

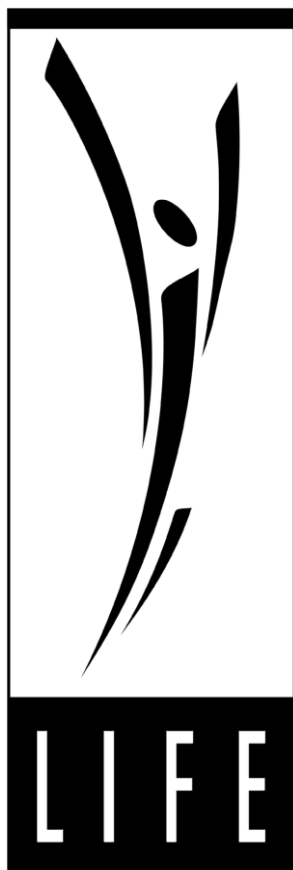
**GOD HELPS
PEOPLE
BY HIS WORD**



BAND

B

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 B planning guide contains model units for three middle years of primary school.

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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 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)

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.

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 B STUDENTS

The students in your class will come with a range of knowledge and understanding of the Bible. Some students will be familiar with many Bible stories and will have developed skills which enable them to use a Bible confidently, while for some students the Bible and its contents will be quite foreign. It is important to support and encourage students who are unfamiliar with the Bible in order to prevent these students from feeling overwhelmed by the structure and content of the book.

Christians believe that God speaks through the Bible. Don't rush in with your own interpretation and application of Bible stories. Assist students to reflect on and explore what the Bible says to them.

Be aware of the following guidelines when selecting Bible stories to use with students in your classroom:

- Choose stories appropriate to the goals and purposes of the unit.
- Emphasise the gospel in each story.
- Choose Bible material which is appropriate for the developmental level of students. Just as not all literature is appropriate for students at all levels, not all Bible stories are appropriate for students at all levels. Encourage students to appreciate the Christian belief that the Bible is God's word to people at every stage of their life.
- Use a Bible translation which the students can understand. For many stories, the students at this band level will still need to use Bible story books.
- Provide students with an opportunity to explore the culture and beliefs in Bible times. This allows students to develop a greater understanding of the story.
- Do not look for complicated and obscure meanings in Bible stories.
- Encourage students to consider the message of the story not only for people in biblical times but for people today.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS		IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING
Students are developing the skills of investigation and inquiry.		Provide opportunities for students to gather, collate and present information related to Bible stories. Encourage students to read and respond to Bible passages and stories. Assist students to develop skills such as locating Bible references.
Students use imagination and insight to explore ideas and experiences.		Provide opportunities for students to listen to and respond to a variety of biblical forms of writing, such as narratives, parables, psalms, letters. Provide opportunities for students to plan and communicate Bible stories in creative ways, eg storytelling, dramas, computerised multimedia presentation.
Students are developing the skills of personal reflection.		Provide opportunities for students to reflect on the ideas, insights and messages evident in psalms, proverbs and Bible stories. Encourage students who know Bible stories well to view them from new perspectives. Provide opportunities for students to reflect on what the Bible story means to them.

Students are attracted to heroes.	➔	Investigate men and women from Bible stories, whom God used to do great things for other people.
Students have abundant energy and desire to be actively involved.	➔	Provide activities which use manual and motor skills, eg drama, art/craft.
Students are able to commit information to memory.	➔	Use quizzes and memory games to assist students to remember Bible facts, Bible references and Bible passages.