

**GOD HELPS
PEOPLE
BY HIS WORD**



BAND

**D
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 D planning guide contains model units for two years middle years of secondary 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 through 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 all 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).

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.

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) 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 D STUDENTS

The Bible is the chief text used in Christian Studies, the chief tool for investigating all LIFE concepts. Students in Band D will generally have a wide range of experience in using the Bible: some may have never seen a Bible, others may be well-versed in its use in both academic and personal applications.

For these reasons, the BIBLE concept may need to be treated differently from other LIFE concepts. It is vitally important that teachers do some diagnostic work to establish students' prior knowledge and that teachers compare students' prior knowledge with goals for Bands A, B and C as well as Band D. Based on what is discovered, teachers may consider such strategies as:

- doing a BIBLE unit at the start of the school year
- incorporating goals from Bands A, B or C in their study of BIBLE
- not doing a separate study of BIBLE, but systematically incorporating goals for BIBLE in the work they do on other LIFE concepts.

When using the Bible with students, it is important to remember that ultimately it is the Holy Spirit who leads people to accept the Bible's authority. This is tied up with the question of faith in Christ. Once a person believes in Christ, they usually don't have a problem with the authority of the Bible . . . It is important in this concept that we help students to see Christ as the centre of Scripture. Until that happens, the Bible is likely to remain a baffling book (see John 5:39, Matthew 11:25–28 and 1 Corinthians 1:18ff and chapter 2).

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING
Students will probably have had a wide range of experiences. For some the Bible will be an unknown quantity. Some will relate to it as a special book, others as a rule book. Some students will know several stories, while others will come with a good overall picture of the Bible, reading it for themselves.	<p>Give students an overview of the Bible, providing the continuing story of the relationship between God and people in the Old and New Testaments.</p> <p>Present the 'characters' in the story of the Bible as real people who lived in a real world, facing problems common to all people, yet living in a different context.</p>
Students vary in their ability to read and in their interest in reading, yet they all enjoy a good story.	<p>Use different techniques and strategies to tell the story of the Bible, eg storytelling, visual presentations, recorded Bibles, video Bibles, comic-book versions of the Bible, children's Bibles, different versions of the Bible, such as <i>The Teen Study Bible</i>, <i>Towards the Goal</i>. Find artwork which tells the Bible stories.</p> <p>Expose students to a range of different Bible versions.</p>
Students have ambivalent feelings about authority, holding it in suspicion while still needing it to give them a sense of security and definition. Students want to know that the Bible is genuine before they will accept it as a book which has authority. On the whole, the Bible is an alien book to students, written in a way they find baffling and often contradictory.	<p>Encourage an open, non-judgmental atmosphere in the classroom where students can raise their questions about the Bible. Rather than giving students the answers, guide them in their investigation of questions that are obstacles to them in accepting the Bible. Show students that the question of truth and genuineness is a concern of the writers of the Bible.</p> <p>Provide students with the tools to find their way around the Bible and to read it in context and with understanding.</p>

Students want to find out new information and widen their experience and knowledge of the world.



There is a vast amount of information about the writing and assembling of the books of the Bible, the history of Bible translation and archaeology which will give students the opportunity to investigate their queries about the Bible from a variety of angles. Encourage students to use a wide range of resources.

Give students research strategies and the freedom to make decisions about how they will conduct their research. Students can work individually or in groups, presenting their findings in many different ways.

Students express a need for personal faith, asking questions about who they are and the purpose and meaning of life. Yet many students dismiss the Bible as irrelevant and boring without having read it for themselves.



Study of the Bible and about the Bible needs to go beyond being an academic exercise. Discuss with students the purpose of God's word for all people.

Draw students' attention to the issues about humanity and daily life contained in the Bible.

Encourage students to speak to Christians about the role of the Bible in their daily lives.

Give students time to reflect on what they read in the Bible.