

**GOD HELPS
PEOPLE
BY HIS WORD**



BAND

A

PLANNING GUIDE



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This planning guide is a part of LIFE, a Christian Studies curriculum developed for Lutheran schools.

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God helps people by his word is one of twelve concepts covered by LIFE curriculum. This BAND A planning guide contains model units for the first three years of primary school.

Writer: Anne Maczkowiack
Theological adviser: David Strelan
Editorial adviser: Mary Jo Zwar

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GOD HELPS PEOPLE BY HIS WORD

AIMS

The ultimate aim of LIFE curriculum is that

- students will come to know God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- students will have faith in God as their Father, Saviour, and Helper.

We understand that faith is entirely a gift of the Holy Spirit.

We teach in obedience to Jesus' command to go and teach.

*How can people have faith in the Lord
and ask him to save them,
if they have never heard about him?
And how can they hear,
unless someone tells them?
Romans 10:14 (CEV)*

GOD HELPS PEOPLE BY HIS WORD

As Christians we believe this and are compelled to tell others.

Our aim in teaching this concept is that students

- hear,
- explore and
- reflect on

these faith statements:

1. God reveals himself to people by his word
2. The Bible is God's word written by people whom God inspired
3. The Bible tells the story of God's plan for the salvation of his people through Jesus

BACKGROUND NOTES FOR TEACHERS

GOD HELPS PEOPLE BY HIS WORD

God does not leave us to work out for ourselves such important things as who God is, what kind of God he is, what he wants from us, how he feels towards us, and what he does for us. God graciously communicates with us. The 'word' of God is God's self-revelation; it makes God known to us so that we can honour, love and trust him as our God.

THE WORD IN VARIOUS FORMS

The word of God has come and still comes to human beings in different ways (Hebrews 1:1). God spoke through prophets, who did not preach their own messages, but proclaimed the warnings and promises of God 'as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit' (2 Peter 1:21). God's ultimate word — his most complete revelation of himself — was in the form of his own Son, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh (John 1:1, 14). Then Jesus' followers (apostles, evangelists, prophets etc) proclaimed the word of God as they had learnt it from Jesus and as they were led by 'the Spirit of truth' (John 14:26; 16:13).

GOD'S WRITTEN WORD So that we and all people of all times can know the word which God spoke through the prophets and apostles and through the Word who came in human flesh, God has also given us his written word, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The Holy Spirit inspired people to write the Bible. We cannot explain exactly how this inspiration happened. It was not some kind of 'dictation', but the writers wrote in their own style; we can recognise their pet words and expressions. 'The holy writers whom God used retained the distinctive features of their personalities (language and terminology, literary methods, conditions, knowledge of nature and history as apart from direct revelation and prophecy)' (*A Consensus Statement on Holy Scripture* A.2.3). Yet at the same time what they wrote was God's word.

HUMAN AND DIVINE So the Bible is both human and divine. We cannot separate the

divine and human, however, or say that some parts are less the word of God because they seem to us to be contradictory or because they deal with everyday matters that don't seem to have much bearing on our relationship with God (eg 2 Timothy 4:13). Rather, we should humbly marvel that 'it pleased God to give us his word under, or in the garb of, the human word of the biblical writers' (*Theses of Agreement* VIII 9).

ULTIMATE AUTHORITY The Bible does not merely **contain** the word of God; it **is** the word of God. Because the Bible is the word of God, it is true and should be the ultimate authority for what we believe and teach and how we should live. Lutherans say: 'The word of God is and should remain the sole rule and norm of all doctrine and . . . no human being's writings dare be put on a par with it, but . . . everything must be subjected to it' (*Book of Concord* page 505). Luther said: '. . . the word of God shall establish articles of faith and no-one else, not even an angel' (*Book of*

The Holy Spirit gave the word of God to people to speak and to write, so that today we have God's revelation of himself in the Bible.

Theological Foundations of LIFE curriculum.

Concord p 295). This does not mean that the Bible is some kind of supreme textbook, which gives us the answer to all our questions on any subject.

PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE In the Bible God makes known his marvellous plan for saving the fallen world. God called Abraham and gave him the promise that he would be the father of God's chosen people through whom God would bless all people. God rescued his people Israel from slavery and made his gracious covenant with them. Israel was not faithful to God, yet God remained gracious to them and preserved a 'remnant' from whom the promised Saviour would come.

God's saving plan reached its climax in the coming to earth of his Son, Jesus Christ, to live, die and rise again as the Saviour of all people. Jesus is the focal point of the Scriptures of Old and New Testaments. The Bible's chief purpose is to lead us to Christ, to 'make (us) wise enough to have faith in Christ Jesus and be saved' (2 Timothy 3:15 CEV). 'The essential

purpose of Scripture is to reveal the Son and his work so that (human beings) might have salvation' (*Consensus Statement Attachment I, Part I, b*).

LAW AND GOSPEL Lutherans see law and gospel as the central teachings of the Bible. The law of God tells us what God wants us to do and not to do and what kind of people God wants us to be. It is the bad news that shows us our sins and our need of a saviour, because we are helpless to save ourselves. The gospel is the good news that tells us that through Christ God has acted to save us out of undeserved love.

While all Scripture is the authoritative word of God, not all statements in the Bible are of equal value and importance. For example, while Old Testament dietary laws or family tree details have their place in the total message of the Bible, they do not have the same importance and value for us as do statements about Jesus' resurrection.

IS THE BIBLE TRUE? How do we know the Bible is true? Ultimately, this can't be proved but must be accepted by faith. When the Holy Spirit leads people to faith in Jesus as their Saviour, he at the same time gives them the confidence that the Scriptures — which Luther called the 'swaddling clothes and manger' where we find Christ — are indeed the word of God.

The Bible makes use of various literary forms in order to present God's word to people from differing generations, cultures and the like. For example, there are narratives, parables, pictures, visions, poetry and symbols. Some things we are meant to take literally, other things are obviously figurative.

INTERPRETING THE BIBLE Some basic guidelines for interpreting the Bible are:

- Let the Bible interpret the Bible. Look at clearer Bible passages to help interpret more difficult passages. Any interpretation of a particular Bible statement must agree with what the Bible teaches as a whole.
- Take the literal meaning of a passage, unless there are clear indications the passage is meant to be understood figuratively (eg the literary style).
- Look at the context and historical situation. What were the circumstances in which the Bible passage was written?
- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to recognise, accept and apply what the Bible passage says to you today, especially in terms of law and gospel.

FOR REFLECTION AND/OR DISCUSSION

1. What questions do the *Background Notes* raise for you? What questions do you think your students will have on this topic?
2. Why is this an important topic to teach to your students? What implications might the topic have for the life of your school?
3. The Lutheran church has often prided itself on being 'the church of the open Bible'. How appropriate is this title? How would you assess the place the Bible occupies in the Lutheran church?
4. What aspects of the Bible give you most difficulty? How should we respond to apparent contradictions in the Bible?
5. How can you tell whether something in the Bible is to be taken literally or figuratively? Give examples of Bible statements that you consider are in 'picture

language'.

FOR FURTHER READING

Formula of Concord, Rule and Norm, *Book of Concord* pages 464, 503–505;

Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions of the Lutheran Church of Australia:

A17: Theses on Scripture and Inspiration

B1: The Theses of Agreement and Inerrancy;

B 9–14: A Consensus Statement on Holy Scripture.

Good Question, ed B Schwarz, Openbook Publishers p 18: *How do Christians know the Bible is true?*

Masterplan by Dr V Pfitzner, Openbook (an overview of God's plan of salvation in the Bible)





BAND A STUDENTS





There will be a range of knowledge and understanding about the Bible among the students in your class. Some students will know many Bible stories, while for others the Bible and its stories will be quite unknown. Do not assume prior knowledge and be prepared to explain the meaning of words and the context in which the stories happened.

Encourage an atmosphere of participation and discovery as you share Bible stories. To help convey that the Bible is about real people, use questions such as: How do you think the people in this story were feeling? What would you have done if you were in the story? Guided discussion and thoughtful questioning can assist students to explore the story for themselves. Christians believe that God speaks through the stories of the Bible. Allow students to explore what the story is saying to them, rather than forcing your interpretation of the story on the students.

When using Bible stories with students in Band A, take the following guidelines into account:

- Choose stories that fit the goals and purposes of the unit.
- Not all Bible stories are appropriate for students at this level. Edit specific instances of violence.
- Do not try to teach abstract concepts through Bible stories.
- Provide students with an opportunity to explore the culture of Bible times. This will help students at this level to understand the illustrations and thereby develop a greater understanding of the story.
- Provide opportunities for the students to make links with the story and their own experiences.
- Avoid using stories to teach morals. Emphasise the gospel in each story.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS		IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING
Students are developing the ability to identify characters, plot and parts of a story.		Strategies for telling and responding to stories in other curriculum areas, eg English, can be applied to the Bible stories you tell. See <i>Some tips for storytellers</i> on page 15.
Students are developing their memory and language skills, becoming increasingly able to recall, retell and discuss stories.		Provide opportunities and time for students to discuss stories as a whole class, in pairs and small groups. Talking allows students to assimilate new ideas. Be aware that students may give the 'correct' answer, but this does not mean they have the same understanding as an adult.
Students may see the Bible as God's book, written by God himself.		Define the terminology you use, eg 'The Bible tells . . .', 'In the Bible we read . . .' As appropriate, distinguish between 'the Bible' and 'stories from the Bible'. As students move through the band, be specific about the people who wrote the book, eg 'Paul wrote a letter that is in the Bible. In this letter it says . . .
Students are unable to generalise about a story and apply its meaning to other situations.		Avoid using stories to teach a principle or moral. Do not feel compelled to explain and apply every story you tell — be content to let the stories stand by themselves, as a foundation that will be built on in later

Students are stimulated by visual images.		bands. Use children's Bibles and Bible story books with quality illustrations. This is especially important for younger students who will be interpreting much of the story through the illustrations.
Students' vocabulary is expanding.		Take the opportunity to teach words that are specific to the Bible and its stories. Do not assume that students will know the meaning of words like <i>cross</i> , <i>saved</i> , <i>heaven</i> , etc.
Students are physically active.		Students will enjoy acting out stories. This can be done in various ways, eg echo pantomimes, students' own improvisation of the story, readers' theatre. Link this work to other areas of the curriculum, eg English, The Arts.
Students look to adults to provide a role model.		The importance that you give the Bible in the classroom, and the way you share stories with the students will also 'teach' about the Bible.