

Promises

Introduction to the syllabus

Unit	Lesson	PDF file name (for individual lessons)
Unit 1: God's promises and Jesus	1. God keeps his promises	P_unit1_lesson1.pdf
	2. Jesus makes a deaf man hear	P_unit1_lesson2.pdf
	3. Jesus makes a blind man see	P_unit1_lesson3.pdf
	4. Jesus heals a leper and a cripple	P_unit1_lesson4.pdf
	5. Jesus makes a dead man alive	P_unit1_lesson5.pdf
	6. Jesus is God's promised Son	P_unit1_lesson6.pdf
Unit 2: God's promises and Easter	1. Jesus speaks of his death	P_unit2_lesson1.pdf
	2. Peter and the disciples	P_unit2_lesson2.pdf
	3. Jesus' death	P_unit2_lesson3.pdf
	4. Jesus' resurrection	P_unit2_lesson4.pdf
Unit 3: God's promises to Abraham	1. God's promises to Abram	P_unit3_lesson1.pdf
	2. Abram and Lot	P_unit3_lesson2.pdf
	3. Abraham and Isaac	P_unit3_lesson3.pdf
	4. Isaac and Rebecca	P_unit3_lesson4.pdf
	5. God's promises to Abraham—revision	P_unit3_lesson5.pdf
Unit 4: God's promises continue	1. Isaac and Rebecca, Esau and Jacob	P_unit4_lesson1.pdf
	2. Jacob and Esau—part 1	P_unit4_lesson2.pdf
	3. Jacob and Esau—part 2	P_unit4_lesson3.pdf
	4. God's promises to Jacob	P_unit4_lesson4.pdf
	5. Jacob's sons—revision	P_unit4_lesson5.pdf
Unit 5: Prayer	1. Pray at all times	P_unit5_lesson1.pdf
	2. Be thankful	P_unit5_lesson2.pdf
	3. Praying for others	P_unit5_lesson3.pdf
Unit 6: Entering the Promised Land	1. Leaving Egypt	P_unit6_lesson1.pdf
	2. The Israelites disobey	P_unit6_lesson2.pdf
	3. God stays with his people	P_unit6_lesson3.pdf
	4. The Israelites disobey, again	P_unit6_lesson4.pdf
	5. Rahab and the spies	P_unit6_lesson5.pdf
	6. Getting across the Jordan	P_unit6_lesson6.pdf
	7. Getting into Jericho	P_unit6_lesson7.pdf
Unit 7: God's promises and God's people today...	1. Jesus is the 'Yes' to God's promises	P_unit7_lesson1.pdf
	2. Jesus is God's promised king	P_unit7_lesson2.pdf
	3. God's people are forgiven by God	P_unit7_lesson3.pdf
	4. God's people live with Jesus as their king	P_unit7_lesson4.pdf
	5. God's people are promised eternal life	P_unit7_lesson5.pdf
	6. God's people love	P_unit7_lesson6.pdf
	7. God's people forgive	P_unit7_lesson7.pdf
Unit 8: God's promises and Christmas	1. A promise to Mary	P_unit8_lesson1.pdf
	2. God's promised Son is born	P_unit8_lesson2.pdf
	3. A promise to the shepherds	P_unit8_lesson3.pdf

Why Teaching Little Ones?

What better time to start teaching children than when they are young. Paul reminds Timothy that he had the privilege of knowing the holy Scriptures “from infancy” (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

So what is the goal of this syllabus? We want to help young children learn about God so that they can develop a relationship with him at their level. We are not wanting just to increase their head knowledge, but focus on a relationship with their Creator.

Promises—where it fits

In the first three *Teaching Little Ones* CD-ROMs there is a syllabus of lessons for preschoolers—*First Steps*, *Learning about God* and *Introducing the Bible*. For more information on these, see: www.matthiasmedia.com.au/tlo. How you use them depends on what age children begin attending Sunday School in your church.

The *First Steps* syllabus is written with a particular group of children in mind—namely, the 2-3 year olds who are too young to join the traditional Sunday School, but are ready for a bit more Christian input than they would normally get in a typical crèche. (I sometimes refer to this age group as ‘transition crèche’.) The aim of *First Steps* is to teach these children simple concepts: helping them learn about God and develop a relationship with him at their level, learning that God is great, that he made the world around them, and that he loves them. They are also introduced to Jesus in the Christmas story.

The *Learning about God* syllabus is intended for pre-school children, aged 3-5 years. It is a syllabus that begins with foundational truths about God—God made, God loves and God knows—and introduces the Bible, prayer, and God’s Son, Jesus.

The *Introducing the Bible* syllabus is also intended for pre-school children. It is a syllabus that begins with Jesus as God’s Son (leading up to Easter) and then moves from Genesis (creation, Noah, Abraham, Joseph) to Moses, Samuel and David in the Old Testament. In the New Testament we are introduced to Peter and Paul and then we learn more about God’s Son, Jesus, at Christmas.

What follows the pre-school syllabus? There are three year’s worth of lessons for 5-8 year olds: *Promises*, *Kingship* and *Salvation*.

If one class is systematically working their way through each syllabus, then the place to begin would be the *Promises* syllabus, followed by the *Kingship* syllabus and finally the *Salvation* syllabus. However, each syllabus is self-contained so that they can be used in a cycle and children can join in whichever year the cycle is up to.

The *Promises* syllabus explores the biblical theme of ‘promise’ and ‘fulfilment’. It includes lessons about Abraham, the Israelites and the Promised Land from the Old Testament.

From the New Testament it includes lessons on Jesus, God's promised Son, and how Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises.

The *Kingship* syllabus explores the biblical theme of 'kingship' with lessons on King Saul, King David and King Solomon, as well as other kings in the Old Testament. These lead into lessons about Jesus—the King of kings.

The *Salvation* syllabus includes lessons from the Old and New Testament about God's salvation. This salvation is ultimately found in Jesus, and is one to which we must respond. Therefore, included in this syllabus is a unit of lessons which gives an overview of the gospel, helping the children understand God's message of salvation. From the Old Testament there are lessons on Elijah and Jonah. From the New Testament there are lessons on Paul and how Jesus is our Saviour.

Promises—what it is (and isn't)

The lesson notes for *Promises* do not do all the work for you—you will still need to set aside some preparation time. The visual aids will not all be made for you, and there is no activity book to be handed out each week for the children to fill in. The lessons are varied and include as much craft as possible. In order for the children to learn, we want them to understand and remember what we teach them. Therefore, the main message is important and the take-home activities try to reinforce this.

What follows are notes for the teaching component of your Sunday School class. If your Sunday School includes a singing time or a time for activities when children arrive, you will find suggestions in my book, *Their God is so BIG* (Matthias Media). Also, if you would like to understand more about the age group you are teaching or about how to manage a class or tell a story or pray then, again, the fuller picture is explained in my book.

The lessons notes follow roughly the same order in each lesson. However, you may need to make adaptations, where appropriate, to suit your class. If the children in your class are unable to concentrate well without frequent concentration breaks, then factor these into each lesson—for instance, do an action rhyme more than once in the lesson and use it as a means of giving the children a 'controlled' chance to have a little wriggle. On the other hand, if I have positioned an action rhyme in the lesson (eg. after the 'Conclusion', but before the 'What about us') to provide a concentration break and you think that for your class it would be preferable to keep the momentum and do it at the end of the lesson, then do so.

Although the lessons in the *Promises* syllabus are aimed at 5-8 year olds, I realize that in many Sunday Schools there will be a wider age range than specifically 5-8 year olds. These lessons can be used for a wider age range, though you may have to make a few adjustments. If you have younger children in your group, provide concentration breaks throughout the lesson as their ability to sit and listen will probably be shorter than the others. If you have older children in your group, you could spend more time on the 'what about us' section of the lesson (even while other children commence one of the

activities). Many of the activities suggested in these lessons will suit older children. One activity in every lesson is specifically suitable for younger children, though you will find other activities are suitable as well.

An explanation of the lesson notes

Bible reference...

You will find two types of Bible references. Some lessons are based on one Bible passage (which may be as small as one or two verses). Other lessons are based on a number of Bible passages and verses. These Bible references are listed so that you can read them in your preparation—they will not all be read to the children. Many of the lessons are a simplified form of a Bible passage, so it is important to understand the Bible before you attempt to tell the simplified version to children. When preparing these stories, always begin your preparation with the Bible passage rather than my version of the Bible passage.

The Bible references themselves are for the teacher's benefit and, as such, they can be read in whatever version of the Bible you personally read. I base the lessons on the Good News Version text, because of its simplicity.

For use in the Sunday School class itself, I recommend that you have a class Bible in the Good News Version. At the beginning of the stories it is helpful to show the Bible and mention that what they are learning comes from the Bible.

When Bible references are written on take-home activities, there is often a Bible symbol. This is to reinforce the fact that the story comes from a part of the Bible, and it is a symbol that the children will be able to recognize. (Remember that many of the children can't read the Bible reference themselves, but they will learn to recognize the picture as a Bible.) However, there are some Bible references without this symbol, for example, where the caption needs to be small.

Bible references on the take-home activities are written with the name of the book and the chapter number, without the word 'chapter' included. The reason for this is that the word 'chapter' is only meaningful for readers who can appreciate what a chapter is. As the chapter numbers appear in large, bold type in the Bible, the children could easily spot these on a page. We do include the word 'verse', to distinguish the 'big' numbers from the 'little' numbers. I have not included this explanation in the lesson notes, as it is a difficult concept for children to grasp when some of them may not even know what a sentence is. I leave it to your discretion to explain, if and when you consider it is appropriate, or necessary, to do so.

Lesson aim...

The lesson aim is a brief expression of what you are trying to teach the children in a given lesson and hence what you want them to learn. It is an explanation for the teacher—it is *not* expressed in terms the children could necessarily understand.

Main message...

The main message is a simple statement of the main learning point in the lesson—what you want the children to go away remembering. It is expressed in terms which the children should understand, as simply as possible. This is what we want to focus on and reinforce in a lesson, and it is also what we want the children to take home on their activity. In some lessons, however, the main message is longer than I would ideally choose to write. In such cases it needs to be that length to adequately summarize the main point of the lesson.

Remember that the main message will not summarize every aspect of the theme or passage being studied—just the main message that we want the children to hear, understand, learn and remember.

Please note...

Some, not all, lessons have a ‘please note’ added. It may refer to some other matter which is important to draw your attention to.

Memory verse...

The lessons in this syllabus include memory verses. There are two memory verses learnt in every ten week term. Sometimes the memory verses are exactly five weeks each, but there are times when, due to the units studied, the memory verses may be for four or six weeks. Where possible the memory verses relate to the unit being studied, but there are some memory verses which have been included simply because they are valuable for the children to learn.

All the memory verses have been taken from the Good News Version. If in the Good News text there is the word ‘he’ instead of ‘God’ or ‘Jesus’, the children learn the verse as it appears in the Good News Bible and the teachers need to make sure that the children understand who the ‘he’ is referring to. We want the children to learn to be faithful to the biblical text and not learn verses with ‘different’ words in them. If they see us changing a little word, they may think in the future that it doesn’t matter if they change ‘bigger’ words in Bible verses.

For each memory verse there are actions or suggestions recommended for use in learning and remembering the verse. These are simply suggestions and you may have other ideas which would work better for your group of children.

There is a printed copy of the memory verse in each lesson. This is mainly for the teachers as many children will not be able to read it. If you do have readers in your group and you are encouraging the children to memorise the verse, then I would suggest that the printed copy of the memory verse is not on display (in the memory verse segment of the lesson) where the children can see it, giving readers an advantage over non-readers.

It is up to individual groups as to where in the lesson the memory verse is learnt. For this reason the memory verse appears at the end of the lesson notes. However, where action rhymes are included in lessons, they are usually placed within the lesson notes at a time when it would be most appropriate to learn the rhyme.

Vocabulary...

In many lessons there is vocabulary listed at the beginning of the lesson notes. These are words, phrases or concepts which appear in the Bible text or lesson and which might be difficult for the children to understand. As simple as possible a definition has been given. Please understand that there are times when it is very difficult to find 'simple' words to adequately describe the meaning of a word or concept. Sometimes a very basic definition is given with the intention that this basic definition would be further expanded on as the children get older.

Sometimes the simplified definition will appear in the story text and other times it is left to the teacher's discretion as to whether the simplified definition needs to be given (for instance, a particular word may have appeared in a recent story and the definition is not repeated within the story text).

Generally the definition is suitable for the children. However, sometimes there are notes just for the teacher.

Story preparation...

This describes the visual aid for helping you tell the story, and how it needs to be prepared. This will vary from week to week. I try to use a variety of methods, including picture cards, puppets and 3D visual aids.

When picture cards are mentioned, I'm not expecting you to use the picture cards in the same way each time they feature in a story. I'd encourage you to be creative and varied in your use of them. There are more ideas in *Their God is so BIG*.

With regard to the pictures of people from the Bible, you might want to explain to the children that people dressed differently back then (i.e. the men are wearing long robes, not dresses!). Also, the king of Egypt will look different because he lives in Egypt.

There may be some lessons where there are no visual aids as such suggested, but rather the children are encouraged to listen to text read directly from the Bible. We want to

begin to train the children to listen to the Bible being read to them without always having visual aids to look at.

Some lessons have the story text written in text boxes which can be attached to picture cards or in a scrapbook, so that you can read text which might be difficult to remember. If you are going to read the story text it is important that you maintain regular eye contact with the children. Hold or place the pictures and text to one side of you so you can look around as you read, rather than burying your head to read something in your lap. Another option is to attach the text behind the picture cards in such a way that the children can look at a picture card (in front of you, eg. on your lap) while you can see (on the back of the picture cards) the text. If you do this, make sure that you hold the picture cards so that you are reading the right text (i.e. don't read the wrong text for the picture you are showing).

In lessons where the text is not written in text boxes, you can still print the text and cut it into cards if that would be helpful to you. I would discourage you from 'reading' the text every week, particularly if you are using puppets. When telling the story regular eye contact is important to help the children concentrate and listen. When the story is based on reading excerpts from the class Bible, the story is written in such a way that there are frequent breaks from reading when you can speak directly to the children and maintain good eye contact.

Introduction...

The introductions have been written with the intention of preparing the children for hearing and understanding the story. The introductions are quite varied, but the intention is always to prepare children for better understanding the message of the story.

A word about puppets

I sometimes use puppets in the introduction. 'Puppets' can be almost anything, from a soft toy to a cardboard roll. Even a tennis racquet with a face on the strings can be a puppet. Puppets can be a wonderful help when teaching children. They can be 'incorrect' without being offended by correction. They can be 'slow to learn' and ask questions which will help you emphasize important truths. They can behave 'badly' or behave 'well'—whichever is going to help you the most! They are very good at being attentive, never rudely interrupt, and set a wonderful example of sitting and listening. They are loved by children (often adored) and build a rapport with children which you or I can only dream about.

My puppets have one thing in common—they can't speak! They all whisper in my ear and I have to repeat what they 'say' to the children. This means that you don't have to be a puppeteer or a ventriloquist to use the puppets suggested in this syllabus.

I would encourage you to look out for a soft toy or two, or a hand puppet, which can make appearances in your lessons. I have found some great soft toys in second hand shops.

They have been given a new lease of life as one of my friends. If you use a puppet (soft toy or whatever) more than once, keep the same name. Children will correct you if ‘Sam’ appears four weeks later as ‘Jeremy’.

I will share with you some of my precious ‘puppet’ friends to give you an idea of how varied puppets can be, and how I have used them. ‘Minty’ monkey is a real puppet, about 10 years old, and is a favourite with children, particularly 5-8 year olds. He has arms (which can go around my neck) and legs. My hand goes up through his body and inside his head and I can give him some facial expressions; as I said, he’s a real ‘puppet’. He lives in a bag and only comes out when it’s quiet. Sometimes he has treasures (which may help in introducing the story) in his bag—sometimes we have a bit of fun together and he has dirty socks or half eaten apples in his bag! ‘Naomi’ is a doll from my childhood—I won’t tell you how old she is. I can dress her and treat her like a child, so she can have experiences just like the children in your class. ‘Jasper’ is a puppet who lives on the end of a stick. Jasper himself can disappear inside a cone. His ability to disappear can be helpful when you want children to be quiet. I have been intrigued by the reaction of older children to Jasper. Jasper has been a hit with 7-8 year olds, and I have been surprised by how captivated children of this age can be by a puppet on the end of a stick! My most unusual, yet versatile, puppet was a square ‘sticky note’ with a face drawn on by children in the class. He was great because he would stay wherever I put him. He could get up close to a caption and help me reinforce the main message, or he could stick on a picture card and look very closely at something.

Story...

The stories have been carefully phrased so as to try to use the vocabulary, where possible, of 5-8 year olds. Please understand that my simplification of Bible passages will never be perfect. My aim is to be faithful to the Bible, meaningful to the children and prayerful in my task of simplifying a passage and communicating the main idea in a straightforward, concise way. I have often found simplification daunting as I certainly don’t want to be misrepresenting the Bible at any point. Please begin your preparation with the Bible passage and then read the simplified version.

At the beginning of stories it is helpful to show the Bible and mention the fact that what they are learning comes from the Bible.

The stories do range in length. This can’t be helped as it is impossible to make every story the same length. I don’t want to add to a story to make it the same length as others, nor do I want to shorten a story to such an extent that the children can’t understand it.

Vocabulary

One problem with the vocabulary in the *Promises* syllabus is that it is impossible to have a year’s syllabus without coming across words which are challenging to simplify or explain. I have included the vocabulary section (referred to earlier) so that you can be alerted to words which appear in any given lesson and may need simplification. Please understand

that it is impossible for me to know which words would be familiar to every child using this material. Always be on the lookout for words which your particular group of children might not know. If you see a word which you don't think your children will know, please either substitute another word or explain the meaning of the word.

As adults we tend to forget how limited the experience of young children can be. For instance, if a child does not live near a beach, has never visited a beach, or has never looked at a book with a beach in it, they may not know what a beach is. Yes, it might have been on the television screen, but unless someone is sitting beside them saying "that is a beach", they will be none the wiser.

I'm also aware that I may use some expressions which are at times colloquial and which may be used widely in my part of the world, but may be less used elsewhere. At times you might need to substitute a different word or expression for the one that I have used.

Use of the Bible

When referring to books of the Bible in the pre-school syllabus, I call them "a part of the Bible called ...(Mark)". In the *Promises* syllabus I refer to them as "a book of the Bible called ...". This is explained in the first lesson of the year.

In some of the lessons in this syllabus there will be quotes to read directly from the Bible. This may be as little as a phrase or a single sentence. You might think that it's a lot of effort to get a Bible out and find the right place just to read a few words. However, it does serve more than one significant purpose. It is a reminder to the children that what we are teaching them is from the Bible. If we read something, even if it is only a few words, from the Bible, the children will know that it came from the Bible—they have seen us reading the Bible. It's also reinforcing the fact that the Bible is important and the Bible is where the Sunday School stories come from. We also want the children to appreciate the fact that the Bible is readable and that it isn't a book just for adults. Simple quotes have been chosen for this reason.

If there is a quote to read from the Bible, you need to have a bookmark in the class Bible before the lesson so that you can easily find the correct place. If the children have to watch you fumbling through half the Bible looking for a verse then their attention will wander. You will also need to have the Bible beside you so that you can easily access it when you need it.

Conclusion...

The conclusion is a brief summary of the main point of the story. This aims to restate and reinforce the main message.

What about us...

This section is an attempt to draw from the story a truth that is particularly applicable to the children. One reason it has been written separately to the Story is so that we are not trying to add to a Bible passage in order to bring out an application point. Not every Story will have a direct application to 'us', but it may be learning an important truth about God. So the 'what about us' section is not necessarily all about us, but about what we can learn, be encouraged by or be challenged by from a given story. The 'what about us' sections are varied in their content and their length—you can add more if you have time, and personalise it more if you know the group of children you are teaching.

Pray...

I have tried to write simple prayer ideas that could be either said by the teacher, or you could have one or more children praying one thing each (this would need to be organized appropriately). It is intended that the prayers be prayed after the story. Therefore, the prayer ideas focus on subjects raised in the story, and are trying to show the children how they can respond to God's word in prayer. I would also encourage you to pray either straight after the story, or at another time in the lesson, for other prayer matters relevant to your class.

Please make sure that when you pray with the children you are always modelling prayers that the children can pray themselves. If we pray using big words in long sentences, then children may think that they can't pray because they will have to wait until they are a grown-up. But the wonderful thing is that our loving Father wants, and delights in, prayer from the youngest to the oldest. And for the child who can't read yet, prayer is something that they can do. They might not be able to read the Bible themselves, but they can pray. There are many things a young child can't do, but prayer is not one of them.

Action rhymes...

Action rhymes appear in many lessons. The reason for action rhymes is that children remember far more if actions accompany words. An action rhyme is an enjoyable and age-appropriate way of helping children in this age bracket learn precious truths about God.

You might find that you can think of your own action rhymes that are appropriate to the world in which your children live. So if snow or banana plantations or beaches (to name a few) are a central part of the world in which you live, you might be able to think of a special rhyme that incorporates those elements and so is more relevant to the children in your group. So I'd encourage you to think of your own from time to time. Just remember, action rhymes don't have to rhyme!

The words for most action rhymes (except the very short ones) are written in a large font size on a page which could be pinned up. This is essentially for the benefit of teachers,

who are likely to have more difficulty remembering the words than the children! Most children will not be able to read the words of the action rhymes, so if you do pin up the words of an action rhyme don't give the children the impression that it is for the children to read. Another way of using these pages is to place them on the floor in front of the teacher so that he/she can be reminded of the words (in the case of a memory lapse) when teaching the action rhyme.

Clapping rhymes...

Some rhymes are accompanied by a clapping rhythm instead of actions. These are just simply a variation on a theme!

'People in the Bible'...

The 'People in the Bible' chart is a pictorial version of a timeline. It's a way of helping the children see where Bible characters and events fit into the Bible. Children in the 5-8 age group do not have a well-developed sense of time and chronology—so this is to assist them in understanding when people from the Bible lived, to get a concept of the order of some Bible events and characters, and grasp the fact that part of the Bible is before Jesus, part of it is while Jesus was here on earth, and part of it is after Jesus went back to heaven.

The 'People in the Bible' chart was introduced in the *Introducing the Bible* syllabus. So those who have done that syllabus will be familiar with it.

When the children are introduced to a person from the Bible, they can see on the chart where they fit in the bigger picture. The story in Genesis about God making everything is in the very beginning of the Bible, and so it is placed on the far left of the chart. Jesus is a long way over to the right. And Peter and then Paul are placed to the right of Jesus.

One weakness of the chart is that we can't possibly include all the people mentioned in the Bible, nor can we accurately represent how many years there are between them. In reality, the people from the Bible on our chart are not right next to each other in time—they may be years apart, even hundreds of years. Our main aim is to help the children see the order they come in (e.g. Adam is before Moses) and also for them to see where people are in relation to Jesus (before him, or after him).

We have included a picture which relates to their life, beside each person. As some children won't be able to read the names, the pictures will help them remember who is who. Sometimes I suggest to cover one part of the picture until they have heard the story that relates to that part of the picture.

You will need to give thought as to how and where you attach the pictures. If your Sunday School class meets in a permanent cubicle or room where you can display pictures on the wall, then you may be able to add the pictures with blu-tack and leave them there throughout the year. If your Sunday School class has to pack up everything at the end of

each lesson so that someone else can use the space, then you will need to think of how the chart can be made so that it is portable. One option is to use strips of cardboard which are joined by tape and can be folded concertina style to store between lessons. Another option is to use thin cardboard which can be rolled, but you might need to store it rolled so the pictures are facing outwards in order for the cardboard to lay flat when unrolled. A third option is to attach each picture onto calico (cheap fabric). Yet another option is to laminate each individual picture, back the laminated pictures with blu-tack and quickly place them on the wall before the beginning of the lesson each week. If you choose this option, it will be easy to store and the pictures won't deteriorate through constant handling. Remove the pictures each week in the correct order so that they are easy to put up the following week.

Concentration breaks...

Some lessons in this syllabus are longer than others. With the combination of the introduction, the story, 'what about us' and then perhaps 'People in the Bible', some lessons can involve a fair bit of listening for the children. I would suggest you have a few ideas in mind for concentration breaks, so that you can use them if necessary. Concentration breaks need only take a very short time, but they provide the children with a legitimate opportunity to wriggle and release some energy. You, the teacher, need to keep control and give very specific directions. Gradually slow the actions and quieten your voice so that you calm the children and prepare them for listening again. Don't have them wildly shaking their hands in the air and then immediately expect them to sit still and listen. You do the actions as you tell the children what to do, so that they follow you. Here are two examples:

Hands: The children could shake their hands, then stop, then shake some more, then stop. Shake hands up high. Then stop. Shake hands fast. Then stop. Shake them slowly. Then stop. Shake them even more slowly. Then place your hands on your lap

Claps: The children could do a clapping rhythm that you demonstrate and then they repeat, eg. two hand claps followed by both hands clapping on knees twice, then both hands clapping on shoulders twice, then back to two hand claps. Alternatively, you could do a rhythm of hand claps including slow and fast claps (eg. slow clap, slow clap, three fast claps, slow clap) which the children imitate. You then give them a longer rhythm followed by a shorter one, followed by a slower one.

Another suggestion for concentration breaks is to do an action rhyme in a lesson at a time when a concentration break is needed.

Activity suggestions...

The activity part of a lesson has a few functions. It is an opportunity for the children to be reminded of what they have just heard. But it is also an opportunity to create something on which the main message can be taken home. For the children to learn, they need to *understand* and *remember* what we teach them. Taking the main message home on a craft activity helps with the 'remembering' part. Whilst the children may not be able to read the caption, their parents usually can; besides, you may be surprised at how a child may recall a message they have learnt just by looking at their activity. The activity part of the lesson is also fun and provides an opportunity for the children and teachers to interact and talk in an informal way.

Please consider the children in your class when choosing and preparing activities. If you have a child with a physical disability, please make allowances in the lesson, and try to bring as little attention to the child's disability as possible. Similarly, if you have a child whose skills are less developed than others, think about how best to assist them without drawing attention to their difficulties. The age group between 5 and 8 years encompasses a large range of reading, writing, drawing, and craft skill levels. For this reason the majority of activities do not require writing skills and the teacher is encouraged to read any text to the children. Some children in this age group are beginning to have feelings of inadequacy because they are aware of being behind their peers in reading or writing (or other) skills. We want these children to feel loved and accepted by God and us. And so we want them to feel a sense of belonging and worth in God's sight that is not based on their ability to achieve. That is why there is an emphasis on craft and drawing, as opposed to reading and writing, in the activity suggestions. You will find that there are some activities which are best for readers, but I try to alert you to this. Think of the children in your class and what is most appropriate for them when you choose activities from those suggested.

As there is a range of skills within the 5-8 year age group, there are a variety of activities for you to choose from in each lesson. Some will be more difficult than others; some will require finer motor skills than others; some will require more teacher preparation; some will take longer for the children to complete; others can be finished quite quickly!

In each lesson I have aimed to include at least one activity which is suitable for younger children. I realize that in many Sunday Schools there will be a wider age range than 5-8 year olds in one class. If this is the case in your situation I hope that you find activities suitable for the younger ones. If you have children older than 8 years in your group then you will find that many of the general activities are suitable for them. You could also add extra challenges for older children by adding a second task or writing task to what they are doing, or ask them to do something else on the back of an activity page once they have finished.

It is not necessarily intended that you choose only one activity. I suggest a range of activity suggestions so that you can choose to do two rather than just one if you wish. Here are some comments on various aspects of the activities ...

Drawing and colouring-in

There will be a variety of skills in the 5-8 year age bracket, and their drawing and colouring skills will vary. Be prepared to accept a range of abilities and end products.

The challenge in this syllabus is to have activities that are related to the Bible passage being studied and yet are at the appropriate skill level for the children. Some may be too advanced for your group, in which case either select a different activity, or simplify the activity. As I write activities I often think of different variations, but there are only so many which can be included in the lesson notes.

The children's pride in their work will vary. Some children will be very keen to show it to mum and dad, while others won't be all that interested. The latter isn't your fault.

Just one word of warning: if you have younger children in your group, dark crayons and pencils, especially dark blue and black, are unhelpful because they have a habit of covering up important things, like text.

Pasting

Glue sticks are a good form of glue if you can afford them. If you have younger children in your class, the teachers may need to apply the glue when the correct placement of glue is important.

Stickers

You can buy quite cheap round stickers and star stickers from supermarkets and department stores. Alternatively, you can make stickers using computer address labels which the children themselves can draw patterns on or colour.

Other equipment and materials

I do not have the children using scissors in the activities. Where things need to be cut out, I regard this as part of the preparation for the teacher.

I do not use traditional paints, as they require a fair amount of setting up, cleaning up and special equipment, and paint has a habit of going where it shouldn't. Having said that, there are a few activities suggesting the use of water-based paints. This is an option for those of you who want to diversify in artistic mediums.

I try to use as many materials as possible that you can collect easily (eg. cardboard rolls, egg cartons, etc.). I have tried to keep purchasing costs to a minimum. I know I mention some craft items that need to be purchased, for instance paper plates and patty cases. But these can be purchased cheaply from a supermarket, or you can simply cut out a cardboard circle to replace paper plates, and coloured circles to replace patty cases (paper cases for making cup cakes).

Another thing to keep in mind is that most craft items mentioned in this syllabus can be purchased from an educational supplier.

Recyclable junk

I refer to a number of items which are things that would normally end up in the garbage bin. The advantages are that they are free and they add variety. One problem with this is that the 'junk' I refer to in these lessons is to some extent specific to a time and place. What I mean is that some items will become obsolete in years to come and be replaced by something else. Other items might be used abundantly in my part of the world, but are unheard of in your part of the world. So some flexibility and creativity is needed. I'm also aware that some objects are given different names in different regions. To help overcome this you will find a file, 'Activity materials.pdf', on this CD-ROM with pictures of the objects and what I call them.

So, my suggestions are:

- Make a habit of collecting recyclable 'junk' that could be used in craft. Have a junk box or bag in which these items are placed. You might want to have a collection box at Sunday School where parents can contribute items as well.
- Junk items have been limited by what's available at the time and place of publishing this syllabus. Keep looking around for new recyclable junk and adapt activities accordingly.
- Look ahead to lessons in the coming weeks and make the necessary preparation to collect items required (you might need to specifically ask parents to collect an item like softdrink bottles or egg cartons).
- If an item is unavailable, take spare moments in the day (waiting in queues or sitting on buses) to think creatively of alternatives. You might come up with a different method of doing a craft activity or think of using a different item.

Playdough

Some activities make use of playdough. Playdough is something that you can make yourself. You should be able to find a recipe easily (for instance on the internet).

Use of envelopes

In the activity suggestions, I sometimes mention placing items in an envelope for each child. Let me explain why. If you want every child to have some shapes or captions that you have cut out, by placing them in an envelope for each child, the children will have what you want them to have with a minimum of fuss

Time

There will be variations in the time activities will take to complete. Some will take longer than others. Some activities can be lengthened or shortened. I often give suggestions for extra options you can choose to add. Also, as you get to know your children, you will know how and when to lengthen or shorten an activity.

Child's name

Ensure each child's name is on the work they do before they begin.

Safety

Always be mindful of safety during the activity time. Keep all scissors, staplers and split pins out of the children's reach. Whenever using split pins for younger children, stick masking tape over the points of the split pin to avoid injury, because the ends can be quite sharp. For younger children you might want to place tape over staples too—we don't want exploring, little fingers to find sharp staples.

Also, on the issue of safety, ensure that the class area is safe. Never leave children without a teacher present—they must always be in your sight.

While talking about child safety, you also need to be aware of and follow the child protection policies of your church and the laws in your state or country (especially if you are the Sunday School co-ordinator).

Paper size

We are limited in this lesson format to A4 paper (which is 210mm wide by 297mm high). An advantage of this is that many Sunday School classes have smallish tables that would not cope with large pieces of paper anyway. However, you have the option of using larger paper, and at times this is suggested, and there is an extra caption provided to paste onto larger paper if you wish. For all those activities which are drawn on A4 paper and you would rather they were larger, you could enlarge the pages on a photocopier, or some could be enlarged by hand.

When you print the lessons, ensure that you print them at full size. Adobe® PDF® has a 'page scaling' option and if this is set to anything other than 'none' then the pages will not be printed at full size. This can cause problems with some activities, particularly the booklets.

Some countries do not use A4 as the standard paper size (i.e. United States and Canada). While A4 paper (210mm x 297mm, 11-3/4" x 8-1/4") is not often advertised, it is available from many office/stationery supply companies in those countries and will fit in almost all modern printers. If you have trouble finding it locally, you will be able to find it via an online store. If you have to print on US letter size, make sure the size adjustment will not cause problems for the activity.

I also often refer to A3 paper. This is twice the size of A4 (297mm x 420mm). This should also be readily available.

Your class

Just as every child is different, so is every class. As the teacher, you will come to know your group of children and understand their skills and limitations. Therefore, you might read some activities and think, “How could she possibly think that my children could do that!” You will need to make an assessment of what is likely to work in your situation with your group of children, taking into account the number of helpers/teachers you have.

Repetition of activities

There is a choice in each lesson so that you can choose the most appropriate activity for your class. You might notice that some activities appear a few times throughout the year. This is intentional. You might choose the activity in one lesson and not another lesson.

Looking forward to Christmas...

For those who did the *Learning about God* and/or *Introducing the Bible* syllabus there was a lesson called ‘Looking forward to Christmas’. This was a lesson where we looked forward and planned how we could make something to give to people in need at Christmas.

I would encourage you to continue the tradition of the children making something that they can give to someone in need before Christmas. This could come out of the lesson in Unit 5 (lesson 3) where we talk about praying for a specific missionary, country, group of people or missionary organization. The children could each draw a picture (you could also make cardboard frames to put the pictures in) to be given to someone at Christmas. For instance they could be sent to the missionary (talked about in the lesson) to distribute to the people where they live, or they could be given to a local nursing home to distribute to the people there, given to a ward in a local children’s hospital, or be sent further afield through a missionary or aid organisation. There are a variety of other ways that children can help other children at Christmas (or indeed other times of the year). You could contact your church or denomination, missionary organization, Bible society or aid organization.

A little about each unit

Introduction to Unit 1

At the beginning of this Unit we introduce the Bible and help the children to understand some key things about the Bible. We also talk about God as being a promise-making and a promise-keeping God. God's promises are written in God's book, the Bible, and God keeps his promises.

We are then introduced to Jesus as being God's Son. Before Jesus was born on earth, God made promises about Jesus, promises which are written in the Old Testament. Jesus' life is a fulfilment of promises made about him. We see that Jesus was able to do the things he did because he is God's Son.

Introduction to Unit 2

In my local context, Easter is at the end of the first term of the school year. If you're doing this syllabus on a different calendar, you might want to move the whole unit to coincide with the lead-up to Easter.

We look at Jesus' death, seeing promises and prophecies that have been fulfilled. It's amazing that Jesus was prepared to die, despite the fact that he knew so clearly what was going to happen—the desertion of friends, the pain, the abuse, the death. Each lesson we look forward to the fact that this sad story has a happy end. We don't dwell on the gruesome details, but acknowledge that Jesus did die and look to the fact that it doesn't end there. We also try to help the children understand why Jesus did die and the wonderful news that we can be friends with God.

Introduction to Unit 3

Now the children hear about Abraham. One great theme with Abraham is that God makes promises and keeps them. Our God is a speaking God and a relating God. In the Old Testament we see him speaking to people like Abraham. He makes promises and he keeps them. The rest of the Bible is, in one sense, God fulfilling the promises that he made to Abraham.

The promises that God made to Abraham will be referred to throughout the lessons this year. In Units 3, 4 and 6 we see in the Israelites' story how God keeps these promises. In Unit 7 we see how God ultimately fulfils these promises in Jesus.

In order to understand the promises that God made to Abraham we are faced with two tricky words, namely 'descendants' and 'blessing'. We attempt to explain these words in this Unit. These words will reappear throughout the year.

In the story of Abraham and Sarah, and then later with Isaac and Rebecca, we see God being able to do the humanly impossible. The birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah in their old age is a miracle—so beyond belief was it that Sarah laughed when being told that she would have a son (see Genesis 18:12). But God’s response is, ‘Is anything too hard for the LORD?’ (Genesis 18:14). Be warned that the children you teach may find it easier to believe that nothing is too hard for God, than us older people. We want to encourage children to remember that nothing is too hard for God, for as we grow we too often forget this truth.

Introduction to Unit 4

In this Unit we see the continuing fulfillment of God’s promises. The exciting news in this Unit is how the number of Abraham’s descendants sharply rises with Jacob’s sons. But along with God’s faithfulness we learn much of the sinfulness of man. In Esau we see someone who despised his birthright and of whom Hebrews 12:16 says, ‘See that no one is...godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.’ But then in Jacob we see someone who gained an inheritance through dishonesty. Neither is the epitome of godliness, and yet we see God makes promises to Jacob. We are reminded that it is God who chooses who to bless—we can do nothing of ourselves to gain God’s blessing or promises. It’s helpful for our children to see that God works in the lives of sinful people—we can never be good enough or perfect enough for God. This is a helpful foundational truth to learn for understanding Jesus’ undeserved sacrifice on our behalf, and God’s love, grace and mercy shown to us through the cross.

Introduction to Unit 5

Prayer is something that is a privilege for God’s people. We want the children to know that they can pray, they can pray at any time, God wants them to pray and he hears them when they pray. We want the children to know that talking to God is not all about just saying ‘please’. We also want the children to see that they can pray not just for themselves but for other people, even people that they don’t know. Within this Unit it would be helpful to encourage the children to pray themselves outside of Sunday School.

Introduction to Unit 6

This Unit focuses on Moses and the Israelites. Here we are introduced to a man who was chosen by God, equipped by God and helped by God in the special task of bringing the Israelites out of Egypt. The big lesson to learn here is about the way God looks after Moses and the Israelites and that God keeps promises to the Israelites despite their sinfulness. God is with them and gives them what they need. We get to know more about how God can do amazing things: he can make water stand up; he can lead his people with a pillar of fire and cloud... We learn so much about God, almost without even being aware of the great things that we are learning. And then at the end of the Unit we see the Israelites entering the land that God promised them.

Introduction to Unit 7

This Unit links the Old and the New Testaments and how promises made in the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus: Jesus is the ‘yes’ to all God’s promises. What a great lesson to learn! We try to help the children see why we need Jesus—Jesus was punished for our sin so that we can be forgiven. And because of Jesus we can be one of God’s people. So God’s people are no longer just the Israelite people living in the Promised Land—we can all be one of God’s people through Jesus and we can look forward to living in the best place ever—heaven. We learn that Jesus is the King of the whole world and God wants us to live with Jesus as our king. When Jesus is our king, God’s promises are for us. We can be encouraged that God keeps his promises. Then having talked about how we can be one of God’s people, we then talk about how God’s people live.

Introduction to Unit 8

Unit 8 brings our year to a close with some lessons on Jesus’ birth. The positioning of these lessons in the syllabus has been based on our local school year which ends just before Christmas. If you’re doing this syllabus on a different calendar then you may need to move Unit 8 to coincide with the lead-up to Christmas.

These Christmas lessons focus again on God’s promises. We see that God made promises before Jesus was born and these promises were fulfilled. God made promises to Mary, to Joseph and to the shepherds. We are reminded in Lesson 3 that one of the promises to the shepherds was that the good news ‘will bring joy to all the people’ (Luke 2:10) and that includes us. What great joy we can have in being one of God’s people, loved and forgiven by God and looking forward to God keeping the wonderful promise of eternal life through Jesus.

For more help

For more tips, safety hints, explanations of the ages and stages of children, and ideas for teaching young children, see my book, *Their God is so BIG* (Matthias Media).

Final thoughts

I learnt so much writing this syllabus and rewriting and revising it. I can't believe how much I have learnt as I have grappled with and explored the theme of promises in the Bible. So much of our life as a Christian is built on God's promises—promises that are written in the Bible, promises that we have seen God keeping with the Israelites in so many wonderful ways, promises that we have seen fulfilled in Christ, promises that are for us now as we live as one of God's people, and promises that we can look forward to with a sure hope, knowing that our God keeps his promises.

Finally, let me confess yet again to my ongoing problem of trying to pronounce a year's syllabus 'finished'. I have been continually thinking of more to add, more to change...but alas, at a point in time, with the encouragement and support of my family and their ever willingness to help me finish it, I have had to pronounce it finished...well, almost. The thing is, that it will never be fully complete—God has so much to teach us and we have so much to learn that we can't say we've finished. And children make our teaching filled with variables far beyond our control (and imagination). I hope you will provide feedback (through Matthias Media), so that I can continue to make improvements in the future. And I hope I have left room for you to think of your own ideas to complement those printed.

Many thanks to Kathy Manchester for all the time she has spent pouring over drawings and covering her dining table with paper and ink on our behalf. I would also like to thank Marianne Campbell for providing other illustrations for this material. Many thanks, too, to Vanessa Stuckings for all her help. And my special thanks to my family who have helped in ways too many to mention.

I pray that you will be able to continue to learn about God's promises and how Jesus is the 'yes' to all God's promises, as you teach the precious children in your class. I pray that God will give you wisdom and help in the ministry of teaching children. And I pray that God will make us all teachable so that we can all keep learning about our promise-making and promise-keeping God and his Son, our Saviour.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17 NIV)

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