

THE USE OF SCRIPTURE IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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Introduction

What if a student can attend a Sunday School class and never have to handle or touch the Bible itself?

What if kids' only contact with the Bible in Sunday School is memorizing isolated verses to win prizes?

What if students do not bring their own Bibles to class and therefore are not able to write in it, highlight certain text, put post-it notes in it, and familiarize themselves with where verses are?

What if a student only reads the Bible passage with his eyes or listen to it but is not prompted to comprehend its meaning nor think critically about its message?

What if a Sunday School lesson does not create the space and provide the guidance for students to prayerfully consider how to apply the Word of God, in community with others?

What if just the Bible Stories are taught but no reflection follows and no prompting is given to help students see its connections with daily life and with other stories of the Bible so that they see God's meta-narrative and how they fit into His-story?

What if Sunday School does not help the students develop a love for their own Bible such that they are motivated to read it and see its relevance in every day decisions?

What if parents, whose responsibility it is to teach their children scripture (Deut. 6), renege because they themselves do not know how to study the Bible?

What if students don't read their Bible at home because they have not been shown how to study and understand it for themselves in Sunday School?

What if the Bible is no longer the textbook for Sunday School?

What if these statements are true, what would happen?

What might happen is that students graduate from years of Sunday School without ever learning how to handle the Word of truth correctly, in the sense meant by **2 Timothy 2:15** (NIV): *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

One might argue that it is not the responsibility of the Sunday School to teach students to correctly handle the Word of truth but rather the parents' duty. However, the oft-quoted

Deuteronomy 6 passage is directed to the people as a whole to teach their children. The entire community is held responsible to keep the family training/teaching their children. The whole passage begins with: *Hear O Israel*, meaning the collective unit of families, the people of God or community of faith. Teaching the younger generation to correctly handle the Word of truth is a joint endeavor between the parents, the students and the faith community as is being reiterated in a growing number of books (Barna 2003; May et al. 2005; McQuitty, 2008, Thompson 1997). God created the church as the faith community where families are to worship and glorify Him and help each other to grow in Christlikeness (Acts 2:42; Eph. 4:12). Sunday School plays a role in accompanying the families within the realm of teaching children and young people to obey everything Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:19-20).

Some might contend that the content of Sunday School curriculum need only be Biblical not necessarily be a Bible class. But, the Bible is a means not an end in and of itself. Knowledge, understanding, and obedience to the Word of God is a means to grow in Christlikeness (Plueddemann 1988). Sunday School curriculum must not only be Biblical, but must use the Bible as a textbook, a springboard, a means to shape and mold one's thinking and view of the world at large.

Bible illiteracy, distorted beliefs, and immoral behavior among churched Evangelical youth have been on the rise and is provoking understandable concern amongst Christian ministers and parents (Barna 2003; McDowell 2002). One wonders if this is due, in part, to Christians having fallen prey to Screwtape's advice to Wormwood to foster carelessness about studying the Bible? (Lewis 2001).

In light of 2 Tim. 2:15 and the current milieu of children and young people, the goal of the Sunday School curriculum should be to teach the student to correctly handle the Bible as a means of growing in godliness and presenting him or herself before God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed.

Correctly handling the Word of truth

What is meant by **2 Timothy 2:15** (NIV): *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth?*

This verse, being the key verse of what was most likely Paul's last letter fairly near the time of his execution, exhorts Timothy to be diligent and zealous in his role as a minister.

Paul urged Timothy to make sure that when he stood before God he would receive the Lord's approval and not be ashamed (cf. 1 John 2:28). Most important in gaining this goal was the way he would proclaim God's truth. He must teach it consistent with God's intended meaning and purpose. 'Handling accurately' (lit. cutting straight) is a figure that paints a picture of a workman who is careful and accurate in his work. The Greek word (orthotomounta) elsewhere describes a tentmaker who makes straight rather than wavy cuts in his material. It pictures a builder who lays bricks in straight rows and a farmer who plows a straight furrow. The way a minister of the gospel presents the Word of God was of primary importance to Paul, and it should be to us. The Greek word 'ergaten'

(workman) stresses the laborious nature of the task rather than the skill needed to perform it. (Constable 2010, 17)

What guidance does this message from Paul to Timothy offer to those “workers” whose job it is to develop or choose curriculum for Sunday School? (1) It highlights the need to work diligently, to strive, to bend every effort, to wholeheartedly study, and be eager to do one’s utmost as unto God alone, for His approval—serving as it were—an audience of One. In practical terms, a “worker” is to search high and wide for a Sunday School curriculum, to spare no effort until one has achieved the goal. Given the numerous curriculums available, this is no easy task. (2) The worker gains God’s approval by correctly handling the Word of truth. The object to be handled is the Bible. Central to correctly handling the Word of truth is knowing its content and how to use it. The Greek word for *correctly handles* is “orthotomeō” and is a verb meaning to make straight and smooth, to handle aright, and to teach the truth directly and correctly. The KJV translates it to “rightly divide” and the NAS “accurately handling.” Spurgeon’s (1874) interpretation of 2 Tim 2:15 notes that “as truth is a straight line, so must our handling of the truth be straightforward and honest, without shifts or tricks.” As one reads through the reams and reams of Sunday School curriculum, one cannot help but wonder if some of the activities are not tricks designed to attract and entertain the students more so than teach them how to *correctly analyze and accurately divide [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth* (Amplified Version).

(3) “The Greek word for *word of truth* is ‘logos,’ and references a word, uttered by a living voice, that embodies a conception or idea what someone has said, like the sayings of God, doctrine, or teachings” (Hurt 2011). Applied to the search for Sunday School curriculum, the worker must carefully examine each curriculum as to how the Bible is used by the teachers and students. As one studies sample lesson plans, it is easy to be swayed by the trappings of full-color visuals, an attractive format, and multi-media presentations. The “worker” must ascertain that the lessons plans are centered on the written Word of God, the very springboard from which the individual lessons are built. The Bible is not to be supplementary text, used to prove a particular stream of thought. Curriculum where the Word of truth is not the centerpiece and that do not require the student to handle God’s Word need to be modified or disregarded.

What is curriculum?

In light of Paul’s counsel to Timothy in 2 Tim 2:15 and the general consensus that exists within the Evangelical world of rightly handling God’s word, the question of how the Bible is used in Sunday School curriculum is of paramount importance. However, given the plethora of curriculums, both old and new, not to mention the many curriculums that the churches and/or Sunday School teachers create themselves that are not published, it would be impossible to accurately assess how the Bible is handled or even make accurate generalizations. Moreover, even if one had access to all the written curriculum, curriculum theory recognizes that what is written in the plan and what actually happens in the classroom may compose two different curriculum (Schwab 1977). This issue reveals the necessity of determining what is meant by curriculum. Gress and Purpel (2002) observe that the field of education has yet to concur on an official definition of curriculum. The author proposes that all curriculum consists of six curricula or dimensions.

- Explicit, implicit, null (Eisner 1985)

- Incarnated (who teaches) (Palmer 2007)
- Whom is taught (the student), and How is it taught (Kliebard 1989)

While these six dimensions are not an exhaustive list, they provide insight into what is meant by curriculum. It should be noted that these dimensions are interdependent and are separated only for the purpose of analysis (see Table 1: Six curricula that all schools teach.)

Table 1: Six curricula that all schools teach

Explicit Curricula Every curriculum describes itself in some explicit manner. It explains exactly what the curriculum will accomplish. Many curriculums are made up of textbooks, handouts, multi-media presentation, visual aids, and others are web-based, but all of them explicitly convey their learning goals, content, and educational activities. The explicit curricula is the most obvious to observe and the easiest to examine, but is only one sixth of the whole curriculum. Many people define curriculum exclusively by what the explicit curricula is.	Implicit Curricula Embedded in every curriculum are the messages the students receive by implication, be they intentionally or unintentionally taught. For instance, in Sunday School, when desks or chairs are placed in straight rows, the implicit curricula may be that “this is going to be just like school.” The teacher’s intent may be to convey the message that order and efficient use of time and space are highly valued but the students may receive a different message. The implicit curricula contain both the negative and positive messages that students will learn. This curricula is sometimes called the hidden, covert or latent curriculum and entails the socialization process of schooling as well (Valance 1973; Kentli 2009).
Null Curricula Schools, both formal and non-traditional, teach by what has intentionally been chosen to teach, but they also teach by what has not been chosen to teach. The Null curricula is what the students learn due to what has intentionally or unintentionally NOT been taught. For example, if a Seminary never teaches on women in leadership, their null curricula may be that women cannot be leaders. Curriculum writers make choices about what to include and what not to include in the explicit content. For instance, when a Sunday School curricula does not require the students to ever read or study the Bible for him or herself, the unintentional Null curricula may be that Bible reading and study are not important, or that one cannot study and understand the Bible on one’s own. This dimension is similar to the implicit curricula but specifically regarding the implications of the missing parts.	Incarnated Curricula Teacher-proof curriculum is an oxymoron since the person teaching the curriculum makes all the difference in the world. The teacher teaches who he or she is—for better or worse—together with the curriculum (Palmer 2007). Within the realm of Christian Education, when the teacher does not incarnate or live out the Biblical values and truths, the students recognize this incongruence and rightly accuse the teacher—and sometimes the whole church—of hypocrisy. On the other hand, when the teacher incarnates the curricula, the impact of the lesson is greatly enhanced and often will be remembered long after the specific content has been forgotten.
Whom Curricula Whom does one teach? Kliebard (1989) notes that one is bound to take into account not just the thing to be taught but <i>who</i> is being taught, the student. For instance, taking into account the whom curricula means that the age/developmental stage of the students will shape the explicit content, so that it is age appropriate. The whom curricula brings to bear how the curriculum is played out in the classroom. For instance in Christian Education, the same curriculum would be taught differently if the students were brand-new believers vs. fully devoted Christ followers. The whom curricula also brings into purview the active role	How Curricula While one may place the how curricula within the dimension of implicit curricula, for the sake of greater clarity, it will be its own dimension. How the curriculum is taught, how it is mediated, presented, posed, and tested greatly impacts what the students learn. “The way one approaches teaching any knowledge inevitably impacts what knowledge gets conveyed (Kliebard 1989, 4). How one teaches carries its own message as pointed out by McLuhan (1994), “the medium is the message.”

the student must play in order for learning to take place.	Regarding the how curricula, methodology, Plueddemann (1988) warns against the danger of dichotomizing teaching the Bible and teaching the student, arguing for an approach that compels critical reflection between the two as both teacher and student strive to connect the content of the Word with a student's present need.
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Critical analysis of how the Bible is used using six dimensions of a curriculum

To capsulize, the goal of the Sunday School curriculum is to teach the student to correctly handle the Bible as a means of growing in godliness and presenting him or herself before God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed. If that were one's goal, the commercial or created Sunday School curriculum would need to be analyzed to ascertain if it serves as a means of helping to accomplish that goal. Admittedly, one must analyze other aspects of Sunday School curriculum as part of the decision-making or creating process like (Cook 2011):

- Teacher's guides
- Attention to student's learning styles
- Student materials
- Teaching aids (visuals, manipulatives, games boards, CD's, etc)
- Parental involvement pieces
- Affordability (\$)

Many other approaches to curriculum evaluation exist, like Ferguson's (2008) *Christian Educator's Guide to Evaluating and Developing Curriculum*; Harris' (1989) *Fashion me a people: Curriculum in the church* and Westerhoff's (2000) *Will our children have faith?*

Due to its paramount importance, the aspect of how the Bible itself is handled in Sunday School will be the primary question probed. These six dimensions of a curriculum while not a concise definition; nonetheless, provide a useful grid to gain insight. It should be noted, however, that because curriculum is a dynamic, living interplay between content, student, teacher, and the Holy Spirit, a perfectly clear and accurate analysis is not possible, even if it were possible to observe the curriculum being carried out in Sunday School. Much of the impact of a curriculum (the sum total and more of its six dimensions) is invisible to the human eye, not capable of being measured or scientifically observed. Therefore, this process of analysis requires humility; only God sees what goes on in the hearts and minds of both teachers and students.

In the tables that follow, questions will be asked of the curriculum specifically in regards to how the Bible is handled (first column). The second column contains the "so what?" arguments articulating why it matters. The third column suggests what might be done to minimize, alleviate, or remedy the negative impact. (See Tables 2-7: Critical analysis using each dimension of a curriculum.)

Table 2: Critical analysis of the Explicit Curricula

Explicit curricula	What does it matter?	What can be done about it?
• Do lesson plans call for going beyond the mere memorization of verses, prompting students to become familiar with the passage through rehearsal (creative repetition), and then grapple with the meaning through analyzing, comparing, contrasting, etc. in order to think critically about its message? (or in the case of younger children, to think meaningfully)	• If the explicit curricula promotes constant movement and going from one activity to another, it is highly unlikely that deep thinking about the meaning of the Bible passage will take place. • Regarding the fear some have that students will get bored in class, one must understand and explain to the students that boredom is the point in time when they have not figured out what they desire to do, it is an “In-between moment” and one should not take on the responsibility to solve this dialectic tension for them. It is a matter of personal choice. They may choose to be “stuck in-between” or can choose to engage with the matter at hand. Boredom is a choice (Phillips 1994). Therefore, trying to ward off this choice (boredom) by constant movement and going from one activity to another is to absolve the student of her or his responsibility to engage in addition to preclude deep thought. • Related to the issue of “fear of boredom” is the curriculum’s explicit goal that students have “fun.” Fun appears to be the standard for excellence and a goal in and of itself. Many teachers and parents seem to judge the effectiveness of the curriculum based on how the student answers the question: <i>Did you have fun?</i> While one can agree with the spirit of what Jim Rayburn of Young Life meant when he said that it was a sin to bore a kid with the gospel, one can go too far in trying to embellish scripture. One does not have to dress it up with bells and whistles (Gosselin 2007). The truth of God’s Word is in and of itself compelling and attractive. Nothing can be more fun than students grasping its life-giving message. • What does it matter if the explicit curricula does not promote and enable the student to comprehend, analyze, synthesize, and value the Scripture passage? It matters because critical thinking in pursuit of Truth matters. One could surmise that Sunday School curriculum that promotes little or no deep, sustained thought, and reflection on the Word of truth and its connection with life is guilty, in part, of Evangelicals’ scandalous anti-intellectual bent (Noll 1995). Superficiality, shallow thinking, busyness, practiced and reinforced year after year in Sunday School can have long-term impact. • Thinking deeply requires time, effort and writing. “The difference between reading and studying comes down to one factor: writing. Regardless of	• Provide time during class to think, to read scripture in silence, to respond to God’s story. The Holy Play (Berryman 2009) or Children in Worship (Stewart 1989) approach have a methodology that provides time to think as well as features wondering questions that invite the young child into the story. • Journal-writing is a very useful technique to facilitate transfer of learning to daily living. Some possible questions to guide journal-writing are: “What did you learn today about... How does this connect or relate to what we already know about... How can this help us, or how can we use this knowledge in the future...” (Sousa 2006). Provide every student with an attractive journal, which is kept at church and used throughout the year and travels with them as they graduate from class to class. • Teach less and teach it better (Whitehead 1929). In the midst of an overwhelming amount of information, activities, media, visual aids, provided in the commercial curriculum packages, plus what is available on the internet, the creator of the explicit curricula must keep a keen focus to select only what “fits” within the time, space, and resource constraints, and moves the lesson towards the aim of 2 Tim. 2:15. • Given the abundance of educational activities provided in the Sunday School curriculum, be judicious in their use so as to never crowd out the time and space needed for a deep and meaningful study of Scripture. • Likewise, avoid the use of pages like puzzles, cross-word puzzles, coloring sheets, letter soups, etc. which have negligible, if any, educational value in helping a student correctly handle the Word of truth. Their aim appears to be to entertain or occupy the precious

Table 2 Critical analysis of the Explicit Curricula (cont.)

	the method of Bible study that works, one needs to have a pen and notepad on hand. Bible study is not something that can be done in one's head. Writing helps to slow down, reflect upon, and work through the passage being studied. Unless thoughts, questions, applications, and observations are jotted down, one quickly forgets" (Deane 2009, 17).	little time one has with students. If crafts or manipulatives are used, carefully ensure their direct relationship with helping the student grasp the Biblical truths. • Coloring pages are of dubious educational value for pre-schoolers, in particular, for whom the symbolism of using a coloring page of Jesus with sheep would be beyond their "cognitive reach." It would be of far greater educational value, given their sensorimotor or preoperational stage of mental operations, to tell the story of Luke 15 using wooden figures of Jesus and sheep. Then invite the children to re-tell the story using the figures, after which one gives them blank pieces of paper and crayons or other art supplies to respond to God's story.
• Does the explicit curricula connect the individual Bible studies with God's overarching meta-narrative?	• What does it matter if the explicit curricula makes no connections between the individual Bible stories and God's overarching meta-narrative? Most likely the student would not appreciate the connectedness of each story to the mega-themes that run through both the Old and New Testament (covenant, redemption, anticipation and advent of a Messiah, etc.). Students might miss the story's connections with daily life and never see exactly how they fit into His-story. They might not get the Big Picture.	• Listen to and heed the growing number of voices sounding out the charge to give students the meta-narrative of the Bible through storying. Feinberg (2008) uses Messianic Jewish stories with flannel pieces, Stonehouse and May (2008) advocate several approaches one of which they call: <i>Hands-on, Bible-time museum</i> which combines story time, project time, and small group time. Novelli's (2008) approach is Chronological Bible storying which is used by many missionaries to reach and teach non-literate oral-based tribes. In all cases, after the story is told, the students re-tell the story, and then discuss it to discover its connections with their lives and the world around them.

Table 2 Critical analysis of the Explicit Curricula (cont.)

• Is the Bible itself is the textbook for each lesson plan, with the truths taught springing from the passage itself rather than isolated verses being used to “prove” a point?	• It matters because the student may not learn how to “mine” a specific passage if the explicit curricula does not spring directly from one substantial Bible passage. Topical Sunday School curriculum tends to focus on life transformation, practical Christian living, or current themes that seem to be most relevant to students or in vogue. While they may have depth, the tendency to jump from verse to verse never really presses the student to understand the verse in context and dig in deep to discover the treasures of God’s Word. Rightly handling the Word of truth would consist of using the Scripture as a springboard, with the text itself creating the structure of the lesson plan. • Another concern of the topical versus the “Bible as textbook” approach is the question of <i>whose words do the students remember?</i> One cannot help but feel the indictment that it’s His Words (and not mine!) that will not return void (Isaiah 55:10-11). Since God’s Word never fails to accomplish its purpose, the lesson plans need to feature His direct words far more than the teacher’s or curriculum writer’s opinion.	• The Bible is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6, Heb. 4:12) but like any equipment of the armor of God, the student needs to learn how to use the Bible, not just memorize isolated verses in a piecemeal fashion, never realizing that each verse is part of a particular book and a whole Bible. Therefore, if the church has decided to make memorization a part of Sunday School, it is important to memorize entire portions of scripture. Testing needs to involve not just the memorization of the words but the students’ understanding. Moreover, since obedience to God’s Word is a true sign of understanding, testing would do well to involve questioning the parents regarding the child’s application of the Scripture to his or her home life. • Novelli (2008) in his journey to discovering “storying,” speaks of his discomfort with the discovery that his stories—supporting illustrations to the Biblical truths—were the only things his students remembered. Have students read along in their Bibles as the story is told, use symbols or pictograms to help them remember the sequence of the stories told. Use just one portion of scripture to focus their attention on. Consider using Novelli’s free downloadable resources, taking advantage of the countless hours he has invested in writing the scripts for story-telling and preparing the discussion questions. (http://www.echothestory.com/).
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Table 3: Critical analysis of the Implicit Curricula

Implicit curricula	What does it matter?	What can be done about it?
Does the curriculum call for the use of prizes, gold stars, and special honors as rewards for attendance, bringing one's Bible, memorizing scripture, or other "good behavior" like participating in class?	- The implicit curricula of the use of reward systems might be that Sunday School is so unpleasant that prizes must be offered to get kids to attend consistently. Another unintentional message might be that apart from getting a reward, no one would want to memorize Scripture. Giving external rewards tends to diminish or hide from view the internal reward performing that activity brings in and of itself. One may argue that external reward systems are justified because they work. They are expedient to achieve good behavior like Bible learning and godly conduct. Nevertheless, extensive research has shown that external rewards and incentives fail to promote lasting behavior change or enhance performance and frequently make things worse (Lepper 1978; Kohn 1999). If Sunday School uses a system "just because it works" for the short-term but interferes with the long-term goal of 2 Tim. 2:15, there is reason to question such "expedient means" and its implied message that the end justifies the means. - Dewey (1938) makes a point that may be applicable to Sunday School curriculum's expedient use of extrinsic motivation. Dewey decried the repressive nature of traditional education which limited a child's external freedom through the physical arrangements of a typical classroom with its fixed rows of desks and almost military like control over the students movements. He saw its implicit curricula as one of restriction on their intellectual and moral freedom. "Enforcing quiet and acquiescence tends to prevent pupils from disclosing their real natures. They enforce artificial uniformity or putting seeming before being. They place a premium upon preserving the outward appearance of attention, decorum, and obedience" (1938, 62). Could the implicit curricula for students be that "seeming is the same as being" and that outward religious behavior is enough? Let it not be so. Jesus' ardent denunciation of the religious "pretenders" in Matthew 23 should put all on guard against ever teaching by implication that "seeming or appearing is the same as being a Christ-follower." - The memorization of Bible verses is a good thing, but in the fervor to promote memorization, the implicit curricula could be that Bible knowledge guarantees godliness. This is a fallacy. If that were the case, Satan, who has Scripture memorized (Matthew 4), could be considered godly. Bible knowledge is a necessary but not sufficient condition. Being doers and not hearers only of God's Word helps avoid self-deception (James 1:21).	- Exercise extreme caution with offering extrinsic motivation like rewards or competition to promote behaviors that are intrinsically good in and of themselves and provide their own just reward like Bible reading. Eisner (1985) points out that the long-term effect is the creation of "reward junkies, since students are less likely to engage in that activity if they believe that an extrinsic reward will not be provided" (1985, 90). - In lieu of offering rewards almost like bribes, which denigrates the very activity one is trying to promote, depend on the convincing power of the Holy Spirit by praying specifically for changes. Seek to harness the incentive collaborative efforts can provide by using teamwork. Do not forget the accumulative effect of doing small things over a long period of time. The goal of rightly handling the Word of truth is a lofty one and is best seen in terms of "a long obedience in the same direction" (Peterson 2000). - Study how Jesus "motivated" his disciples to walk with him. - Meet with the teachers, parents and students to discover intrinsic motivators that could be highlighted and utilized. - Be explicit about Jesus' condemnation against the "pretenders" (NIRV), the Pharisees whom appeared to be spiritual but indeed were like "white-washed tombs" (Matthe. 23).

Table 3 Critical analysis of the Implicit Curricula (cont.)

• Does the aim overall curriculum include developing a love for their own Bible such that students are motivated to read it and see its relevance in every day decisions?	• If the curriculum rarely requires the student to bring his or her Bible, the implicit curricula may convey that Bible reading and study is unimportant. • If the meaning of Scripture is always taught to the students, with little or no personal effort given to discovering for oneself, the implicit curricula may be that the Bible is too hard for a child or young person to understand, so why bother on one's own? • If connections are not conscientiously made between the student's daily affairs and decisions and the Bible, the implied curricula might be that the Bible is irrelevant.	• The teachers must be encouraged and accompanied in pursuit of having their own devotional life, so naturally they will exude with enthusiasm and their love and study of the Word will be contagious. • The teachers must hold in high esteem a student's hunger and thirst for God's word independently of his or her skill level or eloquence in class. • Reading experts talk about "aliteracy" or lack of interest in reading (Toppo 2003), the same can be said for students who know how to read and study God's Word, but are not motivated to read it on their own. Warn students that there may be times in their lives when reading the Bible will require perseverance to get through "dry spells."
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Table 4: Critical analysis of the Null Curricula

Null curricula	What does it matter?	What can be done about it?
• Do lesson plans require each student to bring his or her own Bible in order to write in it, highlight certain text, put post-it notes in it, and become familiar with where the books and verses are?	• If no Bible is required for class nor used in class, might the null curricula be that the Bible itself is unimportant? From the perspective of students learning how to handle the Bible, one wonders about those students who have not yet reached the formal operations level of cognitive reasoning. Will the lack of the Book itself, the use of Bible text on screens, or pieces of paper conflict with a child's need to manipulate concrete objects like a real book to grasp the Bible's significance? • If the long-term aim is for children and young people to study the Bible on their own, there is a common sense logic that points to the need for students to physically handle <i>their own Bibles</i>, thus giving them the freedom to write in it, make notes, and create that same sensation one has when changing to a new or different Bible: <i>Hey, where is that verse? I know it was around here...</i> Handling one's own Bible frequently breeds a sense of ownership and endearment, in the same manner which occurs with one's favorite childhood books, sweet memories seem to adhere to its pages. • Does it matter if the Bible is read in print or on a screen? If the text is on an iPad, Kindle, or smart phone, it can be highlighted and notes can be taken which aid in its study. However, if Bible text is only flashed on a screen, its analysis becomes more difficult. In both e-text and printed-text, the skill of reading comprehension is essential. Therein lays the bad news: "As Americans, especially younger Americans, read less, they read less well" (Iyengar 2007). Reports and books abound with dismal reports about a decline in the habit of reading, resulting in a decline in reading comprehension (Healy 1999; (Bradshaw and Nichols 2004; Trelease 2006). This reality does not bode well with the goal of 2 Tim 2:15 since those same skills are needed to handle the Bible.	• Join forces with the parents and church leadership to announce from the pulpit the importance of a student owning his or her own Bible, in contemporary, easy-to-understand language. In the author's church the following announcement is regularly made: <i>Send your child with a Bible to Sunday School, not a BB (Blackberry).</i> • Make arrangements to have the most "user-friendly" Bibles available for parents to purchase for their children. • Arrange to give each student their own Bible with their name on the cover and with a written blessing from their parents on the dedication page. • Tell the fascinating story of how Sunday School started in the late 1770's and how the Bible itself was used as the textbook for religious instruction and to help develop literacy in children before public schools existed (Lynn 1980). • Tell stories of the price Christians have paid over the centuries to have their own Bibles like <i>God's smugglers</i> (Andrew, Sherrill, and Sherrill 2001).
Do the numerous supplementary educational activities, while helpful, teach the students that without this help, they would not understand the passage?	The null curriculum might be that students will always need an intermediary like a devotional book, commentary or guide to help them study the Bible. They cannot feed themselves spiritually directly from God's Word.	• Introduce the students to age-old spiritual practices like <i>lectio divina</i>, which consists of slowly, meditatively reading a short passage of scripture, almost like you would savor bite by bite a delicious meal, which creates the space to listen to God's voice (Peterson 2009). Teachers could encourage their students to practice this on their own at home; remembering to ask them on subsequent Sunday's what insights God gave them.

Table 5: Critical analysis of the Incarnated Curricula

Incarnated curricula	What does it matter?	What can be done about it?
• Who teaches Sunday School?	• The fact that most teachers are volunteers makes recruiting, training, improving difficult. Since many are parents, time is a very precious commodity, but on the other hand, the time invested in preparing them to teach children how to handle the Word correctly, the better equipped they will be as parents to transfer that to their own children. The return on the time invested brings a two-fold blessing, a blessing for their students and for their own children. • Recognize that there is no such thing as teacher-proof curriculum. No matter how much is provided in the package, a living human being is required to mediate, to stand between the curriculum and the student. (Most Sunday School classes for children and young people do not use DVD's to teach.) Recognize that to a large degree, a good teacher can take the worst written material and turn it into an excellent class. Likewise, a poor teacher can take the best-written curriculum and turn it into a low-Kingdom impact class. Establish a systematic approach to forming quality teachers. • There appears to be a wide range of approaches used to determine who will be the teachers. Some churches seem to have a "we will take any willing, warm body," other recruit through "guilt", others require an interview, application, selection, and training process, finally still others would add steps of background checking and matching the person's spiritual gifting with the Sunday School setting. However, even with a well-defined process, with few exceptions, the assumption is that the Sunday School teachers already evidence in their Christian walk the content of what they are teaching. But, there are very few mechanisms in place to verify, evaluate, or assess whether or not the teacher is living out the curriculum in his or her life. This can be costly oversight due to how the Kingdom of God is negatively impacted when teachers do not incarnate the content they are teaching (James 3:1).	• Teach the teachers how to study a passage for themselves, accompanying them as they learn to feed themselves from the Word. • Teach the teachers how to create a lesson plan which guides the students to study the passage for themselves. • Accompany the teachers as they teach their Sunday School classes, focusing on improvement through formative evaluation (Cronbach 1977). • Encourage older students to teach younger students by equipping and accompanying them in the same process: Learn to study a Bible passage, prepare a lesson plan, teach it under supervision, receive feedback to improve. • Offer interested students "out-of-Sunday-School" opportunities to learn more about Bible skills and eventually have a hand in preparing curriculum. • Take advantage of the curriculums that provide "teacher devotionals" to encourage them to live out the content they teach. • As a measure of prevention, form small groups for the teachers to meet and directly ask one another how they are applying the very Biblical truths they are teaching. • Have some mechanism in place to intervene, restore, and re-integrate a teacher who has fallen into sin. Make this policy known to all the community of volunteers and staff.

Table 6: Critical analysis of the Whom Curricula

Whom curricula	What does it matter?	What can be done about it?
• Whom is taught?	• Just like the teacher, the student plays a key role in learning. Learning cannot be done for or to someone else. Palmer (2007) prompts the student to reflect on his own role by asking: What is it about you that will enable great learning to happen? This question prompts the student to articulate exactly what he or she brings to class. It also clarified the mutuality that exists between the Incarnated curricula (teacher) and the Whom curricula (student), that it is a two-way relationship	• Discuss with the students what they bring to the class that will make or break it. Create the explicit expectation among students that for them to learn, they will need to put as much effort into it as the teachers do. • Avoid at all costs conveying to the students that the role of Sunday School is to “entertain them or keep them occupied while their parents are in church.” These two nocive ideas undermine the noble role Sunday School plays in Christian Education.
• Does the overall curriculum suggest certain Biblical concepts or stories be emphasized based on the age range or development stage of the students?	• The Bible gives details in its narrative that are not appropriate for certain ages, for instance, the exact nature of Mrs. Potiphar’s intentions with Joseph or Genesis 38 regarding Judah and Tamar. One never knows how much the parents have told their children nor is it wise to raise a premature curiosity. Another example is the story that God wanted Abraham to kill his son Isaac. Emotionally this story has many layers and cognitively some preschool children could begin to wonder if maybe God might ask their daddy to give them up (Shadid 2011). • According to Piaget’s stages of cognitive development, the use of symbolism present in many object lessons for young children goes right over their heads. For example, one Sunday School teacher used a flashlight and batteries to teach on John 8:12. Jesus is the light of the world but you cannot shine if Jesus is not in you, just like this flashlight needs batteries in order to shine. Upon arrival at home, he told his Mother that he needed to swallow batteries to shine Jesus’ light.	• Listen to the language spoken by teachers and make sure it is clear and appropriate for each stage of development. For example, pre-schoolers are pre-operational or concrete learners for which the following terms would need to be rephrased (T=teacher might say; S=student in pre-school or elementary might understand) T—Ask Jesus into your heart. S—How can Jesus fit into my heart? Rephrase: Ask Jesus to be your best forever friend. T—The blood of Jesus cleans us from our sins. S—Gross! Blood is yucky, how can His blood clean you? Rephrase: Jesus offered to take the punishment you deserve to get for the sins you have committed.

Table 7: Critical analysis of the How Curricula

How curricula	What does it matter?	What can be done about it?
• Do lesson plans create the space and provide the guidance for students to prayerfully consider how to apply the Word of God, in community with others?	• By not creating a space and providing accompaniment for students to apply, obey, and put into practice what scripture has taught them, the How curricula may be teaching them to be hearers only and not doers of God's Word, thus deceiving themselves (James 1:21).	• Be explicit with the students and their parents about <i>how</i> they are being taught so students can knowingly engage in the process and parents can mature spiritually with their children (Westerhoff 2008).
• Is scripture being taught in a way that reflects the God of the Scriptures?	• The means employed in teaching are not neutral and reflect the teacher's educational philosophy. For example, if dialogue is used, it reflects a belief in being a co-learner and validates input from other than the teacher.	• Examine the methodology employed by the curriculum as well as what takes place in the classroom. For example, search for how the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5) can cloak the entire process, from kind classroom management, to patiently waiting for students to answer, to lovingly blessing each student at the end of the class.

It should be noted that the lists of questions provided in the preceding tables (Tables 2-7) are not exhaustive and as with any line of questioning, reveal their author's own assumptions and biases.

A few of the author's assumptions:

- Bias towards a systematic, literary approach to studying the Bible but increasingly open towards a "storying" oral approach such as espoused by Novelli (2008). An oral approach to studying the Bible coincides with this postmodern generation penchant for experiences, stories, images—namely a returned emphasis on narrative (Ong 2004).
- Bias towards a strong rational, cognitive, and exegetical approach but increasingly open towards an experiential, kinesthetic, "playfully enter into the story" approach (Stewart 1989; Berryman 2009).
- Assumption that humans develop physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, and spiritually through certain stages. Each stage is qualitatively different than the other stages and one progresses in an invariable order, not skipping stages or moving through them in mixed-up orders. Learners cannot function mentally, socially or reason morally at a stage more than one stage beyond their own, which is essentially a developmental educational philosophy (Crain 2010).
- According to Christian Smith's book, fresh off the press, Aug. 2011: *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture*, the hermeneutics' of this paper would be considered biblicist. For example, the author of this paper believes the Bible possesses internal harmony and consistency; the Bible is universally applicable for all Christians; the Bible is a kind of handbook or textbook for Christian faith and practice; the divine will for all issues relevant to Christian life are contained in the Bible. These beliefs form part of what Smith condemns as an inadequate way of reading Scripture. Smith's focuses on the proving his argument that Biblicism as a

way to approach Scripture has failed Evangelicals because “if the Bible is given by a truthful and omnipotent God as an internally consistent and perspicuous text precisely for the purpose of revealing to humans correct beliefs, practices, and morals, then why is it that the presumably sincere Christians to whom it has been given cannot read it and come to common agreement about what it teaches?” (2011, 25). Hopefully, the abuses of a shallow, superficial, ahistorical reading of Scripture will be corrected through this book and a more Christological hermeneutics will be practiced as Smith suggests.

For now, DeYoung’s (2011) review of the book best expresses the author’s position:

We should not cower at the charge of bibliolatry, let alone water down our view of Scripture. Of course, we do not worship paper and ink or parchment or pixels on a screen or any other finite, created medium. But as John Frame (2010) points out, “The psalmists view the words of God with religious reverence and awe, attitudes appropriate only to an encounter with God himself. . . . This is extraordinary, since Scripture uniformly considers it idolatrous to worship anything other than God. But to praise or fear God’s word is not idolatrous. To praise God’s word is to praise God himself” (The Doctrine of the Word of God, 67). .. In other words, God is where his word is. As Timothy Ward (2009) says, “God has invested himself in words, or we could say that God has so identified himself with his words that whatever someone does to God’s words (whether it is to obey or disobey) they do directly to God himself” (2009, 27).

To summarize, given the current state of Sunday School curriculum, as analyzed through a six-dimensional grid, it is likely that students will graduate from years of Sunday School without ever learning how to handle the Word of truth correctly, in the sense meant by **2 Timothy 2:15** (NIV): *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.* The goal of the Sunday School curriculum should be to teach the student to correctly handle the Bible as a means of growing in godliness and presenting him or herself before God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed. Unless concrete changes are made, this goal will not be accomplished.

Creation of a template or overlay

“David C. Cook’s landmark study noted that eighty percent of paid professionals are writing or customizing their own curriculum. When asked why teachers were willing to go to all this work, their top three reasons were: (1) Dissatisfaction with existing materials (36%); (2) Not enough Bible content (29%), (3) To save money (25%)” (Ferguson 2008, x).

For the first year of her church’s existence, the author and two other women wrote the Sunday School curriculum. But, given their time constraints as volunteers, they decided, like those in the aforementioned study, to customize existing commercial curriculum. A template or overlay was created with a methodology that each lesson plan was to follow, and was “laid-over” the curriculum that was purchased. This template enables the Sunday School teacher to take advantage of certain enriching aspects of commercial curriculums in addition to following a consistent method that works towards the aim of teaching the students to correctly handle the word of truth. This overlay is called the Flower/bee methodology (see Figure 1) and was developed in January 2011 and is being used by a team of 20 teachers and assistants each Sunday with approximately 120 Spanish-speaking children ages 2-18. The church is called, Comunidad

Cristiana Internacional del Hatillo and is located in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. (see Figure 1: The Flower/bee methodology.)

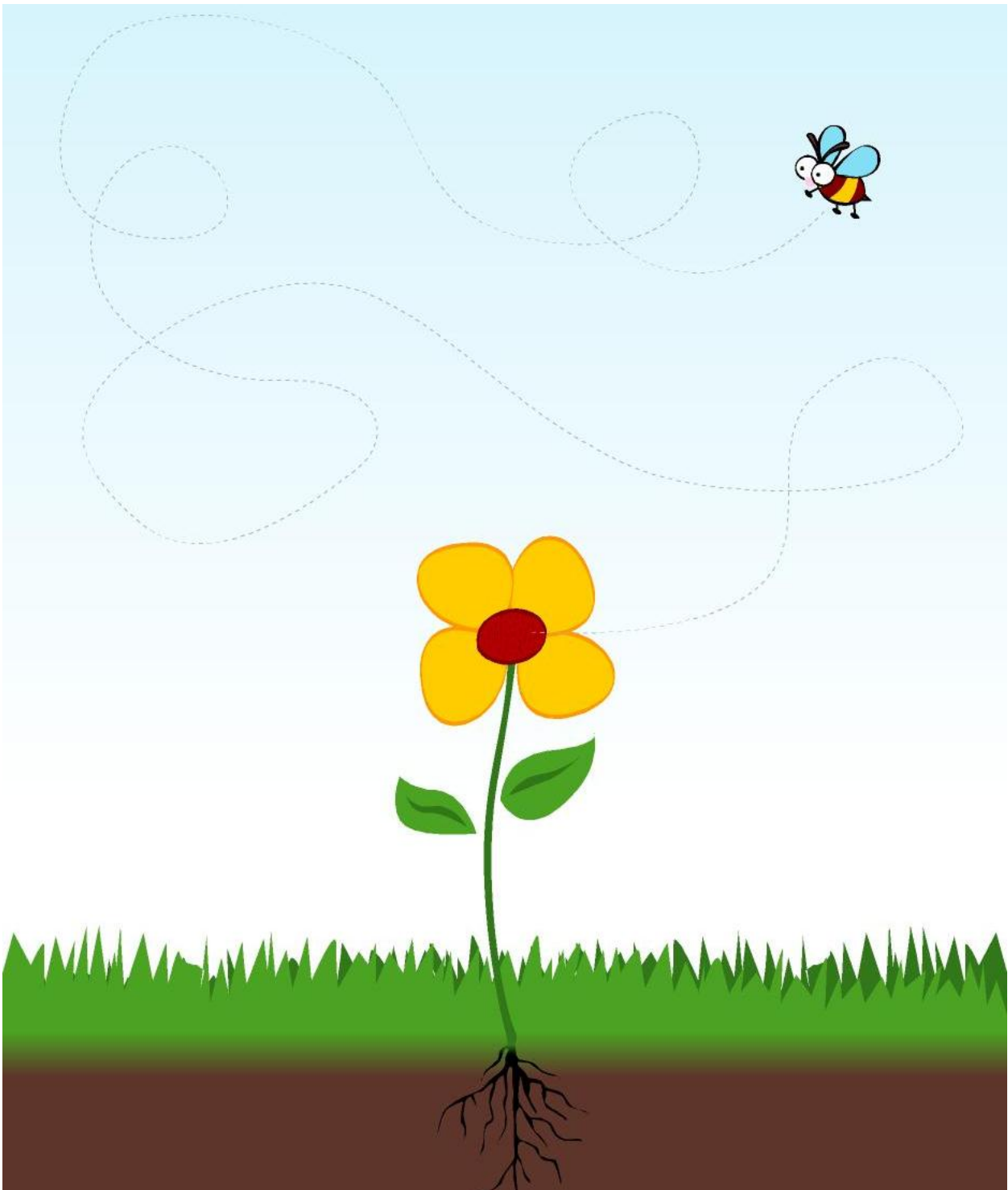


Figure 1: The Flower/bee methodolog

Components of the Flower/bee methodology

Brain-friendly introduction: The bee

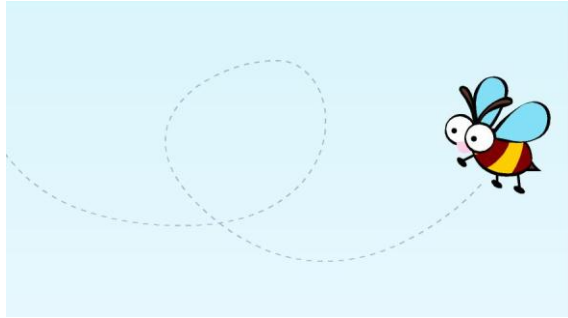


Figure 2 Bee: A brain-friendly Introduction

The bee represents the students' interest and motivation. Just like a bee that buzzes around, students arrive to class with a certain level of personal distraction; they may be excited, tired, worried, or upset because they got yelled at on the way to church (see Figure 3: Bee: A brain-friendly Introduction.)

The goal of the **brain-friendly Introduction** is to

capture and direct “the bee” to the center of the flower, which represents the main Bible passage to be studied.

According to *How the brain learns* (Sousa 2006), the first few minutes and the last few minutes of a class are “cognitive holy ground.” Primacy-recency rules! During a learning episode, one remembers that which comes first, second best that which comes last, and least that which comes just past the middle.

“When an individual is processing new information, the amount of information retained depends, among other things, on when it is presented during the learning episode. At certain time intervals during the learning, we will remember more than at other intervals. More recent brain research helps to explain why this is so. The first items of new information are within the working memory’s functional capacity so they command our attention, and are likely to be retained. The later information, however, exceeds the capacity and is lost. As the learning episode concludes, items in working memory are sorted or chunked to allow for additional processing of the arriving final items, which are likely held in working memory and will decay unless further rehearsed” (Sousa 2006, 88-89).

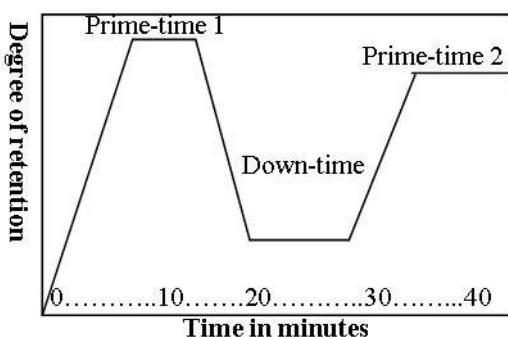


Figure 3 Primacy-recency effect on retention (Sousa 2006, 90)

Figure 4 shows how the primacy-recency effect influences retention during a 40-minute learning episode. The times are approximate and averages. The first or primacy mode is called prime-time 1 and the second mode prime-time 2. Between the two modes is the time period in which it is most difficult or requires the most effort for retention to occur, called down-time.

When the Sunday School teachers remember the “bee”, they are reminded that their ability to create a compelling introduction weighs in as a strong factor in the later success of their mission. In practical

terms, the teacher can either select material from the commercial curriculum to make a compelling introduction or they can create one that generates interest in the theme and shows the

relevance of the story or Biblical truth. The teacher is reminded that they stand on holy ground during those initial minutes of class and must be careful to not misuse prime-times. An example of a waste of Prime-Time 1: “After getting the focus by telling the class the day’s lesson objective, the teacher takes attendance, asks the class what they remember from last week’s lesson, and then makes an announcement. By the time the teacher gets to the new learning, the students are already at the down-time. As a finale, the teacher tells the students that they were so well-behaved during the lesson that they can do anything they want during the last ten minutes of class (during prime-time 2) as long as they are quiet. It is important to make good use of Down-Time with guided practice or small group discussion like having students rehearse (elaborative) information, try out (practice) the new learning or discuss it by relating it to past learnings” (Souza 2006, 91).

One important aspect to a good brain-friendly Introduction consists of discovering, as it were, the distance between the bee and the center of the flower. In order to start where the learner is, the teacher asks several questions to ascertain how much or how little they know mentally and experientially about the theme or passage. For example, if the story to be studied was Samuel and his mother, Hanna, the teacher might introduce the class by having them describe how they typically pray, what they say, what results they expect for having prayed. Or they may choose an activity like listening to the song: *Thank God for unanswered prayers* by Garth Brooks and then using a discussion of the lyrics afterwards as a lead-in to introduce the theme of prayer. One introduction used for a series on Acts 1-2 (Pentecost) had the students interview each other: What date was the Church of Christ born? What events surrounded the birth of the Church? The kids general “cluelessness” regarding the answers created a desire to discover the answers.

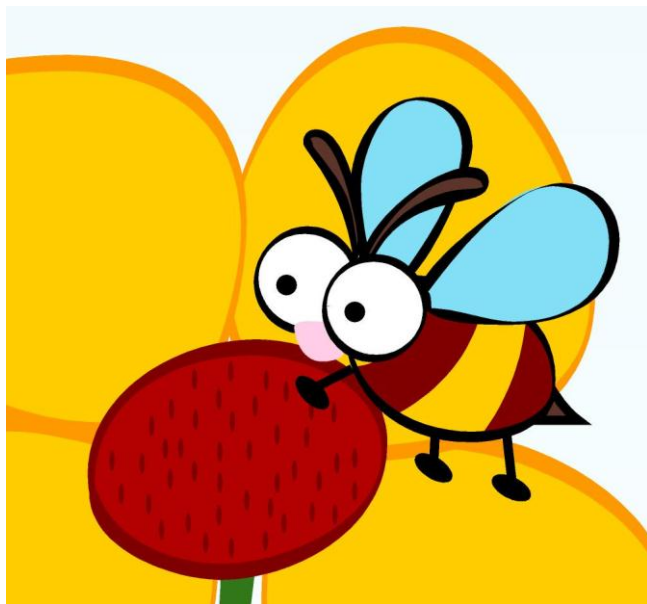


Figure 4 Center of the flower—The main Bible passage

The center of the flower The center of the flower represents the one main Bible story or portion of scripture that will be studied in depth. Many curriculums topical in nature draw from numerous scripture passages or maybe just a memory verse is provided. In order for the students to “fed off the honey-like Word of truth like a bee does to a flower,” only one passage or story will be chosen to study during the lesson. This passage selected must be substantial enough to allow the students to understand the context. Background material is provided to help the students grasp the original meaning of the author. The students read the passage, together with the teacher, while using their own Bibles. They may highlight the text read and place a post-it note there as a bookmark. After reading the passage in their

Bibles, and hearing the teacher explain the important contextual and background material, the principle of creative “rehearsal” is applied. Brain research posits that no learning occurs without repetition. This research only serves to corroborate what has long been known to educators like John Dewey who said that no learning takes place without rehearsal. In creative ways, the story

or passage is repeated and rehearsed in the student's mind through the use of the "petals" of the flower.

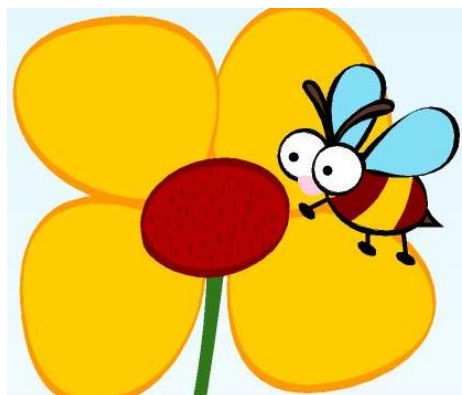


Figure 5: The petals of the flower—Creative ways to rehearse and dig into the Bible passage

Petals of the flower:

This flower shows four petals but more can be used, depending on the teacher's time, resources, and gift mix as well as the students' attention span and interest. Just like the beauty of a flower is enhanced by the petals, so the study of the Bible is enhanced and deepened through the use of various creative activities. The teacher is encouraged to glean any educational activity from the commercial curriculum that meets the standards of the Petals and apply it to her or his lesson plan.

requires that the learner not only give conscious attention but also build conceptual frameworks that have sense and meaning for eventual consolidation into the long-term storage networks" (Sousa 2006, 86). Rehearsal is teacher initiated and teacher directed, at first. However, one's long-term goal is to teach students to be lifelong learners and to use these techniques for their own personal study.

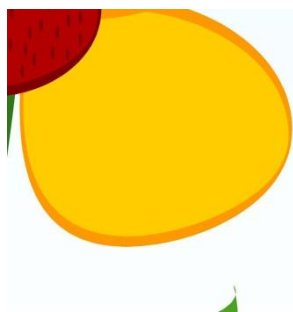


Figure 6 Petal of Analysis

Petal of analysis: The underlying concept is to prompt movement along the line of Bloom's "new taxonomy" (Marzano 2007) thus enabling the students to critically reflect on the Bible passage. Different techniques are used like:

Paraphrase: Students orally restate story or passage in their own words.

Detection of the plot or storyline: Students divide into small groups to review the story. Each group has to detect one part of the storyline like the setting, the characters, the problem, the climax, the resolution.

Prediction: Students study the passage, and the teacher presents to them a different course of action, which the students have to predict what might have happened. Example: Predict how biblical King David's reign might have ended had he not committed adultery with Bathsheba. Even more challenging is when the students are presented the opportunity to present a different course of action and then try to imagine the consequences. Example: One student asked, what would have happened if Lazarus would not have come out of the grave when Jesus called out to him.

Manuscript: Each student receives his or her own copy of the passage which has been printed out on paper, double spaced and with wide margins. They are given color pencils, a list of symbols, and coached on how to do "observe" by underlining plus other techniques used in inductive Bible study.

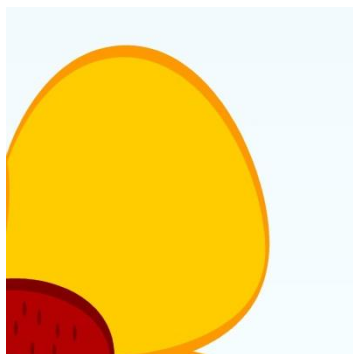


Figure 7 The Petal of Real-life examples

Petal: Real-life examples

Medina (2009, 112-115) notes that tThe more elaborately one encodes the information (associate it with other knowledge the students may already possess) at the moment of learning, the stronger the memory. Why do examples work? They appear to take advantage of the brain's natural predilection for pattern matching. Information is more readily processed if it can be immediately associated with information already present in the learner's brain. Make liberal use of relevant real-world examples embedded in the information, constantly peppering main learning points with meaningful experiences. In one experiment they tested three groups of students: Group one read a 32-paragraph paper about a fictitious

foreign country with no examples. Group two's same reading contained one example. Group three's contained three examples of the main theme. The results? The greater the number of examples, the more they remembered. Providing examples is the cognitive equivalent of adding more handles to the door. Teachers are encouraged to embed into their teaching real-life examples or stories, since the more handles one creates at the moment of learning, the more likely the information is to be accessed at a later date. Different techniques can be used like testimonies, anecdotes, analogies, contemporary parables, etc. These can be presented in a variety of forms, like live, recorded in books/biographies, video clips, or simply shared.

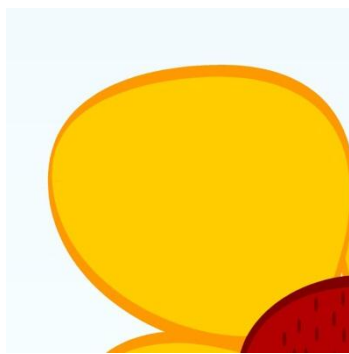


Figure 8: The Petal of Visual aids

Petal: Visual aids

Most Sunday School curriculum provides good visual aids that are worth taking advantage of. Today's young person has a far greater appetite for visual stimulus given their constant exposure to screens. Therefore, almost without exception, the teachers make use of this Petal in all their classes. What has been discovered is that while the student's appetite has increased, they tend to be more "consumers" of images than "connoisseurs," failing to stop long enough to appreciate the finer details and nuances of what is depicted in an image. This has required prompting from the teachers to slow them down and

focus their attention using games like: I spy... and Where's (Waldo)? Questions are asked of the art or paintings to help them appreciate what the facial expressions or body postures reveal. For example, the last week in the life of Jesus from the gospels was taught in a four-part series using famous Lenten painting, many of them depicting the Stations of the Cross.

Other visual aids come from works of art like *The Life of Christ in art* by (Doares 1995) or artwork from Ron DiCianni. Video clips are an all-time favorite for all ages.

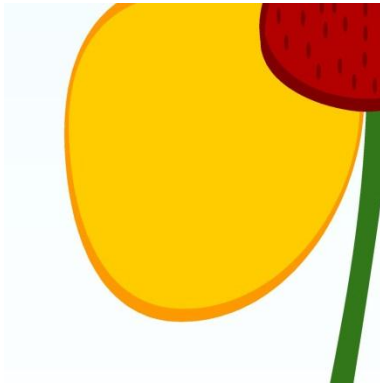


Figure 9: Playful activities

Petal: Playful activities

Physical activity is cognitive candy, so during Sunday School make room for exercise breaks. To improve the students' thinking skills—move! “When one sits for more than twenty minutes, the blood pools in their seat and in their feet. By getting up and moving, the blood is recirculated. Within one minute, there is about fifteen percent more blood in one's brain” (Sousa 2006, 34). “At some point in every lessons, students should be up and moving about, preferably talking about their new learning. Not only does the movement increase cognitive function, but it also helps students use up some kinesthetic energy—the wiggles, if you will—so they can settle down and concentrate more” (Sousa 2006, 233).

In addition to its value to the brain, playful movement also appeals to the kinesthetic or tactile learner who learns by touch and by doing. They may listen to the story, even see pictures of it, but not until they immerse themselves in its movement and action do they truly understand it. The wooden figures of “Holy Play” can serve this purpose, especially when the children are manipulating the figures themselves as they imagine and wonder about the story.

Other examples are the myriad of ways a Bible story can be dramatized, everything from a full-fledged theatre play to acting out Jesus with his disciples when he calmed the sea. Creative drama, dramatic play and techniques like Peter Pitzele's Bibliodrama (1998) can be used.

Camplike activities can form part of this *Petal* like games, trust walks, team-building initiatives, or even hands-on exercises designed to put the Biblical principle into practice. For example, after teaching the passage in Galatians of the works of the flesh, a soccer game was organized and as the teacher served as referee, he began to point out the incongruences between what they had just studied and their actions on the playing field.

Petal: Storying

For students ages 14-18, the author is currently introducing Novelli's (2008) Chronological Bible Storying which would add a fifth *petal* to the Flower/bee methodology.

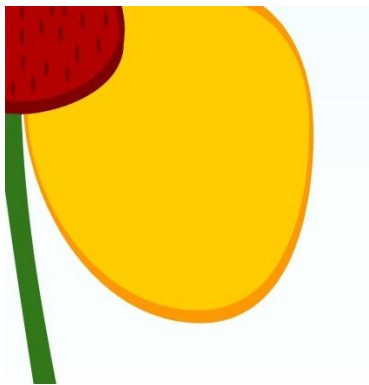


Figure 10: Petal of "storying"



Figure 11: The Stem of Interpretation

The Stem of Interpretation:

As the students and teacher observe the details of the Bible story or passage, they go deeper and deeper into the meaning, just like following the stem of the flower. While inductive Bible study opens up new vistas and helps the student discover layers and layers of learning in the passage, the teacher is still required to study the passage prior to class in order to grasp its meaning. Smith (2011) makes a good point in that not all Scripture can be understood by inductive Bible study. Therefore, Bible commentaries, church tradition, creeds, and doctrines should be consulted where the interpretation is not clear or obvious. Nonetheless, the student, with the teacher's coaching, can learn to make headway into the lifelong process of feeding himself from God's Word.

Some questions can facilitate the interpretation through dialogue and discussion: Is there a good example to imitate? Or a bad one to avoid? Is there a promise to consider? OR an

order to obey? Why did Jesus tell this this parable or story? What does it mean What is God saying or communicating? What is His message? Why was this written and what did it mean to the original hearers? What do we learn from this passage? The interpretation given in the commercial curriculum will need to be corroborated as would those of the teachers' themselves. For pre-schoolers, for whom this level of discussion is beyond their "cognitive reach," other activities can serve to take the place of dialogue: * Take a blank piece of paper and draw the story that we just read. * Using play-doh, let's re-create the story of Noah. * Using the wooden

figures, let's have you take turns re-telling the story in groups of three.

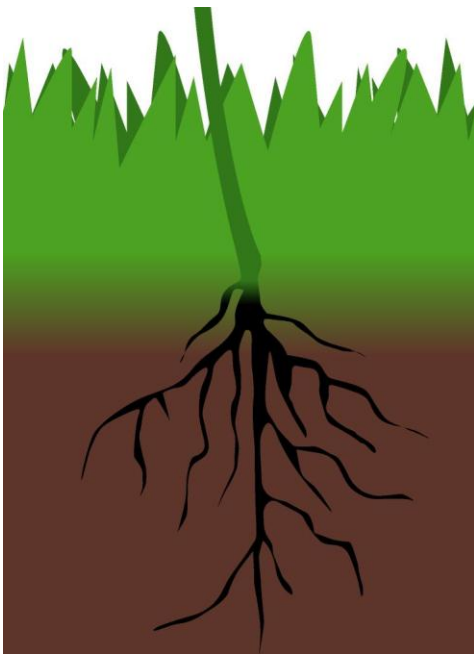


Figure 12: The Roots of obeying God's Word

The Roots of obeying God's Word

Sinking down roots requires obedience to God's Word. The teacher's role at this point is to create the space in the classroom, for each student to form their own action plan, based on the insights and conviction given by the Holy Spirit. The students are invited to share their action plans for the sake of mutual accountability, new ideas and inspiration one to another, and the opportunity to air one's doubts out loud. The teacher usually chooses one or two of the following to prompt the making of a plan: (1) What problem or dilemma will you be able to resolve in your life today with what you have learned? (2) How can I be a doer of God's Word and not just a hearer? (3) What is God teaching me through this passage? (4) Where do I see myself in this story and where does it lead me to go in the daily affairs of my life? (5) What circumstance in my life does this story remind me of?

Activities like songs, journaling, role-playing obedience, are also used to help the student connect God's Word to their lives and obey it.

Roots for pre-schoolers consist of encouragement to tell their Bible story to their parents.

The lesson ends with each student receiving a benediction from their teacher.

Closing thoughts

The following virtues of using a methodology for lesson planning which "lays over" like a template on any existing curriculum have been discovered.

- *The Flower/bee* provides a methodology for each lesson plan that remains consistent no matter which curriculum is used.
- *The Flower/bee* capitalizes on the overall structure of the units and lesson plans offered by the commercial curriculum which is valuable given the time constraints of volunteer superintendents and teachers.
- *The Flower/bee* gleans the best the curriculum has to offer in terms of learning activities, selection of scripture passages to be studied, visual aids, etc. but does not follow verbatim the offered lesson plan.
- *The Flower/bee* seeks to ensure the proper use of the Bible in Sunday School (2 Tim. 2:15... *correctly handling the word of truth*).
- *The Flower/bee* is a user-friendly, visually pleasing and simple way to teach an all-volunteer group of Sunday School teachers.
- *The Flower/bee* provides the teachers with strong guidance in pedagogy since most have a willing spirit but lack training in education.
- *The Flower/bee* is a consistent way to show the teachers how to arrange their lesson plans in a uniform manner for all the age groups.
- *The Flower/bee* provides "brain-friendly" teaching techniques for teachers who unknowingly are not teaching how the brain learns.
- *The Flower/bee* focuses the class around one main Bible passage, striving to help the students learn how to study scripture since most of the church families do not regularly study the Word of God.
- *The Flower/bee* acts like the skeleton, the commercial curriculum is like the flesh placed on the skeleton, and finally, the particular style and creativity and experience of the teacher is what dresses the skeleton, giving it a unique aspect.

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