A 3-YEAR TEACHING STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY FROM GROW CURRICULUM

It's so important to have a strategy for what you'll teach kids. Without a strategy, we run the risk of missing important ideas, teaching only the topics that interest us most, and ultimately failing to give our kids a full and holistic view of God. Our goal should be to help kids grow spiritually by teaching and discussing Scripture in developmentally appropriate ways. So how do we do that? It comes down to **what we teach every week, every month, and every year.** And for kids, we also have to talk about **how to teach them the whole Bible on a repeatable rhythm and sequence.**

That's a lot to figure out, and a lot of strategy to envision! But don't worry — we're going to share how we've structured all of this in Grow Kids Curriculum. **But don't worry if you've never used Grow Kids in your ministry before. You can still steal our strategy!** Take the ideas you find helpful, ignore the parts that don't quite fit your context, and combine them with the unique language, vision, and strategy of your church.

Now, let's talk about our teaching strategy! We'll start with the big picture and then get more specific as we go.

HOW TO TEACH KIDS THE WHOLE BIBLE IN 3 YEARS

When planning your teaching strategy, the most important thing you'll need to do is to **establish your scope and sequence** — a fancy term for what you'll teach (the scope) and when you'll teach it (the sequence).

There are a lot of ways to structure your scope and sequence for teaching kids the Bible. Some people like to base their scope and sequence for kids on key topics, character traits, or moral lessons. But we think it's important to give kids a solid biblical foundation by **making the most important stories in the Bible the foundation of our scope and sequence.**

Since preschoolers and elementary-aged kids are more likely to remember stories about God rather than abstract principles or ideas about God, it's so important to **structure your scope and sequence for kids around biblical stories.**

In short, we suggest **teaching through the entire Bible, *mostly chronologically***, with an equal balance between the Old Testament and New Testament. We say "mostly" because if you actually taught the Bible chronologically from start to finish, it would take a long time to get to Jesus, and he's the most important part of the whole thing! You'd also end up with some weird timing around big holidays. No one wants to teach about Job at Christmastime or Abraham on Easter week, right?

To build this kind of scope and sequence, we came up with a list of all the major events in the Bible, in chronological order. The trick here was to **try to create equally-sized buckets,** each of which could contain about the same number of Bible stories kids need to hear. While there are lots of ways to do this, here's what we came up with. It's what the scope and sequence for Grow Kids Curriculum is based on! In three years, we'll cover ...

OLD TESTAMENT

- Creation, the Fall & Early Humanity
- Abraham & His Family
- Joseph
- Moses & the Exodus
- The 10 Commandments
- Israel in the Wilderness
- Joshua
- Judges
- Prophets
- David & His Family

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- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Job
- Elijah & Elisha
- Daniel
- Esther, Ezra & Nehemiah

NEW TESTAMENT

- Christmas
- Jesus' Early Life
- Jesus' Teachings
- Jesus' Ministry
- Jesus' Miracles
- Easter
- The Early Church

Now, if you're thinking the Old Testament and New Testament sections look a little imbalanced, don't worry! You'll see how the Old and New Testaments fit together (in equal measures) in a second. But for now, here's the important thing: **it will take three years to make it through this list.** Then, every three years, you can start it all over again!

Oh, and **if your church follows** the Lectionary **for your weekly teaching**, here are two bonus tips for you:

- The most common Lectionary calendar also follows a three-year calendar! So if you're trying to teach kids the whole Bible on a three-year cycle, you already have access to three years of Bible passages to help guide you.
- If you're using Grow Kids Curriculum, we did all the three-year Bible math for you already. **Every week of Grow Kids aligns with the Revised Common Lectionary!**

But okay, now that we've got our three-year plan, let's break it down into a yearly view.

HOW TO TEACH KIDS EVERY YEAR

If you're not already planning your teaching calendar a year at a time, you really should! Planning a year at a time means you ….

- Won't need to stop what you're doing multiple times throughout the year and **wonder, "What am I teaching next?"**
- Will be less likely to **only teach your favorite Bible stories or lessons** and accidentally leave out really important things kids need to hear.
- Will be able to **better delegate and empower your volunteers,** since you'll have a teaching plan ready to hand them at the beginning of the year!

For more details on how to plan a year of ministry, including your teaching calendar, check out this article on planning a whole year of children's ministry. There's a video that will walk you through it!

Remember, these are the things we wanted to achieve with our scope and sequence:

- Spend an **equal amount of time in the Old and New Testaments.**
- Teach these stories **(mostly) chronologically.**
- **Teach the Christmas and Easter stories** during the actual holidays!

And here's how we put those puzzle pieces together to create an annual teaching strategy: every year, **we spend six months in the New Testament and six months in the Old Testament**.

NEW TESTAMENT (DECEMBER – MAY)

- In December, we begin our time in the New Testament toward the beginning of Advent, with the birth of Jesus!
- In January, February, March, and April, we focus on Jesus with stories and passages from the Gospels and Epistles. And of course, we tell the Easter story!

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- In May, we look at stories and writings from the early church, introducing kids to stories from Acts and the Epistles.
- We repeat this rhythm every year, using different stories and passages each year until we run out of stories! Over the course of three years, you'll be able to hit all the major stories and ideas from the whole New Testament. At that point, you can start over again!

OLD TESTAMENT (JUNE – NOVEMBER)

- In June, we leave the New Testament and head back to the Old Testament. If it's time to start our three-year scope and sequence all over again, we'll begin with the Creation story and continue chronologically through the entire Old Testament. This will take three years, so we make sure we've split the Old Testament stories we want to cover into three even chunks.
- In November, we'll complete our six months of Old Testament stories and get ready to head back into the New Testament. To help kids make this transition, November usually includes prophecies about the coming Messiah, whose birth we're about to celebrate!
- Oh, and here's a tip — **when you're teaching a story from the Old Testament, always include a passage from the New Testament** to help kids connect the stories about God in the Old Testament with Jesus!

HOW TO TEACH KIDS EVERY MONTH

Now that we've talked about an annual (and 3-year) teaching strategy, let's zoom in a bit more and look at each month. Rather than one-off lessons, **we suggest teaching kids in a new teaching series every month.** During that month-long series, you can create a special month-long experience to help kids better remember what you're talking about and process the big ideas you're sharing.

Once you know what Bible stories you'll be teaching (like four weeks on Joshua, or five weeks on the early church), you can begin to look for the big-picture ideas, lessons, and themes you plan to help kids see in those stories. With those identified, you'll be better prepared to come up ways to **tie everything together for the month**, like with …

- A memorable series name.
- Unique series graphics, music, and videos that follow a monthly theme.
- A special room or stage design.
- Series-specific activities, rhythms, structures, or patterns.
- A series-long challenge or activity.

For more ideas on how to **create monthly themes that make your teaching more effective,** check out this article on how to create a strategy for your Weekly Environments!

If you'd like to see how this looks in a year of Grow Kids Curriculum, check out this sample of our Scope & Sequence!

If you're using Grow Kids Curriculum, you know we've already developed this monthly teaching strategy for you. And if you're not using Grow Kids, for every week of every year, **we provide teaching content designed by real in-the-trenches pastors and volunteers in children's ministry** who understand how to teach kids effectively. And we give you everything you need to make it happen!

But before we wrap things up, let's talk about how to approach your teaching every single week. We've already talked about **your big-picture teaching strategy**, but **your weekly lessons should be strategic too!** So let's talk about how.

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HOW TO TEACH KIDS EVERY WEEK

To teach kids effectively, we can't just open the Bible and teach! We need **strategic and age-appropriate teaching methods** if we want them to remember, personalize, and apply what we teach.

There are so many different ways to approach your teaching time for kids. There are countless models, structures, and formulas you can follow to teach the Bible in compelling and practical ways. But we like to think about teaching in terms of three questions the kids in your church are asking every time a grown-up stands up to teach them something:

- **WHAT?** What are we talking about?
- **SO WHAT?** Why does it matter to God and to us?
- **NOW WHAT?** What should we do about what we just learned?

(If you've ever used Grow Kids Curriculum, those three questions might be familiar, because every week of our teaching is structured around these three questions.)

Now, when some people hear the word "teaching," they automatically picture a class or a sermon. But when you're talking about kids, the truth is **kids never learn best just by listening to someone talk**. Instead, there are other, more effective, and engaging ways to help kids learn, like...

- **QUESTIONS AND POLLS** give kids the chance to share their opinions and thoughts.
- **PERSONAL STORIES** give them real-life examples of faith, doubt, and difficulties to learn from and remind them they're not alone.
- **IMAGES, VIDEOS, AND MUSIC** engage their eyes and ears and help us capture their attention when it wanders.
- **OBJECT LESSONS** give concrete experiences to help them understand or remember abstract ideas.
- **ACTIVITIES** get them moving and interacting in ways that will help them remember what they've learned because they didn't just hear it — they experienced it.
- **MOMENTS OF REFLECTION** give them a chance to sit quietly, write, think, or pray so they can process what is being taught.
- **OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESPONSE** give them a chance to do something about what they've learned, like make a commitment or choose a next step.
- **DISCUSSION** gives them an opportunity to have conversations with their peers and with grown-ups, about what they're learning — and it might just be the most important teaching method of all. For kids, this should include questions that review or summarize a lesson, but the real focus should be on questions that help them **personalize and apply what they've learned.**

Okay, maybe this seems like a lot to think about, but **the most important thing you can do in kids ministry is to strategically teach kids about who Jesus is!** So make sure the strategy you're using to teach the kids in your care is leading kids in the right direction.

In case you missed it, check out this article about planning an entire year of ministry. It'll show you how this teaching strategy could look on your annual calendar, alongside an annual strategy for your:

- Discipleship
- Weekly Environments
- Events
- Volunteers
- Families

We've said this before, but we've got to say it again! These ideas we've talked about are nice ... **but these *ideas* only become a *strategy* when you put them on your calendar and turn them into actions.**

When you have an annual plan to turn your ideas and goals into a strategy, you'll make a much bigger impact.

So whether you use Grow Curriculum or not, **we hope you'll steal our strategy!** We developed it over lots of years of ministry, with input from lots of church leaders and lots of trial and error. Take it, tweak it, and make it your own. We really hope it helps you be just a little more awesome at what you do this year!

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For even more resources like this one, try a free trial of Grow Curriculum and Annual Strategy for your children's or youth ministry. It's everything you need for a more strategic year of discipleship, teaching, environments, events, volunteers, and families!

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