one another at the cross of the Christ. It is to show students how the Old Testament leads to the cross, how the gospels show the cross and how the Epistles proclaim the cross. Open up the Scriptures, and they will speak of salvation in Christ and in Christ alone. When the Holy Spirit opens his mouth, he shows us the love of the Father in Jesus Christ his Son. In “Walking the Path of Our Salvation” students have the opportunity to take a close look at the Messianic Psalms, to see the Christ’s passion announced in the book of Zechariah, to walk with Jesus through the gospels, to see Jesus as the Messiah and Savior the Old Testament prophesied in three lessons from the book of Hebrews among countless other occasions they will cross paths with the Christ in this curriculum.

²⁶ John 5:39

²⁷ David Kuske, *Christ-Light Handbook* (Milwaukee, WI: WELS Board for Parish Services, 1997), 2.0 page 2.

²⁸ D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe, v. 51 (Weimar, 1893) 4.

3. The students revere the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

With the emergence of post-modern thought in our world, students in the religion classroom are more and more likely to be of the mentality that “what is true for you isn’t necessarily true for me.” While other religions will teach that the Bible is a good book with a lot of good stories and meaningful morals the Lutheran teacher must take great care to present the Bible as the Word of the Living God. It is not just some other book or a mere subject of study during the school hours, but the very words of God that he speaks to give life to our souls. Certainly the students who have attended a Lutheran grade school throughout their lives have learned from early on that the Bible is God’s Word. In fact, they will further develop their understanding of that doctrine in catechism class. This goal is not unique to a curriculum which takes a whole-Bible approach; every period of religious instruction must begin and end with the premise that the Bible is God’s Word. A strength of “Walking the Path of Our Salvation” is that it exposes students to large portions of the Bible. The reading of a broad selection of the Bible is advantageous as the most important way for students to be convinced of Scripture’s infallibility and inerrancy is to have them read the Bible.

It is hardly the duty of the Bible reader to defend Scripture’s infallibility or its inerrancy; the Bible does that quite well all on its own. C. H. Spurgeon, upon being asked if he could defend the Bible, replied, “Defend it! I would as soon defend a lion. Let it out—it can defend itself.”²⁹ Let the Scriptures speak for themselves and impart piety and instill reverence in students. As students are given the chance to see the clear connections made throughout the corpus of Scripture—from the Old Testament to the New Testament—the Bible itself will convince them of the truth which Paul readily declares, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”³⁰

4. The students receive a devotional model that they may emulate in their lives.

The study of Scripture is not simply an academic pursuit. It profits a soul in spending time with Jesus so that a person can cry out with the Emmaus disciples: “Were not our hearts

²⁹ J. C. Ferdinand, *Bible Truths Illustrated: For the Use of Preachers, Teachers, Bible-school, Christian Endeavor, Temperance and Other Christian Workers* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1917), 21.

³⁰ 2 Timothy 3:16

burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?³¹ Yet even the WELS as a synod has great room for improvement. In the opening lines of a paper presented to the Missionaries' Conference, James Aderman depicts the serious nature of this problem:

“The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has a serious problem with Scripture. That sentence is not an attention getting device. The Wisconsin Synod does have a serious problem with Scripture. True, it is not a problem with what we believe about Scripture. By God's grace and guidance we still retain the teachings of their "truth and purity". The problem is in the way we as a Synod, all 400,000 of us, handle that Word. The fact is we are not using God's Word as we should. We are not as familiar with it as our Lord wills us to be. Although we as a Synod proclaim God's Word as it was meant to be proclaimed, are not studying that Word, as it was meant to be studied.”³²

The task is left to the pastor or the religion teacher to be a model for the students in making God's Word a part of their daily walk with him. Certainly the teacher will pray that the students learn to love and desire God's Word and can say together with the psalmist: “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.”³³

Especially as students progress through the whole Bible, book by book, and as they reach an age of maturity the teacher has an optimal opportunity to instill and encourage a devotional reverence for Scripture in the lives of students. As students have the opportunity to study portions of Scripture which they have not previously encountered, they grow in both their understanding of Scripture and their ability to wield the sword of the Spirit. As students gain a sense of familiarity with each book of the Bible, they will be more likely to read them on their own. The greater exposure they have to the Word, the greater their confidence will be in using it in their daily lives.

In organizing devotions for this course, the teacher would do well to prepare a devotion and a prayer for every lesson which presents the themes which will be discussed during the class period. During the study of the Old Testament, the teacher could read a portion of the Psalms one day each week and a selection from Proverbs another day. In teaching the New Testament, a

³¹ Luke 24:32

³² James A. Aderman, *Bible Study In The Life Of The Pastor And His Congregation; An Introductory Paper Presented to the Missionaries' Conference of the South Atlantic District* (WLS essay file, January 23, 1980), 1.

³³ Psalm 119:97,99

number of good thoughts for devotion come to mind. A teacher could divide up Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and introduce the students more fully to what may very well be the greatest sermon ever preached. Another course of action would be to read through John's gospel during the course of the year. This would give the students the opportunity to see one whole gospel unfold before their eyes, piece by piece, from beginning to end. Another option would be for the teacher to designate a certain amount of time for the class to read silently and allow the students to choose the portion of God's Word on which they would like to meditate. Still another idea would be to purchase some different devotional books and allow students to choose which one they would like to read throughout the course of the year.

These devotions give students a greater exposure to the wealth of material in the Old Testament and New Testaments and, more importantly, they show them how they may spend some time in meditation in their journey of faith that lies before them. Whatever the teacher chooses to do, it is critical that the teacher help students to make the Bible part of their daily lives and equip them to raise up the next generation of Christians in their homes.

5. The students receive opportunities to live their faith in school, at home and in the world.

Students in religion class are often well prepared to get an A+ on an assignment, recite a passage of Scripture flawlessly, ace a test and create a project that is nothing short of a masterpiece. However, what takes place in the classroom does not always translate to the world they live in. When they go home, there is no fill in the blank. When they are on the job there are no extra credit points. When students grow up they will not receive a quarterly report with letter grades demonstrating the progress they're making in marriage, parenting and finance management.

It is especially true at this time in their lives that young adolescents are looking for outlets to serve and live a sanctified life. One challenge that we face is utilizing their many and varied talents to serve our God and his Church. Sometimes a teacher will face the opposite challenge—a student will not want to serve in any capacity. Certainly, the teacher needs to avoid moralizing. Good works must flow from gospel motivation; they cannot be coerced from the Law. Additionally, sanctified living cannot be prescribed. A teacher can, however, work together with students to create opportunities for sanctified living. Both students and teacher benefit from

dialog about how they can put the Word to work in school, at home and every path they travel down in their lives. In “Walking the Path of our Salvation”, students can contemplate ways that they can go with the gospel and reach out to their world as they study the missionary journeys of Paul. While studying the Old Testament, they can use the wisdom they learn from Proverbs and the comfort they gain from Psalms to share with family and friends. When they study a lesson in the book of James, “Faith in Action,” they can brainstorm about ways they can put their faith in action and then implement a plan to achieve their goals.

6. The students’ hearts and minds and *lives* be transformed by the Word of God.

Certainly, this is not something that a teacher or student can measure or grade; one can only plead with the Holy Spirit that he would transform lives with God’s Word. But when the subject at hand is the sword of the Spirit—it is a miscarriage of God’s will to strive for anything less. It is God himself who has promised to do the work. It is the Lord himself who says, “[My word that goes out from my mouth] will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”³⁴

One cannot be transformed by something to which one is not exposed. The goal of studying the whole Bible is that students receive frequent exposure to the word of God. This is one exception to the idea of “moderation in everything” – more here certainly is better!

7. The school—its students and faculty—be transformed by the Word of God.

The students are not the only ones who will benefit from frequent exposure to various parts of God’s Word. The teacher will be reading and studying lesser-studied portions of God’s Word to prepare for class. One would hope that the students would share what they have learned from or about Obadiah or 2 Timothy with students from other classes at lunch or at recess, with the other teachers and those who work at the school, with parents and siblings. This sharing of the Word of God also will not return to the Lord empty.

It is only right to hope and pray *and even expect* that the Word which is taught in our seventh and eighth grade classrooms would go beyond the four walls of the teaching structure and spill over into the lives of all who come into contact with it. This is what the Christian

³⁴ Isaiah 55:11

Church prays for when it gathers together and pleads with the Lord in the prayer that he taught us, “Your kingdom come!” Jesus Christ wants his gospel to go to the earth and the world and change lives. He gave his Word to heal the hurting, to mend the sick, to bind the broken, and to raise the dead; he gave his Word to transform lives. The Church and our schools simply cannot set our sights any lower because our Lord does not.

The Bible Study Curriculum

Curricular Considerations from the Secular World

The previous seven goals find their basis in biblical, Lutheran theology. There are, however, numerous secular goals that are important to the religion teacher as well. A number of articles that suggested that you could throw out technology, textbooks, even teaching theory³⁵ and still have a class that would learn something. While this may be true, it certainly is not ideal. To best meet the needs of young adolescents, the National Middle School Association advocates a curriculum that is “relevant, challenging, integrative and exploratory, from both the student’s as well as the teacher’s perspective.”³⁶

There is a tremendous amount of ink spent screaming out the mantra, “Teach what is relevant!” Certainly, a religion curriculum must be *relevant*. In that regard, there is good news for the religion teacher: the entire Bible is relevant. There is not a single word of Scripture that is not relevant, otherwise God wouldn’t have given it to us. Jesus said that every jot and tittle, every stroke of the pen matters.³⁷ No other book can make the claim that its every last word was inspired by God. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”³⁸ “Walking the Path of Our Salvation” demonstrates the relevancy of the whole of Scripture, including some of the books of the Bible that are not often studied in WELS schools. These books are just as relevant to the teacher as they are to the student. God gave all of the Scriptures to all people and therefore, all of these Scriptures are relevant as Lyle Lange writes,

³⁵ Brown and Knowles, *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know*, 147.

³⁶ National Middle School Association, *We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adults. A position paper of the National Middle School Association*. 2003, 19.

³⁷ Matthew 5:18

³⁸ 2 Timothy 3:16

Every word of the Bible is part of the unified proclamation that Jesus is the God-sent Savior from sin. There is no useless or trivial information given in the Bible. All of it is put into the service of the Bible's main mission, which is to tell the good news of God's love for sinners in Christ. Whether it is matters of genealogy, geography, science or history, all is recorded so that God may reveal to us his plan for our salvation in Jesus.³⁹

A religion curriculum should also be *challenging*. Complacency does not lead to preservation of the status quo and certainly not to advancement but rather to backsliding. It is for that reason that the apostle Paul exhorts believers in the book of Galatians, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."⁴⁰ Students at this age need challenges set before them to progress in their learning. "Young adolescents need meaningful, challenging learning experiences in order to develop and sustain cognitive growth process."⁴¹ In this respect, "Walking the Path of Our Salvation" offers a wonderful challenge for the teacher to set before the students. A teacher can begin the school year by simply holding up a Bible and saying, "In the next two school years, we're going to be taking a journey. We're going to walk the path of our salvation, book by book, from cover to cover. That sounds like a great challenge, doesn't it?" Throughout the year, the teacher can show the progress that has been made simply by utilizing book marks that show where the students began and where the students are now. Students themselves may keep tabs on their own progress and even tell their parents about their accomplishments. When students perceive a goal that is both challenging and attainable, they will be more likely to pursue it and achieve it.

A course which will meet these goals also must be *integrative*. "Walking the Path of Our Salvation" not only shows the logical flow of the events that unfold in the history of God's people as recorded in the Bible but also integrates these events with their applications to the life of the Lord. Additionally, students incorporate the Bible and add to their learning as they make cognitive connections and relate biblical principles to their own lives. This is facilitated by a variety of teaching tools which help to bring things together: homework, memory work, tests and projects which all build on each other are some of the things which allow students to integrate their knowledge outside of class. Interaction with their teacher and classmates during the periods of instruction further develops the content of the course used in the curriculum. A religion

³⁹ Lyle W. Lange, *God So Loved the World* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2005), 36.

⁴⁰ Galatians 5:25

⁴¹ Brown and Knowles, *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know*, 27.

course which covers portions of Scripture that are non-narrative will be inherently challenging for seventh and eighth grade students who have previously and primarily learned from narrative Bible stories. As the students wrestle with new and challenging forms of literature, the teacher must be aware of this transition and plan lessons and instruction accordingly.

A religion curriculum also ought to be *exploratory*. As for the exploratory nature of “Walking the Path of Our Salvation,” for the most part, students are heading into uncharted waters. Students will delve into the depths of Scripture which they have never read before and come out with insights and treasures that they never expected. Not only is this demonstrated in the planning of the curriculum but it is also exploited in the time of instruction in class. This course presents an excellent opportunity for the teacher to continue exploring God’s Word, growing in knowledge and wisdom and depth of insight together with the students.

The Curriculum Overview

The proposed goals are high and lofty but can they be attained? What would such a curriculum look like? The components that will make up the curriculum must be examined while considering the characteristics of the learners and fit them together with the established goals to accomplish them. Several items must be considered as materials are selected, as one author affirms, “While the declarative content of Scripture is changeless, the specific needs of learners are not. If curriculum is to help students learn and apply principles by which the Spirit of God directs their lives toward righteousness and truth, it must meet critical standards of attractiveness, relevance, and clarity in addition to accuracy of presentation.”⁴²

The most critical element of this course might be determining which textbook should be used. Numerous texts have been used to teach religion classes. There are books which simplify the Bible readings and make them more palatable for an audience that hasn’t acquired a high level of proficiency in reading. These books are good, as they serve God’s people and express his sacred truth. However, it is a concern that too often students read *about* the Bible and

⁴² Gangel and Hendricks, *The Christian Educator’s Handbook on Teaching*, 52.

haven't read *from* the Bible. Simply put, "Reading about the Bible is not enough. It has to become its own expositor."⁴³

Some curricula come with all kinds of different hand outs and overheads and work books with flashy covers and neat logos, but they lack the presentation the words of sacred Scripture. There has to come a point in the lives of our youth when they learn to make the Bible their own book. In light of all the cognitive developments that are taking place in the mind of seventh and eighth graders, this point in their lives proves to be an optimal time.

There are numerous benefits that come about by using the Bible as the textbook for the course. Students most likely have their own Bibles and if they do not, it is a great time to get one. Unlike some course materials, Bibles are neither difficult to acquire nor expensive. Using the Bible increases their familiarity with God's Word and gives them a sense of *Lokalgedächtnis*—that is, spatial orientation—so that they are able to find things later in life. As the students read through the Scriptures they will be able to locate books, chapters and verses more readily and easily. Students can mark up their own Bibles, highlight favorite passages and write notes in the margin which they can have with them for decades. When a doctrine is attacked by anyone who challenges the faith, the Christian will be more readily able to give an answer directly from the Bible. All of these things will help make the Bible the people's book.

Once a textbook is chosen, the next determination is to decide which parts of it we can cover in the time allotted. In some WELS grade schools, seventh and eighth graders have religion class twice a week, catechism twice a week and hymnology once a week. Although the number of school days varies from school to school and state to state, a typical class that meets twice a week has about seventy class periods throughout the year. This formula works out well so that the teacher can have one period for an introduction to the course, sixty-four teaching periods, four tests and still dedicate one whole period to wrap up with a course evaluation.

During those sixty-four periods of instruction, the teacher must decide which sections of the Bible to cover. The Bible has 1,189 chapters; throughout the course of two school years, students will have the opportunity to read roughly twenty percent of the Bible in "Walking the

⁴³ Barbara Fisher. "Promoting Biblical Literacy in the Elementary Classroom" (2005). Education Papers and Journal Articles. Paper 19. 81.

Path of Our Salvation.” When it comes to determining which of those 1,189 chapters to study in the curriculum, there are two main factors. First, chapters which are thematic to each individual book of the Bible and give a representative view of its context should be chosen. Secondly, topics which clearly point to Christ and highlight God’s plan of salvation ought to be selected. The best of both worlds happens when these two concepts collide. Overall, the chosen chapters help the student and the teacher to walk the path of our salvation as they journey from the creation of the world, to the cross and to the world’s end.

Reading Assignments

As students walk the path of salvation, the goal is to have them read about two chapters of the Bible each day as they prepare an assignment for class. Some would say, “That’s too much reading! Some kids simply won’t be able to handle that amount!” These objections may well be justified. For some students, reading two chapters of the Bible for one class period might seem as feasible as swimming across the ocean or climbing Mt. Everest. However, with the accessibility of God’s Word and today’s technology, students can hear the Bible read to them with a half-dozen clicks of a mouse. Any student can listen to a reading assignment in less than ten minutes on a website such as www.biblegateway.com. However, the majority of students is up to the task of reading directly from their Bibles and will benefit greatly by spending fifteen minutes with the Word. Certainly there will be students for whom fifteen minutes will not be sufficient time to complete the entire reading assignment; the teacher will want to work together with the students individually to set appropriate goals.

Preparation for Class

Research shows that “all teachers should strive to design high-quality homework so that students who complete their assignments will, in fact, benefit from their efforts.”⁴⁴ One unique facet of “Walking the Path of Our Salvation” is that what most people refer to as homework is used as preparation for the next class period. Each student prepares for every lesson with a Bible reading and completion of a worksheet. This allows the teacher to use the classroom as a place to

⁴⁴ Joyce L Epstein. “More than Minutes: Teachers’ Roles in Designing Homework.” 2001 *Educational Psychologist* 36(3) 181-193. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc, 185.

answer students' questions on what they studied and prepared on their own and then further that learning while teaching the day's lesson.

One curriculum used in the Wisconsin Synod at one time addresses students as it introduced the course with these words "Each [lesson] will take from two to four hours' time to do before you go to class."⁴⁵ Furthermore, the expectations for every student in that course were to read between two and twenty chapters of the Bible and answer between thirty five and fifty questions about the facts of the content they read.⁴⁶ A theory which emphasizes this concept states, "The call for more homework is based on a belief that the more time students spend on schoolwork, the more they will learn."⁴⁷ There is not a direct correlation between the quantity of homework and the time spent doing it with the quality of learning that takes place, however.

The results of research on homework completion, time on homework, and parental involvement suggest that teachers have a responsibility to select or design assignments that are purposeful, engaging, and of high quality so that (a) students at all grade levels—including low-ability students—take the time they need to complete their assignments; (b) students benefit from their effort; and (c) parents at all grade levels are appropriately and effectively involved in their children's education.⁴⁸

While a teacher would love every student to spend several hours every day soaking up God's Scriptures, considering the course loads for other classes, this amount of homework is impractical. In view of this and to maximize the use of students' time and attention span both at home and in the classroom, "Walking the Path of Our Salvation" takes a different approach to the issue of how much work a student should do for each class period. An objective in this course was that students would spend approximately half an hour preparing for each lesson: fifteen minutes reading the Bible and fifteen minutes completing a related worksheet. While this lesson preparation does encourage learning new facts about the Bible, it also seeks to engage learners and help them to appropriate the content of Scripture through other means than answering lists of questions.

⁴⁵ Julian G. Anderson, *The Story of Jesus the Messiah* (Naples, FL: Julian G. Anderson, 1980), 1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁷ Epstein, *More Than Minutes: Teachers' Roles in Designing Homework*, 181.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 186.

The best learning happens when students perform, create, or solve.⁴⁹ As students are wrestling with the text of the Bible, they are able to do far more than simply fill in the blank. While some assignments seek to skyrocket students into the upper echelons of the taxonomy of questions, others simply seek to draw out the basics from the text. Variety in learning keeps the mind on edge and the students wanting to learn. Activities in “Walking the Path of Our Salvation” are varied between writing assignments, reflection questions, art work, class presentations among many, many others. The teacher will constantly undertake efforts both to revise and rework current materials to ensure that they fit each classroom and also create and craft new materials to ensure that the best learning is taking place for the sake of the students.

It is crucial that the students find meaning in doing their homework and a purpose for completing it. A candid comment shows why this is important: “Teachers should rethink the reasons for assigning homework. Rather than seeing homework as an obligatory task students must complete as part of the routine school process, teachers can use homework to enhance classroom lessons, reinforce skills, and engage students in meaningful learning exercises.”⁵⁰ The reason the religion teacher will assign homework is so that the student may grow as God’s child as he blesses that student’s learning experience both in the classroom and out of it.

Memory Work

While some students and parents, even pastors and teachers maintain that memorization is simply too much to handle, there is a great benefit in committing the words of our God to memory. John Wilson gives insight which summarizes a general sentiment concerning memory work, “We live in a time when memorization is routinely scorned, an attitude summed up in the ubiquitous phrases ‘rote memory’ and ‘rote learning.’ Memorizing, we are told, discourages creativity, critical thinking, and conceptual understanding”⁵¹ Seventh and eighth graders are at

⁴⁹ Todd Finley. Edutopia: What Works In Education. Accessed November 26, 2011.

<http://www.edutopia.org>

⁵⁰, Nancy S. Self, *Designing Effective Homework*, <http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol4/426-self.aspx> (Last accessed, February 23, 2012).

⁵¹ John Wilson 2011. "Changing forever how you think: recovering the lost art of Scripture memorization." *Christianity Today* 55, no. 1: 41. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed February 23, 2012).

the peak of their mind's ability to remember⁵² and it is good stewardship to utilize the great gifts God has given. Specifically in this course, a teacher could work with the students to select a passage from every book of the Bible that proclaimed the book's theme for memorization. This also serves the function of helping the students make connections between the name of a book of the Bible and its contents. Above all, "That which is memorized should be for the learner meaningful learning of meaningful material."⁵³

Variety in the methods of memory work assessment may also help to foster both the interest and the desire to commit passages of Scripture to memory. Students could recite the passage individually or as a class. Alternatively, they could fill in the missing words of a passage or write out the verse on a blank sheet of paper. The teacher could even occasionally forego any type of quiz on a certain memory verse. The goal of learning memory work is to words of sacred Scripture indelibly etched in the mind. "The more we commit the Word to memory, the richer our being becomes. The melodious concert of his Word will continually echo within us. Then we'll encounter the conductor, our Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit, who helps us remember the Scriptures, and the Father, who'll receive glory through all of this."⁵⁴

Quizzes

What should a religion teacher use a quiz for? The purpose of a quiz is not to threaten the students or whip them into submission. It is not to stress them out or catch them off guard. A quiz is given just as much for the teacher as it is for the student. With the vast amount of material to cover, it is simply too much to ask for a teacher to cover everything in one class period. In order that students come to class prepared and ready to further engage in the study of God's Word, it is a good practice to give a quiz on the assigned chapters or on the material that has been recently covered in class. A quiz gives the opportunity to the students to challenge

⁵² David Elkind, *A Sympathetic Understanding of the Child: Birth to Sixteen* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1974), 136

⁵³ Marion J Snapper. 1981. "Memorization in church education." *Calvin Theological Journal* 16, no. 1: 42. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed February 23, 2012).

⁵⁴ Wilson, "Changing forever how you think: recovering the lost art of Scripture memorization," 42.

themselves in their preparations at home with a limited amount of reading material. The teacher can then check for retention.

A quiz may have to be used to curb students from being negligent in their reading, but that should not be the primary purpose of quizzing students. The questions on the quiz ought to cover only the material that was presented in the assigned chapters of the Bible. The aim of a quiz should not be to test retention of pedantic facts, such as listing the ten plagues in order or writing the full names of Job's three friends. Rather, questions should focus on the topic, theme, and elements presented to them when they opened up the sacred Scriptures. Additionally, students who read the assigned chapters of the Bible should easily be able to answer the majority of the questions correctly, and any student who did not read should not be able to answer many of the questions correctly. This avoids exasperating the students. The purpose is that students love God's Word and be able to put it to good use, whether they are quizzed on it or not.

In order to have students review and use the material they have studied, it might be prudent to give students a quiz as frequently as once a week. A typical quiz could consist of five questions based on the important points of the reading assigned for that day. Students seem to appreciate one extra credit question that is often, but not always, more difficult than the five base questions.

Tests

First of all, these questions must be addressed: "Are tests truly necessary for religion? How can a teacher grade someone's faith?" These questions pose a legitimate concern. While faith certainly is an immeasurable component in the eyes of men—known only to God—there is an academic attribute to the study of God's Word with knowledge that can be measured. Since the religion teacher handles subject matter which is divine and yet imparts information to very human brains, it is evident why this issue can be perplexing. How ought a seventh and eighth grade religion teacher approach this issue? John Elias states the traditional Christian educator's method,

The traditional theological approach does not place a strong emphasis on evaluation. In this view religious education is concerned primarily with the communication of a divine message. Since the aims of education in this approach are other-worldly and divine, little attempt is made to measure the effects of education on the student. The teacher and the

content of the lesson rather than the student and his learning outcomes become the crucial focus of evaluation in this approach.⁵⁵

Given that few religion curriculums even include materials for testing, it is easy to see what “little attempt” is actually made to assess student learning. It is imperative that the religion teacher not be so quick to follow the traditional approach without wrestling with the issue. While there are valid arguments on each side of the debate, Elias posits two important points; most religion teachers do not give out tests and the ones that do use them primarily for the assessment of their own instruction. While an examination certainly aides the teacher in gauging the level of retention of every individual student, often it is the student who is left out. Tests which simply check for the retention of facts will encourage students to store up information short term and jettison that information once it goes from their pencils to the page.

Students cram so much into their heads that, at times, it seems like luck plays a role in what they are able to scribble down on paper during traditional tests. A test that involves luck does not allow the teacher to have a fair window into the mind of a student and truly see what students have retained. Multiple choice questions can be tricky, true and false questions can be deceiving. But time and consideration must be put into developing of tests, if they are to be used at all:

If evaluation leads merely to more testing, drilling and memorization of the so called basics of religion, then it is of dubious value. Religious education is much more than the testing, drilling and memorization of prayers, dogmatic formulas and moral commandments, just as education is more than a knowledge of the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic.

Evaluation in religious education will not have a future unless it is supported by sound educational philosophy. Otherwise it will be a passing fad and useless panacea. Evaluation will have a future in religious education only if evaluators possess a sound philosophy of religious education and understand clearly the assumptions, theories, purposes, objectives, methods and limitations of this instrument.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ John L. Elias. 1979. "Evaluation and the future of religious education." *Religious Education* 74, no. 6: 658. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed February 2, 2012).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 662

If tests are to be utilized in the religion classroom, a student-centered approach used to further knowledge instead of simply to evaluate retention will help to accomplish the spiritual and intellectual goals the religion teacher seeks for his students.

Especially in the subject of religion, there will be many students who go on to public high schools where they will not have daily instruction in God's Word in a classroom setting. As teachers prepare students to face that environment, it is essential to prepare them to be able to search for truths in Scripture themselves. It is critical that they be able to do some of their own research into biblical truths to defend what they have learned from kindergarten to eighth grade.

These factors were taken into consideration when planning the "tests" associated with "Walking the Path of Our Salvation." A better name for these might be a large-scale learning assessment and advancement. A student-centered approach allows for variety and creativity as students express what they have learned. At the same time, because God's Word is absolute truth, there will be facts on the test as well; a teacher has to balance the two. There is no "perfect" religion test; however, a viable approach is the use of take-home examinations administered each quarter. Students may be allowed to use any resource in order to complete these assessments with one exception: they should not copy another student's work. Such an assessment would be quite lengthy, and not all of the questions need to review what is studied in class. Some review questions might ask students to identify people or places or things. Some questions, however, should require students to delve deeper into a topic previously studied in class. This would allow the students to reflect upon what they have learned and further develop their knowledge as they put the pieces together. Certainly this will help the teacher to see if they grasp the truths taught in class and comprehend the truths that God presents in the Scriptures. Furthermore, and even more importantly, it will enable students to make connections as they examine the big picture of the truths of Scripture and apply these truths to their own lives.

Projects

Another way to integrate God's Word into the students' lives is to involve them in projects. As students look for ways to live their faith, a teacher can work together with them in determining what kind of appropriate outlets there are for works of service. Things like preparing a devotion, giving a class presentation, corresponding with a missionary and his

congregation, writing a brief paper or interviewing relatives about their Christian life would all make excellent projects. Students could undertake a more rigorous study of a specific book of the Bible and present their findings to the class or they could conduct a literature review from other denominations which touch on topics covered throughout the course of the class. The possibilities are as endless as the students' ideas. What is the value in this? To help students make God's Word their very own and go with the gospel into the lives of those who need it most. Additionally, this is a great time to foster interaction in order to develop the relationship between the student and the teacher. One project per semester seems to be a good fit.

Family Scripture Readings

One final piece of material that has great potential is a "travel log" with readings they could take home and share with their families. Because it is impossible to cover every chapter of every book of the Bible in two years in religion class, students can be given a selection of chapters to read with their families that otherwise would not be covered. These supplemental readings may be completely optional and sent home with the students at the beginning of each month. Students who participate in these readings with their families will more readily retain the material presented and relate that material to their lives. This gives parents the opportunity to impress the words of the Lord on their children and to talk about them when they sit at home and when they walk along the road, when they lie down and when they get up."⁵⁷ Furthermore, this will help students accomplish both the spiritual and intellectual goals a religion curriculum seeks to attain.

INSTRUCTION

Planning Instruction

Knowing the information, skills or attitudes that one wants to produce in students is only one part of the effective teaching equation. Simple knowledge of such objectives does not guarantee effective teaching and learning; the teacher must also plan how he is going to teach to attain these objectives.

⁵⁷ Deuteronomy 6:6

This requires concentrated effort from the teacher. “Developing an effective teaching style and supporting the learning styles represented in any group of learners are achieved by loving and artful attention to particulars of what one is and does, both as a person and as a teacher.”⁵⁸ The teacher should not decide how he will teach a particular lesson by randomly pulling a strategy out of a hat or choosing his favorite or most comfortable or easiest teaching style and methodology as the plan for every lesson. He needs to consider the learners, the subject, possible instructional methodologies, learner motivation and effective application of materials to daily life.

The Importance of Content

The first consideration when planning how one will teach a lesson is the content of said lesson. It is essential that teachers know the material they will be teaching. While this may seem obvious, “knowing the material” does not mean opening the book five minutes before class and skimming over what is planned for that day so that it seems like the teacher knows what he is talking about. “Effective teachers must know the facts about the content they are teaching.”⁵⁹ This involves prior study and preparation. In order to teach something, a teacher must know the material. More than one acquaintance of the author has related accounts of teachers who had been assigned to teach a class but had no knowledge of the subject matter. Needless to say, those acquaintances also related that they learned little to nothing in those classes unless they made a concentrated effort to study the textbook on their own time.

Not only will expert knowledge of the subject and material equip the teacher to effectively teach without burying his nose in the book while he essentially reads it to the class, it will also enable the teacher to choose an instructional methodology that is suited to that particular lesson. Knowledge of the subject will allow the teacher to decide more quickly and more creatively how a lesson might be taught to his particular group of students in the most effective manner.

⁵⁸ Robert W. Pazmiño, *Principles & Practices of Christian Education: An Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 107.

⁵⁹ Paul R. Burden and David M. Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching: Meeting the Needs of All Students*, 5th ed. (Boston,: Allyn & Bacon, 2010), 3.

Knowledge of content signifies a few specific things when it comes to teaching the whole Bible. WELS pastors and most WELS teachers have been trained extensively in biblical knowledge, especially in the “big” or “important” books. However, most have not spent significant time learning the backgrounds and summaries of books such as Joel, Nahum, or Philemon. Therefore the instructor must learn first for himself the backgrounds and summaries of each book taught. Ideally he would read the entire book, as well as a biblical commentary or two, but at the least he should become very familiar with assigned readings and sections that will be scrutinized in class.

Knowledge of the Learners

“Understanding one’s content is one criterion for successful teaching – but only one. Effective educators at all grade levels possess something more significant than content knowledge: a deep understanding of their students.”⁶⁰ God did not create every person the same. These differences mean that every person is unique and will not think or learn in the same way. This may be obvious to most people, but the many student characteristics that a teacher would do well to learn about before planning instruction might surprise many. The teacher must implement differentiated instruction in order to reach the wide variety of students with their diverse learning styles,

Age is one obvious consideration; clearly, a four-year-old, a fourteen-year-old, and a twenty-four-year old will think and process information in different ways. This is generally an easy characteristic to take into consideration, as extensive research has been performed on the characteristics of different age groups. Not all students will be exactly the same, but it is not hard to find general information on the physical, cognitive and emotional development of a particular age group. One very concise example for the seventh and eighth grade classroom is found on page 62 of *The Shepherd Nurtures God’s Lambs and Sheep: Part Three* as well as page 134 of *The Christian Educator’s Handbook on Teaching*.

However, other characteristics of students that are not necessarily as apparent include cultural, linguistic and economic backgrounds. Students may have special needs that are not immediately apparent, especially to a teacher that only has class with a student a few times a

⁶⁰ Brown and Knowles, *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know*, 25.

week. It is essential for the teacher to find out if there are students who have a difficult home life, who struggle with English because it is not their native language, who are more accustomed to their culture's oral tradition than American culture's written tradition, or who struggle with dyslexia, ADD or Asperger's syndrome. The religion teacher will also want to know what kind and amount of prior religious instruction the student has received. All of this information can often easily be acquired by speaking with the classroom teacher, the parents or the student himself.⁶¹ Once the teacher has learned of these unique characteristics and needs, he can research, if necessary, to learn how to effectively teach students with such characteristics and needs. Then he can incorporate what he has learned into planning how he will teach to meet these needs.

Yet another facet of knowing the learners involves learning about their preferences and attitudes in regard to learning. "It is essential that you understand who your learners are, what motivates them, why they are reluctant to learn, which ones will embrace an idea, and which ones need more relevance."⁶² A short survey or careful observation can inform a teacher about learning styles – some commonly accepted styles include visual (written words), auditory (spoken words), or kinesthetic (physical activity of some sort).⁶³ This translates to teaching not only by speaking or through the use of visuals or with activities that involve physical activity, but with a combination of these methods when possible.

Equally important is learner motivation. What interests the students? Perhaps one enjoys reading, while another only seems to care about basketball and another has trouble paying attention to anything that might otherwise interest her due to constant lack of sleep or nutrition. What inspires them to listen and learn? One might strive for success because of fear of parental repercussions if she fails, another might want to please the teacher because he likes him and another might enjoy learning new information just to know it. This type of information may be more difficult to gather, but it is especially valuable when working with seventh and eighth graders. Once again, careful observation and casual conversation with students can reveal a large amount of useful information. The teacher can play off of student interests and motivators

⁶¹ Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 86-87.

⁶² Allison A. Carr-Chellman, *Instructional Design for Teachers: Improving Classroom Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 4.

⁶³ Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 91-92

when planning instruction to make it interesting and relevant to this age group. If students find what they are learning interesting and relevant, they are more engaged. “A relevant curriculum responds to the questions and concerns that students have about their lives and their world and offers students the opportunity to make connections to what they are learning. Such a curriculum engages students...”⁶⁴ Teachers and pastors must desire to engage young people in this most important study of God’s Word in view of the worldly pressures to keep them from doing so.⁶⁵

Instructional Strategies

Once the teacher knows his content and his students, he is ready to choose an instructional methodology or strategy for that particular lesson. It is important to understand what instructional methodologies or strategies are; on what they are based; and the intricacies, strengths and weaknesses of different strategies before one chooses a specific strategy to teach a particular lesson.

By definition, instructional strategies “determine the approach a teacher may take to achieve the learning objectives and are included in the pre-instructional activities, information presentation, learner activities, testing, and follow-through. The strategies are usually tied to the needs and interests of students to enhance learning and are based on many types of learning styles.”⁶⁶ Note that many and varied instructional strategies exist and that the use of a particular one depends on the students as well as the material.

When considering the use of instructional strategies, it is also helpful to consider how individual brains work. Each person is unique and no two brains work in the same way. Research has demonstrated that each person processes and stores information differently. “No two brains are wired identically. Not in terms of structure. Not in terms of function. For example, from nouns to verbs to aspects of grammar, we each store language in different areas,

⁶⁴ Brown and Knowles, *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know*, 119.

⁶⁵ David Kuske, *The Shepherd Nurtures God’s Lambs and Sheep: Part Three* (Mequon, WI: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Press, 1995), 65.

⁶⁶ Institute for Interactive Technologies, *E-learning Concepts and Techniques*. Bloomsburg, PA: Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, 2006.

http://iit.bloomu.edu/Spring2006_eBook_files/ebook_spring2006.pdf, 58.

recruiting different regions for different components. Bilingual people don't even store their Spanish and their English in similar places."⁶⁷

Because each person and each brain functions differently, it only makes sense that each person learns best in different ways. A lecture that might be very easy for one student to understand might frustrate another, who processes information best in a more social setting, and bore another, who prefers to read information because it is easiest for her to understand. This means that teachers should "change instructional strategies often: use computers, groups, field trips, guest speakers, pairings, games, student teaching, journaling, or multi-age projects."⁶⁸ Variety is important to reach different learners, being careful not to discount methods that might not appeal to the teacher's preferred learning style or teaching style.

Teachers who continue to emphasize one-sided lecture methods are violating an important principle of our brain: Essentially we are social beings and our brains grow in a social environment. Because we often forge meaning through socializing, the whole role of student-to-student discussion is vastly underused. When used properly, cooperative learning is highly brain compatible.⁶⁹

This does not only apply to social methods, but other varied methods of teaching.

Instructional strategies are often divided into two categories: direct and indirect. Direct instruction strategies generally emphasize explicit instruction by the teacher which follow a systematic approach to clearly laid-out steps of learning.⁷⁰ Direct instruction is usually teacher-centered. Direct instruction strategies are often deductive: they "start with a known principle and then attention moves to the unknown."⁷¹ Indirect instruction strategies, on the other hand, usually involve student exploration, observation, and investigation to arrive at the lesson's main

⁶⁷ John Medina, *Brain Rules* (Seattle: Pear Press, 2008), 65-66.

⁶⁸ Eric Jensen, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998), 32.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁷⁰ Direct Instruction.

http://education.calumet.purdue.edu/vockell/edpsybook/edpsy2/edpsy2_direct.htm (accessed February 23, 2012)

⁷¹ Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 118.

concept.⁷² They are commonly student-centered and inductive: starting with the unknown and moving to the known or the main concept of the lesson.⁷³

These two categories of instructional strategies have many characteristics that the strategies in each set share. However, each method has many different manifestations. The following paragraphs will focus on methods that are likely to have value for those instructing seventh and eighth grade religion. Remember that not every strategy is suitable for every lesson and using a variety of methods will resonate with more learners and learning styles: “An effective teacher will attempt to use the methods best suited to the subject and to the students. Again, it is not important that we use all the methods, nor that we use some of the more attractive ones, but that we make use of the best methods, those that best present the materials and meet the needs of the students for whom we have responsibility.”⁷⁴

Direct Instruction Methods

Most students and teachers are most familiar with direct instruction methods due to historical approaches to teaching in the United States, especially following the development of the assembly line and the desire to have good factory workers. School consisted of prescribed information that every student needed to learn from the teacher.⁷⁵ This led naturally to the nearly uniform use of direct teaching strategies: “... instructional approaches in which the teacher structures lessons in a straightforward, sequential manner. The teacher is clearly in control of the content or skill to be learned and the pace and rhythm of the lesson.”⁷⁶ These ideas have greatly influenced education up to this day, and WELS pastors are very likely to recognize this as how they were educated. While some educators might claim otherwise, “Certain bodies of knowledge, of course, will best be taught using the methods of lecture, discussion, memorization, and indoctrination. These are not ‘bad words.’”⁷⁷

⁷² Saskatoon Public Schools. Instructional Strategies Online: What is Indirect Instruction? <http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/de/pd/instr/indirect.html> (accessed February 23, 2012).

⁷³ Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 118.

⁷⁴ Dr. Paul A. Kienel, ed., *The Philosophy of Christian School Education* (Whittier, CA: Association of Christian Schools International, 1978), 113.

⁷⁵ Brown and Knowles, *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know*, 70.

⁷⁶ Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 120.

⁷⁷ Kienel, *The Philosophy of Christian School Education*, 101.

One common direct instruction approach is referred to as presentation or lecture. It is “an informative talk that a more knowledgeable person makes to less knowledgeable persons.”⁷⁸ The great strength of this approach is the ability to transmit large amounts of information in a relatively short time. It is also useful for explaining difficult ideas and giving instructions about other learning tasks. However, this approach can generally only be used for 15 to 20 minutes before students start losing interest or simply reach the end of their attention span. In addition, it is not suited to teaching when the objective is not knowledge acquisition, when the information is very detailed or complex, or when learner involvement and critical thinking are important. Other guidelines for using this method include being sure to present the material in an organized manner, to use some sort of visual aid, to encourage questions and comments from students and to check for student understanding.⁷⁹ In light of the limited attention span of 15-20 minutes, it is important to intersperse this method of instruction with others in order to maintain student attention and interest.

A second direct instruction strategy is questioning. This method involves asking questions in an organized progression, often in conjunction with material that has been read, in order to attain a goal or concept. Many times this follows a pattern called I-R-E: Initiate (teacher asks a questions), Respond (student answers), and Evaluate (teacher evaluates the response).⁸⁰ Like a lecture, this approach is highly structured and has a specific aim. The questions are usually formulated using Bloom’s Taxonomy, which gives a progression to levels of the cognitive domain: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Questions may be convergent, or focused toward the “correct” or “best” answer, or divergent, which are open-ended and have more than one answer that is appropriate.⁸¹ Many WELS pastors will recognize this technique as the waltz step, which is often used to teach catechism class.

Questioning also has its strengths and weaknesses. Strengths include that students feel involved in the learning process, and individual students have the chance to express their ideas. Teachers can assess students’ understanding and learning and adjust the lesson accordingly if

⁷⁸ Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 124.

⁷⁹ Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 124-125.

⁸⁰ Cathy Collins Block and Michael Pressley, eds., *Comprehension Instruction: Research-Based Best Practices* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2002), 102-103.

⁸¹ Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 126-127.

necessary. Some weaknesses include the amount of time necessary to prepare and conduct such an approach, especially if the questioning is very rigidly structured. It is easy to fall into a predictable pattern of calling on the same students in the same order or only on students that raise their hands, which leads inattention and lack of thinking from other students.⁸² One way to remedy this is to ask the question before saying a student's name and to call on students at random. One common mistake is to allow only a second before calling on a student or even the teacher answering the question himself. Ideally a teacher will wait at least five seconds before even calling on a student, especially when asking a higher-level question.⁸³ Teachers must also take care not to shoot down every incorrect or not-quite-correct answer, as students may become more reluctant to offer an answer the next time. Finally, teachers should be sure to form clear questions and use both convergent and divergent questions from different taxonomy levels in the same lesson in order to promote thinking.

A third technique that fits into the realm of direct instruction is scaffolding. The premise of scaffolding is that the teacher helps the students to master a skill or concept that the students could not master at first on their own. The teacher does not do the task or explicitly tell everything to the students; he only offers instruction as to what to do in the first place and then assistance for what is just beyond the students' grasp. When the students have mastered the task, the teacher allows the students to work on their own. The teacher carefully chooses the skill or concept based on students' prior knowledge and abilities, making sure that the objective is neither too easy nor too hard.⁸⁴

It may be difficult to visualize this process and how it might be utilized in teaching the Bible to seventh and eighth graders. One possibility would be to use it in teaching Revelation chapters 2 and 3 in conjunction with commendable practices and sins in churches today. After having introduced the book of Revelation, the teacher could read (or have the students read) Revelation 2:1-7. He could then identify to whom this was written, for what the church was

⁸² Dr. Y. K. Ip, *The Pros and Cons of Questioning*. Singapore: Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning, 2005. <http://www.cdtl.nus.edu.sg/ideas/iot83.htm> (accessed February 23, 2012)

⁸³ Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 128-129.

⁸⁴ L. Lipscomb, J. Swanson, A. West. Scaffolding. In M. Orey (Ed.), *Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching, and technology*. (<http://projects.coe.uga.edu/epltt/index.php?title=Scaffolding>) (accessed February 23, 2012)

commended, what was condemned in the church, and the promise given to this church. Depending on the students, this first step might even be skipped and the teacher could go directly to the next step. The next step would be to have the students as a whole class identify the church, the commendation, the condemnation, and the promise of a section. It would be important to point out that not every section contains all four items. After succeeding as a class, students could be paired up or work alone on the remaining sections. Finally, the skills gained in doing so could be used for critical thinking, when the groups or individuals are asked to analyze their churches: they would create a message to their church, following the pattern they observed. It is very possible that the teacher would have to assist with identifying both positives and problems in the church. The goal, however, is to have the students thinking independently about issues raised in the Bible. Scaffolding is not a method that would work for every Bible lesson, but there is potential for it to be used and used well.

One more direct instruction strategy that could be employed is demonstration. A demonstration is simply a presentation that involves some sort of visual to more closely examine and understand information and ideas. In other words, a demonstration lets students see real things and how they work.⁸⁵ Modification of this idea might include giving the students the opportunity to touch, taste, or hear what they are learning – and therefore make it more real to them.

Demonstrations would probably most often be used as a short section of a Bible lesson rather than the whole class. Some suggestions for use might be measuring out how big the ark really was, building a model of the Tabernacle, listening to some of the common prayers in Hebrew pronounced by a rabbi, looking at pictures of the Holy Land to see what the people would have seen as they ascended to Jerusalem or the desert that David writes about in the psalms, or touching nails similar to what might have been used in the crucifixion. A more involved demonstration could be used when teaching the Passover – the teacher could prepare a Passover meal and explain the elements of the meal while the students eat.

⁸⁵ Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 125-126.

A demonstration can also be used to model an activity as well. The teacher models the actions before asking the students to do so.⁸⁶ A seventh and eighth grade religion teacher would do well to remember this when discussing the use of the Psalms or Jesus' devotional life. A demonstration of how one can study the Bible, pray about anything and everything and confess sins can be useful in teaching some spiritual habits: "Spiritual habits we want to teach seventh and eighth graders: a) to pray at regular times as well as many times on his/her own....c) ...to read the Bible daily on his/her own. d) to confess his/her sins to God and anyone he/she may have sinned against and ask for forgiveness."⁸⁷

Indirect Instruction Methods

Many students and teachers are less familiar or comfortable with indirect instructional methods, as they are often regarded as "newer" methods or even "wrong" because of the beliefs of those who developed the philosophies behind them. However, "although many of the methods used in the traditional approach are excellent, it would be unwise to rely exclusively on them as our only approaches...many times the best way for a student to learn is to be properly motivated and to discover information, solutions, and relationships for himself."⁸⁸ Indirect strategies are student-centered, which means that students are actively involved in and pursuing learning. This can be particularly useful when teaching the Bible and working towards objectives that involve skills or attitudes as opposed to knowledge. A negative of this is that such learning may take more time than direct methods, and there may be more student failure involved initially.⁸⁹ Use of indirect strategies may seem more difficult until the teacher is more comfortable with the method and the preparation involved.

The responsibility of the teacher for challenging students sufficiently to involve them in the process of learning requires a greatly increased emphasis upon the teacher's preparation prior to his actual encounter with students. The older techniques of teaching were primarily performances by the teacher. Thus, preparation for teaching consisted primarily in deciding in advance what would be done when one faced the class. In newer approaches of teaching, the bulk of classroom time is used by the students in the pursuit

⁸⁶ Ibid., 126.

⁸⁷ Kuske, *The Shepherd Nurtures God's Lambs and Sheep*, 62.

⁸⁸ Kienel, *The Philosophy of Christian School Education*, 101.

⁸⁹ Indirect Instruction.

http://www.saskschools.ca/curr_content/onlineteach/instructionalstrategies/indirectinstruction/indirect.htm (accessed February 23, 2012).

of their own educational purposes. Consequently, the teacher has the responsibility of anticipating the needs of the learners and of giving on-the-spot help and guidance when the students encounter obstacles in their attempts to learn. Such responsibilities require extensive preparation before the class assembles.⁹⁰

Additionally, the teacher may have to pay more attention to ensure that the students are attaining the objectives of the lesson. However, it is wise to note that students gain responsibility and skills, just as a child who attempts many times to tie her shoe will learn more about this skill and responsibility than a child whose parent always ties his shoes for him because it is faster. It is our goal to equip our students to be functioning Christian citizens.

One popular indirect method is problem-based learning. Students work in small groups to come up with solutions to a problem that mirrors a problem the students might encounter in the real world. Discussion and acquisition of new, relevant knowledge is student-led. The teacher acts as more as a facilitator and less of an instructor as he introduces the problem, supports the learning, models the process and monitors the work of the groups. Learning can be more effective because critical thinking is involved and students can learn from one another.⁹¹ Weaknesses of the approach include that it can require a lot of work to prepare such a problem and some students may not contribute to the discussion.

An example of a way that this might be implemented in the seventh and eighth grade religion class would be to confront students with some of the “big” questions that unbelievers might pose to them in the real world, such as “Why don’t you believe in evolution? It’s science,” or “How can you say homosexuality is wrong? Doesn’t Jesus love everybody?” Another possibility would be to inform students that some scholars think that Jude should not be included in the Bible. Then the teacher could give the students various resources (such as biblical commentaries at a level they can understand) and ask them to use those resources and their discussion to explain why Jude should be included in the Bible. One important note that secular educators would not agree with is “In relation to [the teacher’s] role, the Christian teacher is the formal or nonformal authority, but the final authority is always God.” Also, “as a facilitator, the Christian teacher does indeed promote creativity and growth but not exclusively in

⁹⁰ Marvin J. Taylor, ed., *Religious Education: A Comprehensive Survey* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), 185-186.

⁹¹ Dr. DeGallow. What Is Problem-Based Learning? University of California, Irvine. <http://www.pbl.uci.edu/whatispbl.html> (accessed February 23, 2012).

the students' own terms."⁹² In other words, unlike the secular approach that says there is probably no real "wrong" answer to a problem, no definitive authority, and that students know what they want and need to learn and discuss, God's answer is the final one and the teacher does need to guide students to see God's truth.

Another method of indirect instruction is inquiry-based learning. Inquiry-based learning is similar to problem-based learning in that it is student-centered; the students ask the questions and find the answers. The teacher simply acts as a facilitator and guide to the students as they learn. Inquiry-based learning, however, is shaped by students' questions about a concept or subject, which they then research and answer. The work can be done either individually or in small groups.⁹³ While inquiry-based learning is often used at the college level for a semester, the approach can easily be modified to use in the seventh and eighth grade classroom. Grade-school teachers often employ a strategy called KWL or KWHL. This stands for: what do I already **K**now about the subject? What do I **W**ant to know about the subject? **H**ow do I plan to learn it? After learning, what did I **L**earn (and present that to others)?⁹⁴

One way this strategy might be used in the proposed curriculum is to assign each student a book of the minor prophets to research and then said book used as the subject of a presentation to the rest of the class (the 'what did I **L**earn?'). Each student would then complete for himself the K and W and perhaps H of the KWHL before beginning research. The teacher would provide the students with Bible commentaries as well as some basic instruction in how to use them to perform research. It would also be wise to provide some basic guidelines for information to research, such as, "Who wrote this book? What happens in this book? What is the main point of this book? Why should be study this book?" The teacher would certainly want to circulate through the classroom while the students work on the research and/or make himself available to answer further questions and guide students who feel stumped or stuck. Because there is a possibility that this age group has not given many formal presentations in front of the

⁹² Robert W. Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 101.

⁹³ Jill L. Lane. *Inquiry-Based Learning*. University Park, PA: Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence, 2007. (<http://www.schreyerinstitution.psu.edu/pdf/IBL.pdf>)

⁹⁴ Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 125.

class, the teacher might ask that each student present first to the teacher and work out any issues, offer suggestions for improvement, etc.

Concept learning activities are another strategy that the seventh and eighth grade teacher might utilize in teaching the Bible. The idea of concept learning has students categorize and differentiate information in order to understand main ideas. One activity that fits into this category and could prove especially useful in the religion classroom is the use of comparison. Students “[identify] similarities and differences between concepts”⁹⁵ – in other words, they compare and contrast information. It is important that students understand the topic well in order to be successful and comparing and contrasting may take quite a bit of practice to use well. Graphic organizers, such as a Venn diagram, are extremely helpful in organizing the information that students are comparing and contrasting.⁹⁶

This strategy could be especially useful when talking about the requirements for the Passover lamb. Students could be asked to list those requirements in small groups, then to list the characteristics of Christ in another column. Students would then compare and contrast the two columns to arrive at the realization that Christ served as our Passover lamb once and for all – the ultimate Passover lamb. The teacher could further the learning after completing this activity by asking students to explain, in light of their findings, why God gave the Israelites the Passover and such requirements for the Passover lamb. What was he teaching them?

Students could also be asked to compare and contrast what the Bible tells us about the decoration of the tabernacle or the temple with how our churches are decorated today. With the teacher’s help, students might then analyze the different elements used to decorate the respective places of worship and the symbolism behind them.

The following indirect instructional strategies are classified as “social approaches.” This means that students interact with each other in order to further learning. While many of them require more time and preparation than direct instructional strategies, social strategies can be especially powerful and effective because students are participating in their learning. They are

⁹⁵ Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 141.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 141-142.

active, not passive, and are more likely to remember when they participate.⁹⁷ In addition, students at this age often learn more effectively and readily from their peers. “[Young adolescents] lean heavily on peers to provide a structure for new behaviors and count on their peers to lead them in the right direction.”⁹⁸ This can extend not only to behaviors and attitudes but also to positive encouragement and teaching of one another in the academic realm.

Role playing is a learning activity that seventh and eighth graders seem to respond to particularly well. Role playing is basically acting out a situation, and it is very useful to help students understand the perspectives and feelings of other people.⁹⁹ It can make the words on the page of the Bible come alive and then facilitate follow-up discussion. Important considerations with this activity include making sure that students understand what biblical account they are presenting and what role each student will play. Students should be given a chance to prepare (including the chance to prepare props, the set, costumes, etc.) Not all the students should participate, as there should be some observers (and those observers could be actors the next time role playing is used as part of the lesson). Finally, the teacher should lead a follow-up discussion that not only analyzes what was presented but also ties it to the lives of the students.¹⁰⁰

Some Bible lessons that lend themselves well to this approach include Ruth, Jonah, many of Jesus’ parables, and the book of Philemon. Many of these accounts would also be useful for students to write modern-day adaptations that capture the main idea or application of the lesson. The students who observe the presentation of the Bible lesson could be responsible for acting out how a similar situation might happen today. This would serve to make the application of the lesson even more real and applicable to students’ lives.

Another useful indirect technique is debate. In order to stage a debate, students need to become informed about an issue and then use the information they have learned to contribute to a formal discussion of the issue. Students must either choose their stance on the issue or be assigned a stance, then present their stance as well as a rebuttal to other participants’ stances.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 148.

⁹⁸ Brown and Knowles, *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know*, 43.

⁹⁹ Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 156.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 156.

This technique would also work best when part of the class is assigned the debate while others observe.¹⁰¹

One possibility for such a lesson would be while studying the second part of Colossians. Students could debate how to handle heresy. Another possibility would be a debate about the issue of slavery (and whether or not it is forbidden by God) when studying Philemon. A modified version of this that would involve all of the students would be to provide the students with a statement such as, “God doesn’t like slavery,” and give them time to research what the Bible says about slavery. Then, the teacher could tape a piece of paper that says “agree” on one side of the classroom and one that says “disagree” on the other side of the classroom, and students would line up across the classroom according to how strongly they agree or disagree. Students that are unsure could stand in the middle and then a class discussion could ensue. Students would be free to change places during the discussion if they change their minds due to what other students say.¹⁰²

Panels are indirect method for presenting information, understanding different points of view, and examining motives and feelings of Bible characters. A panel consists of a previously assigned small group of students who discuss a topic or issue among themselves and then with the rest of the class.¹⁰³

The teacher might consider using a panel to examine the book of Esther or the actions of the disciples from Holy Week until Pentecost. In these cases, it would be wise to assign each student a particular Bible character in order to facilitate preparation. A modification of this could take the form of an interview and would be helpful in discussing the book of Revelation. The teacher would take the role of John and tell about his vision from God, then answer questions from the class.

Both whole-class and small-group discussions are good ways to involve the entire class. A discussion is just what it sounds like – participants are conversing about some topic. The teacher’s job is to provide the students with direction – the topic and the purpose of the discussion. A whole-class discussion is most easily led by the teacher, who can be sure to keep

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 155.

¹⁰² Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 150.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 155.

the discussion on topic. The teacher will want to make sure students are adequately informed about the topic before the discussion begins and also prepare questions beforehand to facilitate the discussion. This method, however, differs from questioning because the questions are generally more open-ended, encouraging student discussion with less direction from the teacher. While the teacher may provide new information or clarify when necessary, the students are the ones discussing. Small-group discussions are similar but involve dividing the students into groups of four or five to discuss a topic. Because of the greater independence from the teacher's supervision, small groups do have a tendency to get off-topic more often unless the teacher gently guides the students back on-topic or reminds them of the objective. Also, while whole-class discussion might be used for a whole class period, small-group discussions should generally be shorter, depending on how well they are going that particular day.¹⁰⁴

Ideas for whole-class or small-group discussion include a discussion of stewardship (time, talents, and money) in conjunction with Malachi, various sections of the gospels, the pastoral epistles, Romans, or 1 or 2 Corinthians; discussion of evangelism in conjunction with the great commission, or forms of public worship in conjunction with the Psalms, Colossians 3, or 1 Corinthians 14. Study of 1 Corinthians 5 could be followed or enhanced by conducting a whole-class discussion modeled after a church council meeting. After discussing the issue presented in 1 Corinthians 5, the teacher could also introduce other theological topics or issues that might need to be discussed at modern church council meetings. Whole-class and small-group discussions can also easily be initiated by an agree/disagree question pertinent to the lesson of the day.

One final indirect method that can be utilized in the religion class for some lessons is the use of art or music activities. This type of activity allows for some creativity while encouraging learning.¹⁰⁵ The method can vary greatly, but the idea is to use some sort of artistic or musical expression – drawing, painting, creating a collage, building – while reinforcing some aspect of a lesson. For example, students could work in groups to illustrate the Ten Commandments or draw or build a model of the tabernacle or temple according to the information given in the Bible. They could write a short song that captures the main point of the day's lesson and then

¹⁰⁴ Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 148-150.

¹⁰⁵ Gangel and Hendricks., *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Teaching*, 144.

sing it to the class. These activities will interest and instruct students with gifts in the areas of art and music, as well as allowing students to use those gifts to teach the rest of the class or enhance their learning.

It is clear that there are many instructional strategies that are helpful when teaching seventh and eighth graders the Bible. It is interesting to note that there are few teaching strategies that would not be suited for at least occasional use in the seventh and eighth grade religion classroom. While not all methodologies are equal in the value nor should they be given the same amount of use, nearly every strategy can be used in a beneficial way, given the right circumstances. Not every teacher must use every strategy, but “some teachers have certain methods that become an end in themselves, the teacher finding it necessary to defend a method and use it at all costs and at every possible opportunity. This is not wholesome. We cannot allow the method to dominate the curriculum.”¹⁰⁶ Instead, the teacher should choose instructional strategies depending on his learners and on the lesson he is teaching that day. This will help him to teach God’s Word effectively. With this age group, it is also wise to periodically ask which lessons they remember the best or aid them most in their life of sanctification and why they chose those lessons. The teacher can then use their input and criticisms to help in future lesson planning.

Student Motivation

Even with lessons that use varied strategies to effectively teach different topics, some teachers may struggle with the idea of motivating the learners. Perhaps one might say, “This all sounds nice, but what if they just don’t want to learn?” Of course, the teacher can always try to establish rules to dictate learning: this often manifests itself as a letter grade, which is a powerful law motivation for many people in our society. However, as Christians, we strive to motivate with the gospel, which changes hearts and lives. As such, it is useful to consider the following: “Motivation to learn draws on the meaningfulness, value, and benefits of the academic task to the learner.”¹⁰⁷ If the students see that what they are learning is relevant and valuable to their lives, as the Bible surely is, that is a great motivator. The teacher can also employ other motivators that have been shown to be effective. One is to show that the teacher truly cares for

¹⁰⁶ Kienel, *The Philosophy of Christian School Education*, 111.

¹⁰⁷ Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 190.

and respects the students; this means the instructor “demonstrates warmth and openness, encourages student participation, is enthusiastic, friendly and helpful, and is organized and prepared for class.”¹⁰⁸ Teaching in a supportive manner is also helpful. Being supportive includes “listening, giving hints and encouragement, being responsive to student questions and showing empathy for students.”¹⁰⁹ Another important factor is the level of difficulty or challenge. Students need some responsibility and challenge; if a task is too easy, the student may become bored and feel that the teacher does not expect much or think that particular student is capable of much. On the other hand, tasks that are too difficult may cause the student to give up because it is too hard. One more motivator for students is allowing them to have choices of some sort, whether it be choosing a partner, choosing among various assignments, picking a due date for an assignment or giving the teacher feedback on teaching methods and assignments.¹¹⁰

One note that bears repeating is that students are motivated by relevance to their lives. There is no subject more relevant to life than God’s Word and seventh and eighth grade religion teachers have the privilege and responsibility of emphasizing that relevance. They teach not only the facts about the Bible but what the Bible means in life, its relevance to every day and how it can be used by students every day. In addition to the learning in the classroom, teachers ought to provide opportunities for students to learn through works of service – putting sanctification into practice. Studies have shown that students who participate in service-learning tend to have stronger moral values and judgments as well as more positive social behavior, such as avoidance of alcohol and drugs.¹¹¹ Works of service could include anything from tutoring younger students in the same school or helping with upkeep of the church or school property to performing yard work for a senior citizen or creating get-well cards with a biblical message for patients in a local hospital or sending letters of Christian encouragement to troops overseas. Works of service are an excellent way to help students apply and put into practice what they have learned.

¹⁰⁸ Karin Kirk. *Motivating Students*. Last modified February 18, 2012.
<http://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/affective/motivation.html>

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ RMC. *Impacts of Service-Learning on K-12 Participants*. Scotts Valley, CA: Learn and Serve America’s National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2003/2007.
http://www.servicelearningtexas.org/images/uploads/Impacts_of_SL_on_Participating_K-12_Students_FS_Short_Final_Mar08-1.pdf

“Walking the Path of Our Salvation” is a course designed to help students learn biblical knowledge as well as Christian habits, aptitudes and attitudes. As such, the course requires that students do more than just show up to class. Students prepare for each class period by reading a short assigned section from the Bible and completing an assignment that reinforces or expands upon what has been read. As aforementioned, students also actively participate in each class period, working together with the teacher and peers to explore biblical truths.

Here it is pertinent to note that this religious curriculum is not entirely theoretical. The author developed such a curriculum for study of the Old Testament and used many of the aforementioned instructional methods to teach it to sixteen seventh and eighth graders over the course of a school year. “Walking the Path of Our Salvation” has been tested in a classroom, and many people have expressed satisfaction with this walk.

Instructional Assessment

After teaching a lesson, it is important that the teacher know if he has reached his goals. Each teacher should take time for reflection: thinking about what worked and what needs to be improved, as well as how that could be improved. The teacher can also receive feedback from students, either informally in a short conversation or more formally in a lesson or course evaluation. The classroom teacher or parents may also offer feedback if asked.¹¹² All of this reflection and feedback will help the teacher see if he has reached his goals or not, as well as plan future lessons.

The creator of “Walking the Path of Our Salvation” strove for frequent reflection as feedback, as he did not feel he had sufficient educational training to teach such a course without much feedback from others. The teacher asked himself after every lesson, “Should I do that again? How should I change it?” He observed students during class to see if they were paying attention. He used student assessments to see what they were learning. He took it as encouragement that the students asked if they could have religion class for a longer period of time. Perhaps surprisingly, parental feedback was often unsolicited, but it was overwhelmingly positive. One parent said, “It’s amazing what this religion class has done for my daughter. She knew a lot of this stuff before, but she didn’t seem to see how it relates to real life. I can see a

¹¹² Burden and Byrd, *Methods for Effective Teaching*, 11-13.

difference in her behavior and attitude.” The classroom teacher of the seventh and eighth grade class where the course was taught commented, “The students learned a lot in this class. They paid attention much more closely than they normally do. I learned more about teaching, too; [the religion instructor] used ideas and approaches I might not have, with good results.” One prays that these sentiments will be echoed by the lives of the students in years to come.

CONCLUSION

There are many options available which will help students achieve both the intellectual and spiritual goals outlined in this study. It would be presumptuous and unwise to say that “Walking the Path of Our Salvation” is the best way of undertaking a systematic study of the Scriptures. What this curriculum does have to offer is an approach to the study of the Bible which is not presently offered in any other curriculum available. It is unique in that it suggests an isagogic approach to the study of the whole Bible over the course of two years. It sets very high, yet attainable goals for both teachers and students. It must be said that this course is not for anyone, however. It demands more from the educator than simply picking up the material and heading to the classroom. For the teacher who is looking for a challenge both for himself and for the students, “Walking the Path of Our Salvation” can be a very useful and even refreshing addition to the religion classroom.

Even more important than the development of a product are the principles which drive this curriculum. Choosing materials that keep Christian theology at the center while attaining goals rooted in sound educational philosophy through teaching that is relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory is key in establishing a worthwhile curriculum. Using diverse methods of instruction which allow God’s Word to be the deciding factor in how the material is presented while considering the many and varied ways in which students process and acquire information is important. Keeping a balance between cognitive and affective goals, giving students the opportunity to grow in wisdom and knowledge and to put it into practice in their sanctified lives by providing them with numerous opportunities are critical components of meaningful instruction. It is the will of our Lord and the desire of the author that teachers would be diligent in presenting God’s Word to seventh and eighth graders with renewed zeal so that they flourish at such a critical age in their formation as God’s children and the future of his Church. It is my prayer not only that they walk the path of salvation as they read God’s Word,

not only that they journey through the Old Testament, walk with Jesus in the gospels and go with that gospel into the world, but that, ultimately, they walk the path which ends in the eternal glories of heaven. May God grant it.

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Walking the Path of Our Salvation

A Journey through the Old Testament

Genesis

1. The Journey Begins
2. Sin and the Promise
3. Noah and the Flood
4. Abraham
5. Isaac
6. Jacob

Exodus

7. Moses
8. Ten Plagues and the Passover
9. The Exodus and the Desert
10. The LORD Gives the Law
11. The Tabernacle

Leviticus

12. The LORD Is Holy
13. The Day of Atonement

Numbers

14. The Spies' Report
15. The Bronze Serpent

Deuteronomy

16. The Law Revisited
17. Moses' Death, Blessing and Burial

Joshua

18. Entering the Promised Land
19. The LORD's Army
20. Ai and Achan

Judges

21. Israel's Obedience and Rebellion
22. The Judges

Ruth

23. The Story of Ruth

1 & 2 Samuel

24. Samuel (3 & 8)
25. Saul
26. David I
27. David II

1 & 2 Kings

28. Solomon

1 & 2 Chronicles

29. A Kingdom Divided

Ezra

30. Back from Babylon

Nehemiah

31. Nehemiah: a Man with a Plan

Esther

32. For Such a Time as This

Job

33. A Man of Faith
34. A God of wisdom

Psalms

35. 119
36. Songs of Sorrow
37. Songs of Joy
38. Songs of the Messiah
39. Psalm reports

Proverbs

40. The Wisdom of God
41. Putting Prudence into Practice

Ecclesiastes

42. What Does This Mean?

Song of Songs

43. Solomon Sings a Love Song

Isaiah

44. Isaiah's Song of Sin and Salvation
45. Isaiah's Servant Songs

Jeremiah

46. Jeremiah's Job
47. The Purpose of the Pictures

Ezekiel

48. Chasing God's Glory
49. Finding God's Glory

Daniel

50. Our Almighty King
51. His Awesome Kingdom

Lamentations

52. Sighs, Cries and Lamentations

Hosea

53. I Promise To Be Faithful...

Joel

54. Lights, Camera, Action!

Amos

55. God's Ring of Fire

Obadiah

56. Outlining Obadiah

Jonah

57. The Story of Jonah

Micah

58. Judge for Yourself

Nahum

59. Comfort and Calamity

Habakkuk

60. A Prophet Full of Prayer

Zephaniah

61. Restating Ancient Truths

Haggai

62. Building God's House

Zechariah

63. See, Your King Comes!

Malachi

64. Standing on the Doorstep of Salvation

Walking the Path of Our Salvation

Walking with Jesus & Going with the Gospel

The Gospels

1. This is the Gospel of our Lord!
2. Good News!
3. Setting the Stage
4. The Christ Is Come!
5. The Gospel for All
6. A Showdown in the Desert
7. Follow Me!
8. The Miracles of our Lord
9. The Parables of our Lord
10. Who Is Jesus?
11. A Cross for the Christ and for the Christian
12. The New Covenant
13. Prophet, Priest and King
14. The Christ on the Cross
15. He Is Not Here!
16. Go with the Gospel!

Acts

17. Go with the Gospel!
18. The Birth of the Christian Church
19. Stephen the Martyr
20. Saul to Paul
21. Peter the Evangelist
22. The Gospel Goes: Journey 1
23. The Gospel Goes: Journey 2
24. The Gospel Goes: Journey 3
25. The Gospel Goes to Rome

Romans

26. Heavy Duty Doctrine: Sin
27. Heavy Duty Doctrine: Justification
28. Heavy Duty Doctrine: Sanctification
29. Heavy Duty Doctrine: Predestination

1 Corinthians

30. A Church in Christ
31. A Church in Crisis
32. The Church in Christ

2 Corinthians

33. God Reconciles His People to Himself
34. God Reconciles His People to Each Other

Galatians

35. No Other Gospel!
36. Understanding Law and Gospel

Ephesians

37. The Gospel Proclaims Grace
38. Fighting for the Faith

Philippians

39. Rejoice in the Lord Always!
40. I Will Say It Again: Rejoice!

Colossians

41. In Christ Alone

42. How To Handle Heresy

1 Thessalonians

43. Eagerly Expect the Christ

2 Thessalonians

44. Patiently Await the Christ

1 Timothy

45. Dear Pastor Timothy...

2 Timothy

46. Again, Dear Pastor Timothy...

Titus

47. Dear Pastor Titus...

Philemon

48. Slavery Unshackled?

Hebrews

49. Christ: The God-Man
50. Christ: The Greatest Priest
51. Christ: The Greatest Sacrifice

James

52. Faith at Work
53. At War with the World

1 Peter

54. The Gospel Brings Salvation

55. The Gospel Brings Suffering

2 Peter

56. The Gospel Gives Precious Promises

1 John

57. Walking in the Light

2 John

58. Walking in Love

3 John

59. Walking in the Truth

Jude

60. When the Word Is Warped

Revelation

61. Pulling Back the Curtain
62. Revealing God's Gospel
63. Unveiling the Fate of the Foe
64. Glimpses of Eternal Glory

Numbers

The Bronze Serpent

Devotion: Psalm 91 *The LORD Provides Protection in Time and Eternity*

Stepping Stones:

In preparation for this lesson, students drew two pictures—one of the scene in Numbers 21 of the bronze snake on a pole and the other as Jesus prophesied to Nicodemus in John 3:14-18.

What am I going to teach?

- 1) The teacher is faced with a beautiful dilemma in teaching this lesson. The imagery is so rich in Numbers 21 that even our Lord Jesus fixates on this account as He preaches what might be the most beautiful Gospel ever told in John chapter 3. The teacher will certainly want to make the most of this typological portrait of the Messiah who is to be lifted up on a pole.
- 2) Time restrictions only allow two lessons for the Book of Numbers. It is important that the teacher not simply try and cover as much information as possible solely for the sake of imparting large quantities of facts for students to download. Such haste will hinder learning.
- 3) While the teacher could focus solely on the Bronze Serpent during the lesson, some other possibilities to highlight from the second half of the Book of Numbers are:
 - a. 20:1-13: *Water from the Rock*
 - b. 20:22-29: *The Death of Aaron*
 - c. 23-24: *Balaam's Oracles*
 - d. 26: *The Second Census*
 - e. 27:12-23 *Joshua to Succeed Moses*
 - f. 28-29: *Worship Regulations*
 - g. 33: *Stages in Israel's Journey*
 - h. 36:13: *A Summary Verse of the Book of Numbers*

How am I going to teach it?

- 1) Begin with devotion on Psalm 91.
- 2) If you desire, give students a quiz.
- 3) Take a few minutes to review the homework assignment and to explain just what the bronze serpent on the pole means and what it doesn't, what Jesus meant when He said "just as" and what He didn't. Consider having the class to evaluate a few statements such as "God had Moses put a snake on a pole to show how Jesus would crush the serpent's head." "The snake was made out of bronze to show that Jesus would be strong just like bronze." "It was the faith of the Israelites which saved them after they had been bitten by snakes, not simply looking at the bronze serpent." etc..
- 4) In order to engage the students visually, the teacher could present images which depict the bronze serpent and Christ on the cross for students to compare and contrast. If computers are available to students, they could search for images themselves on the internet. Another option would be to fashion a "bronze" snake and a crucifix to use for an object lesson.
- 5) A very practical idea for teaching this lesson would be to spend some class time allowing students to read a chapter or two which they were not assigned. Each student could write down three important points from the chapters they read and present them to class.

POINTS TO PONDER AS I PREPARE

1. Why would the loving LORD send venomous snakes among His people which would kill some?
2. Why did the LORD send snakes and not bears or bats?
3. What power did the bronze serpent have?
4. What is "the Book of the Wars of the LORD?" Is that in our Bibles?
5. Why does Israel make such frequent reference to the defeat of Sihon and Og in the Scriptures?
6. How do I determine which topics to present to the class from the Book of Numbers?
7. How can I keep from rushing through the final chapters of Numbers simply to cover much ground?
8. As we walk the path of our salvation, how does the Book of Numbers fit in the picture?
9. How will I present the Law in class?
10. How will I present the Gospel in class?
11. How does this text relate to sanctified life?
12. How does this Book point us to Christ?

RESOURCES

1. Book of Books: 23-25
2. People's Bible: Numbers
3. Concordia Self Study Bible
4. Concordia Self Study Commentary
5. The Lutheran Study Bible
6. Franzmann OT Bible History Commentary: 275-291

Walking the Path of Our Salvation **Numbers**

Lesson 15: The Bronze Serpent

Reading Assignment: NUMBERS 21

Read **Numbers 21:4-9**. Draw a picture of what you see.



Read **John 3:14-18**. Draw a picture of what you see.

Memory Treasure:

Numbers 6:24-26

The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.

Name: _____

Numbers

- 1 What caused God to punish His people?
- 2 How did God punish them?
- 3 What was the people's response to God's punishment?
- 4 How did the LORD respond to His people?
- 5 The Israelites defeated two great kings in this chapter. Name one of them.

EC: Jesus mentions the bronze serpent in another Book of the Bible. Name that Book.

Name: _____

Numbers

- 1 What caused God to punish His people?
- 2 How did God punish them?
- 3 What was the people's response to God's punishment?
- 4 How did the LORD respond to His people?
- 5 The Israelites defeated two great kings in this chapter. Name one of them.

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Name: _____

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EC: Jesus mentions the bronze serpent in another Book of the Bible. Name that Book.

Name: _____

Numbers

- 1 What caused God to punish His people?
- 2 How did God punish them?
- 3 What was the people's response to God's punishment?
- 4 How did the LORD respond to His people?
- 5 The Israelites defeated two great kings in this chapter. Name one of them.

EC: Jesus mentions the bronze serpent in another Book of the Bible. Name that Book.

Song of Songs

Solomon Sings a Love Song

Devotion: Proverbs 5 “Warnings Against Adultery”

Stepping Stones:

In preparation for this lesson, students have written an essay of about 100 words in which they describe what they are looking for in their future spouse. Not all students will have read all of the Song of Songs, as the instructions for the worksheet allowed.

What am I going to teach?

- 1) The Song of Songs is considered by many to be the most difficult Book in the Bible. Not only is the language itself at times obscure due to our inability to specify the flora and fauna of Solomon’s day or even understand some of his similes, metaphors and other literary devices, but the very interpretation of the Song—its basic meaning—has also baffled readers.
- 2) A question for every student of the Word of God to consider carefully as they read through the Song of Songs is if the relationship described in the Song is about the love of a man and a woman, about God and His people or both.
- 3) While the students certainly would benefit from talking about some of the underlying issues in the Song such as different ways of interpreting it, the structure, the characters involved, etc., this lesson presents a wonderful opportunity to speak about sexuality in the light of sacred Scripture. Since 7th and 8th graders are constantly exposed to so much false information about sex from the examples given on TV, the internet, their friends and even their families, cherish the opportunity to teach the gift of sex the way God designed it to be.

How am I going to teach it?

- 1) Begin with devotion on Proverbs 5.
- 2) If you desire, give students a quiz.
- 3) Hand out and discuss the introduction to Song of Songs page.
- 4) The teacher might consider using direct instructional methods in the classroom, allotting a significant amount to lecture about the gift of sex which God gives to a husband and a wife, the gift which is disclosed in the Song. However, there certainly are other ways to teach this lesson which would promote student involvement and participation.
- 5) This lesson would also be a prime candidate for using inquiry-based instruction where the students ask the questions and find the answers. The teacher simply acts as a facilitator and guide to the students as they learn. The teacher’s ability to undertake this kind of discussion essentially depends on the relationship which has been fostered between the students and the teacher.
- 6) Since the students have already completed a worksheet on which they wrote down some of the qualities they will be looking for in a future spouse, the teacher could divide the class into two groups—young men and young women. The boys could discuss together the things that they wrote and the girls could do the same. Once each group has spent some time doing this individually, the groups of boys and girls could share their thoughts with one another while the teacher acts as facilitator/moderator.

POINTS TO PONDER AS I PREPARE

1. How should I account for such ornate, explicit and flowery language?
2. Are there 2 main characters or 3?
3. Are two main characters in the Song lovers or a married couple?
4. What does the structure of the Song teach me?
5. Is Song of Songs about two lovers or about Christ and the Church?
6. What, if any, imagery would be valuable to explain to my students?
7. How can I address Song of Songs in a way that shows reverence for the text, giving an honest presentation, and is applicable to and wholesome for 7th and 8th graders?
8. As we walk the path of our salvation, how does the Book of Song of Songs fit in the picture?
9. How will I present the Law in class?
10. How will I present the Gospel in class?
11. How does this text relate to sanctified life?
12. How does this Book point us to Christ?

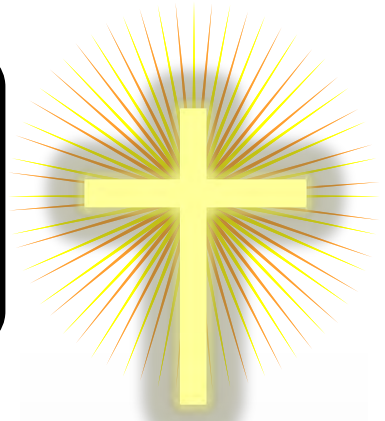
RESOURCES

1. Book of Books: 65
2. People’s Bible: Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs
3. Concordia Self Study Bible
4. Concordia Self Study Commentary
5. The Lutheran Study Bible
6. Concordia Commentary: Song of Songs

Song of Songs

Walking the Path of Our Salvation

Song of Songs – the LORD’s Love Song



Our Path in Song of Songs:

1. Solomon Sings a Love Song

Author: Solomon **Date:** Around 970 BC

In 10 words or less... Married love paints a picture of God’s love for us.

Purpose:

God’s love in Christ for you is “the very flame of the Lord,” which alone conquers death and enables you to be faithful to Him and to the person with whom you are united in marital love

Blessings for readers:

The Song of Solomon is not the first book people should study from the OT. Nor is it the chief book for establishing Christian doctrine. Nonetheless, it is essential reading for God’s people because life is more than precepts. God created us beautiful and passionate. To celebrate these blessings is to celebrate our Creator and His passionate love for us. As you read the Song of Solomon, consider this: if earthly love and life are so wondrous and stirring, how much more wonderful will eternal love and life be?

From *The Lutheran Study Bible*

A point to ponder:

A question which is not readily or easily answered as you read the Song of Songs is this: is the Song about the love that a man and a woman share, the love that God has for His Church... or both? As you read the pages of sacred Scripture, pray that the Lord give you wisdom and insight to answer a question that has puzzled God’s people for thousands of years.

Memory Treasure:

Song of Songs 6:3

“I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.”

NKJV



Walking the Path of Our Salvation **Song of Songs**

Lesson 43: Solomon Sings a Love Song

Reading Assignment: SONG OF SONGS

I AM MY BELOVED'S AND MY BELOVED IS ???

A common wedding verse for people of Jewish descent is Song of Songs 6:3, "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." Well, what will your beloved look like? Solomon asks you: Girls, what are you looking for in a husband? Guys, what are you looking for in a wife? **100 WORDS**

Memory Treasure:

Song of Songs 6:3

"I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine."

NKJV

Name:

Song of Songs

Name five things which you learned or remember from your reading of the Book of Song of Songs. Consider ideas, phrases or concepts in your answer.

1

2

3

4

5

EC: Name the two main characters in the Book of Song of Songs.

Name:

Song of Songs

Name five things which you learned or remember from your reading of the Book of Song of Songs. Consider ideas, phrases or concepts in your answer.

1

2

3

4

5

EC: Name the two main characters in the Book of Song of Songs.

Name:

Song of Songs

Name five things which you learned or remember from your reading of the Book of Song of Songs. Consider ideas, phrases or concepts in your answer.

1

2

3

4

5

EC: Name the two main characters in the Book of Song of Songs.

Name:

Song of Songs

Name five things which you learned or remember from your reading of the Book of Song of Songs. Consider ideas, phrases or concepts in your answer.

1

2

3

4

5

EC: Name the two main characters in the Book of Song of Songs.

Philemon

Slavery Unshackled?

Devotion: John 13:1-17: *Jesus, Master of all, became our servant.*

Stepping Stones:

Before this lesson, students have prepared an assignment called “Slavery Unshackled” in which they responded to Paul’s letter to Philemon.

What am I going to teach?

- 1) Students will need to become familiar with the situation that this Book puts forth. It is imperative that they understand the underlying issues that Paul addresses between Philemon, a well-to-do Christian, and Onesimus, his runaway slave.
- 2) Slavery is an important topic to discuss when approaching the Book of Philemon, especially in the culture we live in as Americans. We have become entitled to freedom and personal liberties; life was not always that way for the human race.
- 3) The heart of the Book of Philemon is the Christian relationship that Paul encourages Philemon and Onesimus to display. Paul wants to show both the runaway slave and his master that, as Christians, they are subject to laws appointed by men but also—and more importantly—to the selfless love that Christ wants His people to demonstrate and live.
- 4) The Apostle Paul demonstrates his extreme love in this Book both for the people he is privileged to serve and for the Gospel of Jesus. It is worthwhile to point out that we should strive to follow his godly example when we face perplexing situations.
- 5) While Christ’s own acts of servitude are not explicitly expressed in the Book of Philemon, they certainly lie latent in the text. This Book is still laced with His love, yet the teacher might do well to take a trip to Philippians chapter 2 and see how the almighty Christ lowered Himself to the status of slave for us.

How am I going to teach it?

- 1) Begin with devotion on John 13:1-17.
- 2) If you desire, give students a quiz.
- 3) Hand out and discuss the introduction to Philemon page.
- 4) Divide students into groups of four. Give each group a Concordia Self-Study Bible, The Lutheran Study Bible, Book of Books and the People’s Bible. Have each student skim their book to glean information about Philemon and Onesimus. Have the students record what they’ve learned.
- 5) Introduce the concept of slavery as we know it today and contrast it with what is presented in other parts of the Bible and especially here in the Book of Philemon. Have students take sides as to whether or not they believe slavery is immoral and why. Use the classroom as a place for debate.
- 6) Bring the class back together and have students break out into groups and determine how they would act out the Book of Philemon.
- 7) Give students the opportunity to act out what they think would happen when Philemon and Onesimus meet up again.

POINTS TO PONDER AS I PREPARE

1. Who is Philemon?
2. Who is Onesimus?
3. What was Onesimus’ crime?
4. What legal rights did Philemon have as master?
5. What legal rights did Onesimus have as a slave?
6. Is slavery inherently sinful?
7. Which other sections of Scripture address the issue of slavery?
8. What does our society teach us about slavery?
9. What is Paul relating when he calls himself a prisoner of Christ Jesus?
10. What do we learn as Christians from Paul’s example in this Book?
11. As we walk the path of our salvation, how does the Book of Philemon fit in the picture?
12. How will you present the Law in class?
13. How will you present the Gospel in class?
14. How does this text relate to sanctified life?
15. How does this Book point us to Christ?

RESOURCES

1. Book of Books: 269, 270
2. People’s Bible: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon
3. Concordia Self Study Bible
4. Concordia Self Study Commentary
5. The Lutheran Study Bible
6. Concordia Commentary: Philemon

Walking the Path of Our Salvation *Philemon*

Lesson 48: Slavery Unshackled?

Reading Assignment: THE BOOK OF PHILEMON

RE: TO PHILEMON, OUR DEAR FRIEND AND FELLOW WORKER...

Read the book of Philemon and then write a letter as if you are Philemon responding to Paul. Be sure to let Paul know how you received Onesimus and why, in keeping with what Paul wrote.

Memory Treasure:

Philemon 4-7

4 I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, 5 because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. 6 I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. 7 Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.

Name:

Philemon

- ❶ Name three people mentioned in the Book you read for today.
- ❷ Circle the word which is not found in the Book of Philemon: 1) slave 2) joy 3) Iscariot 4) prisoner 5) Onesimus.
- ❸ Describe Paul's tone in writing this letter.

- ❹ What is the Book of Philemon about?

- ❺ On the back of this quiz, write down two things you learned from your reading of the Book of Philemon.

EC: Name two more people mentioned in the Book you read for today.

Name:

Philemon

- ❶ Name three people mentioned in the Book you read for today.
- ❷ Circle the word which is not found in the Book of Philemon: 1) slave 2) joy 3) Iscariot 4) prisoner 5) Onesimus.
- ❸ Describe Paul's tone in writing this letter.

- ❹ What is the Book of Philemon about?

- ❺ On the back of this quiz, write down two things you learned from your reading of the Book of Philemon.

EC: Name two more people mentioned in the Book you read for today.

Name:

Philemon

- ❶ Name three people mentioned in the Book you read for today.
- ❷ Circle the word which is not found in the Book of Philemon: 1) slave 2) joy 3) Iscariot 4) prisoner 5) Onesimus.
- ❸ Describe Paul's tone in writing this letter.

- ❹ What is the Book of Philemon about?

- ❺ On the back of this quiz, write down two things you learned from your reading of the Book of Philemon.

EC: Name two more people mentioned in the Book you read for today.

Name:

Philemon

- ❶ Name three people mentioned in the Book you read for today.
- ❷ Circle the word which is not found in the Book of Philemon: 1) slave 2) joy 3) Iscariot 4) prisoner 5) Onesimus.
- ❸ Describe Paul's tone in writing this letter.

- ❹ What is the Book of Philemon about?

- ❺ On the back of this quiz, write down two things you learned from your reading of the Book of Philemon.

EC: Name two more people mentioned in the Book you read for today.

Jude

When the Word is Warped

Devotion: John 19:6-16 *When the Word is warped, the innocent Christ is killed.*

Stepping Stones:

In preparation for this lesson, students have read the Book of Jude and wrestled with the questions of what happens when the truth is twisted and when the truth is told.

What am I going to teach?

- 1) The Book of Jude has some interesting history behind it. It was classified in the category of antilegomena by the early Christian Church. It is a close companion of the Book of II Peter with an astounding number of similarities. It is possible that either Peter copied from Jude or Jude copied from Peter.
- 2) Jude cites some references that do not come from the OT. There is no OT writing regarding the devil and the angel Michael disputing over the body of Moses or of the prophecy of Enoch. Obviously, not everything that happened in OT times is cited in the OT. Jude makes use of material known in his time, but not part of the Scripture prior to his time.
- 3) Jude writes against those who were espousing the gnostic heresy, warning God's people of the imminent danger proposed by that false doctrine. These false teachers were people "who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord." (Jude 4)
- 4) Jude's point about false teachers is that God's judgment against such ungodliness is inescapable. However, it is not God's last word to us – His last word is the Word, the Son of God, Jesus. Notice Christ's stance: He always taught the truth; didn't mince words, making the law stronger and the gospel sweeter than any human theologian. But it isn't just His words – it is His action of taking God's judgment against all sin, taking the place of those who have rebelled by suffering the results of their rebellion. In Christ, and in Him alone, there is another judgment – and it is a courtroom term – "not guilty." When Christ comes to judge the living and the dead, you can be sure a place has been saved for you in heaven, because He saved you. And that's the truth.

How am I going to teach it?

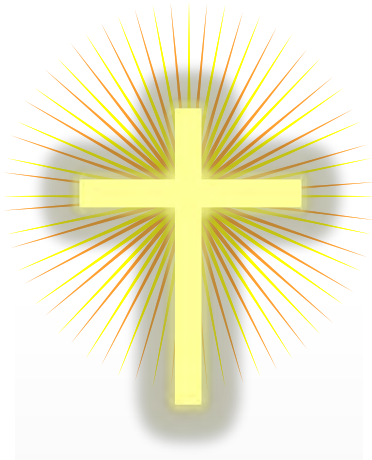
- 1) Begin with devotion on John 19:6-16.
- 2) If you desire, give students a quiz.
- 3) Hand out and discuss the introduction Jude page.
- 4) Point out to students that God-fearing Christians have long debated whether or not the Book of Jude should be included in our Bibles. Pose this problem to the class: "Should the Book of Jude even be in our Bibles?" Encourage students to brainstorm, either in small groups or as a class and seek out an answer. Students can rely on previous knowledge or the teacher could hand out other information to guide their thinking.
- 5) After giving students 15 minutes for thinking and 15 minutes for group discussion, have each student write down their conclusions on a sheet of paper which they can hand in to the teacher.
- 6) Ask the class to volunteer some of their conclusions. Don't let anyone leave without knowing that when the Word is warped, souls are slain; when the truth is taught, souls are saved.

POINTS TO PONDER AS I PREPARE

1. Who is Jude?
2. To whom is Jude related?
3. Which errors is Jude combating in this Book?
4. What is unique about Jude's doxology?
5. Why does Jude spend so much time delving into ancient history?
6. Why does Jude spend so little time addressing the Gospel?
7. Why would Jude cite two examples which are not recorded elsewhere in the Bible?
8. Does the fact that the Book of Jude and II Peter have so many similarities add or detract from its canonicity?
9. As we walk the path of our salvation, how does the Book of Jude fit in the picture?
10. How will I present the Law in class?
11. How will I present the Gospel in class?
12. How does this text relate to sanctified life?
13. How does this Book point us to Christ?

RESOURCES

1. Book of Books: 294-296
2. People's Bible: James, Peter, John and Jude
3. Concordia Self Study Bible
4. Concordia Self Study Commentary
5. The Lutheran Study Bible



Jude

Walking the Path of Our Salvation

Jude – Fighting for the Faith

Our Path in Jude:

1. When the Word Is Warped

Author: Jude **Date:** Around 68 BC

In ten words or less... **Beware of heretical teachers and their dangerous doctrines!**

Purpose:

To warn fellow Christians about the dangers posed by the ungodly false teachers

Of Interest:

There are only 25 verses in Jude, yet he gives nine examples of God's judgment from the OT. Beginning with the positive example of how God rescued His people from Egypt, he continues with eight other examples of how prophets and leaders earned wrath by various shades of rebellion against Him and His Word. Some are openly blasphemous (Balaam's attempts to curse God's people for financial gain); some are simply rebellious (Korah's attempt to discredit Moses because of dire conditions); some are quite mysterious to us (the rebellion of the devils). All are as current as rebellion against God today.

Blessings for readers:

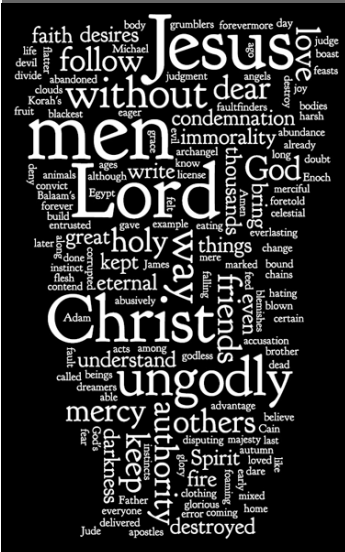
This short letter is easy to overlook. Yet it contains important instruction that has always applied to Christians: false teachers are a constant threat. Jude will help you distinguish between false teachers, who are doomed to destruction, and wounded believers who are struggling with doubt and need fellow Christians to encourage them (see vv. 22-23)

From The Lutheran Study Bible

Memory Treasure:

Philemon 4-7

“But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.”



Walking the Path of Our Salvation *Jude*

Lesson 60: When the Word Is Warped

Reading Assignment: THE BOOK OF JUDE

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE TRUTH IS TWISTED?

Read the Book of Jude and write down some examples you see where Jude points out that the Word of God is being warped, twisted and misused by the people who are teaching it.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE TRUTH IS TOLD?

The Book of Jude has a condemning message for all who misuse the Word of God. In the space below, write down some ways that the Book shows us how we can properly use God's Word.

Memory Treasure:

Jude 20, 21

“But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.”

Name:

Jude

- 1 What kind of men had slipped in among the people whom Jude was addressing?
- 2 In the Book of Jude we hear that two celestial beings were arguing over the body of Moses. Name one of them.
- 3 Circle the passage from the Book of Jude:
 - 1 "All men are like grass and their glory is like the flowers of the field."
 - 2 "They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead."
- 4 Fill in the missing word from Jude 23:
"Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the _____ and save them."
- 5 How does the Book of Jude end?

EC: Jude was whose brother?

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Walking the Path of Our Salvation

A Journey Through the Old Testament

TEST I: GENESIS, EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS & DEUTERONOMY

Name That Book

Write the book of the Bible in which you can find these people, places, things or events:

- 1) Pharaoh _____
- 2) The Ten Commandments _____
- 3) Creation _____
- 4) The Day of Atonement _____
- 5) The Passover _____
- 6) The Flood _____
- 7) Manna _____
- 8) Mt. Sinai _____
- 9) The Garden of Eden _____
- 10) Isaac _____

Short Answer

1. Who is the author of the book of Leviticus?
2. What is the purpose of the book of Numbers?
3. Summarize the content of the book of Genesis in ten words or less:
4. When was the book of Deuteronomy written?
5. What blessings can you expect as a reader of the book of Exodus?

Identification

Write **three sentences** to show me that you know who or what these things are. In your answer, you may want to consider the achievements of the person or the purpose of the event or object.

1. The Ten Plagues

2. The Day of Atonement

3. The Tent of Meeting

4. Abraham

5. The Passover

6. Scapegoat

7. Moses

8. Jacob

9. The Table of the Bread of the Presence

10. The Ten Commandments

The Tabernacle

Draw a picture of the tabernacle. You must include the following items:

- 1) the Holy of Holies
 - 2) the courtyard
 - 3) the lampstand
 - 4) the Ark of the Covenant
 - 5) the wash basin
 - 6) the table of the bread of the presence
 - 7) the altar
 - 8) the Holy Place
 - 9) the entrance
 - 10) the incense altar
- Anything else you label is extra credit.

ESSAYS

Since we began reading the book of Genesis, we have been walking the path of our salvation. How have you seen God's hand in our salvation in the first five books of the Bible? **AT LEAST 10 SENTENCES!**

We have seen Israel commit some terrible sins during our journey with together. What have you learned about their sin—and your sin, too—as we've walked with them? **AT LEAST 10 SENTENCES!**

ESSAYS AND EXTRA CREDIT

Describe, in detail, your favorite lesson that we've covered so far this year. AT LEAST 10 SENTENCES!

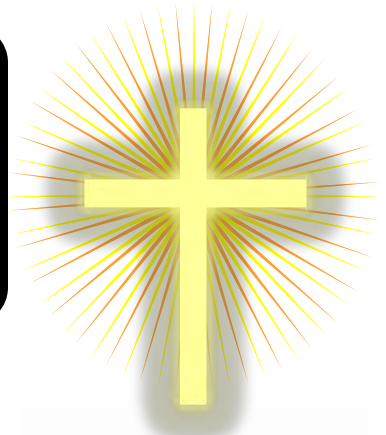
Extra Credit

1. What is the Decalogue?
2. The first five books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy—are also called the:
3. When we see the name, “The LORD” written in all capital letters, how is that different from “Lord”?
4. Which of the ten plagues couldn't the Egyptian magicians reproduce?
5. What does “Yom Kippur” mean?

EXTRA PAPER

This section is a large, rounded rectangular area with a thick black border. It contains numerous horizontal lines, providing a space for writing or drawing. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the area.

Minor Prophets



Walking the Path of Our Salvation

As we walk our way through the Old Testament, we meet up with the Minor Prophets. The Minor Prophets were twelve men whom the Lord chose to write the sacred letters of Scripture. They are called “Minor Prophets” not because they have a miniature message but because of the size of the books they wrote. Part of our journey is to get to know these men and their messages better. As we study these books, you will work together with one of your classmates to do a two-part assignment: 1) a research paper and 2) a class presentation.

RESEARCH PAPER

You will begin your project by reading the book assigned to you. Then, together with your partner, you will write a paper entitled, “(NAME OF MINOR PROPHET), The Man and His Message.” The paper will be at least 500 words and divided into two parts:

1) The Man

The first part of the paper will be a biography on the prophet assigned to you. In writing this part of the paper, you will want to learn as much as you can about the life and history of the prophet and write what you’ve learned in a 250 word typed essay.

2) His Message

The second part will deal with the prophet’s message. For this half, you should spend some time getting to know what the prophet was writing about, how it applied to God’s people then and how it applies to us now in a 250 word typed essay.

MEETING WITH TEACHER

After writing this paper, you will meet with your teacher and we’ll discuss what you’ve found out. We’ll work together to determine what **the major point** of **the Minor Prophet** is and discuss the presentation you will give in class.

CLASS PRESENTATION

For your class presentation, you will inform the class about what you learned from writing your paper. However, if you wrote your half of the paper on “The Man” you will present on “His Message.” Likewise, if you wrote your paper on “His Message” you will now tell the class about “The Man.” Each of you will present to the class for about 3 minutes. Your presentation must include 2 questions to ask the class. Also, I will give the class two minutes to ask you questions about your prophet, and you should try to respond *as if you were the prophet!* You will finish this presentation by teaching the class **the major point of the Minor Prophet.**

The Minor Prophets

1. Hosea
2. Joel
3. Amos
4. Obadiah
5. Jonah
6. Micah
7. Nahum
8. Habakuk
9. Zephaniah
10. Haggai
11. Zechariah
12. Malachi

Partners	Minor Prophet	Research Paper	Meeting	Class Presentation
1/2	Amos	Tuesday, March 29	April 4-7	Tuesday, April 12
3/4	Obadiah	Thursday, March 31	April 4-7	Thursday, April 14
5/6	Micah	Tuesday, April 12	April 12-14	Thursday, April 28
7/8	Nahum	Thursday, April 14	April 26-28	Tuesday, May 3
9/10	Habakuk	Tuesday, April 26	May 2-4	Tuesday, May 10
11/12	Zephaniah	Thursday, April 28	May 2-4	Thursday, May 12
13/14	Haggai	Tuesday, May 3	May 9-12	Tuesday, May 17
15/16	Zechariah	Wednesday, May 4	May 9-12	Thursday, May 19

Walking the Path of Our Salvation

A Journey through the Old Testament.

Dear Parent-

We are well on our way through the Old Testament! We've had the opportunity to walk through the pages of sacred Scripture and visit the Garden of Eden, the land of Israel and the sands of the Egyptian desert. During the month of October, we'll be walking through the wilderness as we travel through the books of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy—the last three books of the Pentateuch (the books that Moses wrote). I invite you to come along with us on our journey!

On this sheet, you will find a reading plan that will take you through the highlights of the Old Testament. I want to reiterate: **this is not a homework assignment for the student or parent; it is supplemental to the material we will cover as a class during the school year.** If you are not in the habit of doing a devotion together with your family, I strongly suggest that you use this reading plan to grow together in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. This reading plan is for five days each week. I've suggested that you read the selected chapters from Monday to Friday. If you miss a day, you can make it up on Saturday. If you miss several days, don't give up! Just leave behind what you missed and pick up with us again. If read out loud, these daily walks with the Lord shouldn't take more than fifteen minutes. Join us together on our journey through the Old Testament—let's walk the path of our salvation!

October

10/1: Exodus 37, 40
10/4: Leviticus 1-4
10/5: Leviticus 5-7
10/6: Leviticus 8, 9, 10
10/7: Leviticus 16, 19, 20
10/8: Leviticus 23-27
10/11: Numbers 1-3
10/12: Numbers 5, 6, 9
10/13: Numbers 11-14
10/14: Numbers 16, 17, 20
10/15: Numbers 21:4-9; 22-24
10/18: Numbers 26-29
10/19: Deuteronomy 1, 2, 4
10/20: Deuteronomy 5-6
10/21: Deuteronomy 8-10
10/22: Deuteronomy 11-13
10/25: Deuteronomy 27-29
10/26: Deuteronomy 30-31
10/27: Deuteronomy 32-34
10/28: Joshua 1-2
10/29: Joshua 3-5: 12

Walking the Path of Our Salvation

A Journey through the Old Testament.

Travel Log

October

10/1: Exodus 37, 40

10/4: Leviticus 1-4

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10/6: Leviticus 8, 9, 10

10/7: Leviticus 16, 19, 20

10/8: Leviticus 23-27

10/11: Numbers 1-3

10/12: Numbers 5, 6, 9

10/13: Numbers 11-14

10/14: Numbers 16, 17, 20

10/15: Numbers 21:4-9; 22-24

10/18: Numbers 26-29

10/19: Deuteronomy 1, 2, 4

10/20: Deuteronomy 5-6

10/21: Deuteronomy 8-10

10/22: Deuteronomy 11-13

10/25: Deuteronomy 27-29

10/26: Deuteronomy 30-31

10/27: Deuteronomy 32-34

10/28: Joshua 1-2

10/29: Joshua 3-5:12