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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

TEACHING MATERIAL FOR 3-5s, 5-8s AND 8-12s

The Garden, the Curtain and the Cross Sunday School Lessons

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Published by:

The Good Book Company

thegoodbook.com | thegoodbook.co.uk

thegoodbook.com.au | thegoodbook.co.nz | thegoodbook.co.in

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Design by André Parker | Illustrations from *The Garden, the Curtain and the Cross* storybook by Catalina Echeverri

ISBN: 9781784987169 | Printed in Turkey

Contents



Introduction 5

Session One: Life and the First Garden

Prepare Your Heart 11

3-5s 12

5-12s 14



Session Two: The Choice We've All Made

Prepare Your Heart 25

3-5s 26

5-12s 28



Session Three: A Curtain Says "Keep Out"

Prepare Your Heart 41

3-5s 42

5-12s 44



Session Four: A Curtain Says "Come In"

Prepare Your Heart 55

3-5s 56

5-12s 58



Session Five: The Choice We All Face

Prepare Your Heart 69

3-5s 70

5-12s 72



Session Six: Life and the Last Garden

Prepare Your Heart 83

3-5s 84

5-12s 86

Tricky Questions 99

Introduction

Welcome to this journey from Genesis to Revelation!

In this six-lesson series for 3-12-year-olds, the children you teach will learn the story of God's presence with his people. The series follows the structure of the best-selling storybook *The Garden, the Curtain and the Cross* and is intended to help children to dig deeper into the Bible passages and truths that underpin it.

Each of the six sessions in the series includes:

- a "Prepare Your Heart" section, helping you to enjoy and apply the truths yourself, before you teach them to your children's group.
- a lesson plan for 3-5-year-olds.
- a lesson plan for 5-12-year-olds, with different Bible-time questions and activities signalled as being for "Younger Children" (approximately 5-7-year-olds) and "Older Children" (approximately 8-12-year-olds). These teach directly from the Bible to follow the overarching story of the Bible.
- free, downloadable PDFs containing the relevant Bible passages, questions, activity sheets and illustrations for you to use with your group, as well as downloads of all the illustrations from the storybook. (You will see the icon to the right wherever the session is talking about something that is included in the download.)



The lesson overviews below give more details on exactly what the lesson plans for the different age groups include.

We have put each lesson together in a way that means you can deliver it exactly as it's written: all activities, scripts, Bible studies, questions, links and prayers are provided for every session, as well as games and craft ideas. (Please note that you'll need a copy of the storybook for teaching a 3-5s group). If preparation time is pressing, or you are new to teaching children, we want to give as much support as possible. At the start of each session for 5-12s, we've also included an outline of the aims of each part of the session, making it easy for you to adapt things to suit your particular group. At the end of the book, we've suggested ways to answer some of the questions that might crop up in each of the sessions (see page 99).

- ① *Where you see a text marked in this way in the 5-12s' plan, it's a note for you as the leader, rather than something intended to be read aloud to the group!*

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At the back of this book, there's a list of "Tricky Questions" that each session might prompt, with some suggestions for how to begin answering them.

The scripts and Bible studies use the International Children's Bible (ICB), New International Reader's Version (NIRV) and New International Version (NIV). They will work with other translations, but we recommend aiming to use translations with simpler sentence structures, especially for the Bible studies where older children are being asked to find answers from the text themselves with less support. Memory verses are from the New International Version.

If You're Teaching 3-5-year-olds...

Session Structure

Each of the six lesson plans contains a number of segments that can be adapted for your circumstances.

The core elements of each lesson are:

- 1)* A short opening prayer
- 2) Reading the relevant pages from *The Garden, the Curtain and the Cross*
- 5) A simple statement summarising that section's teaching (See the "God's Word Tells Us..." summary in each lesson plan)
- 6) Sharing a Bible verse that shows that the truths in the book come from the Bible
- 7) A simple closing prayer

* The numbers here correspond to numbered segments in the full lesson plans provided.

In addition, you can include any/all of the following optional elements:

- 3) Simple questions that engage with the book reading
- 4) A game that reinforces the teaching point as well as providing movement and a concentration break
- 8) A craft activity that reinforces the teaching point

Sample explanations are also included for how to show the children the link between the game/craft and what they have been learning.

Series Overview

SESSION	MAIN TEACHING POINT
1. Life and the First Garden	It was wonderful to live in God's garden, and it was wonderful to live with him.

2. The Choice We've All Made	Adam and Eve decided they didn't want to listen to God. The Bible calls this "sin", and everyone sins. Sin means we can't live with God. The good news is: God has a plan to fix sin.
3. A Curtain Says "Keep Out!"	God's temple, and the "Keep Out" curtain in it, reminded people that it is wonderful to live with him, but because of their sin they couldn't come in.
4. A Curtain Says "Come In!"	God the Son came to live as a man called Jesus. Jesus died to take our sin. When he died, the curtain tore to show that Jesus had opened the way back to God.
5. The Choice We All Face	Jesus rose from the dead to live and rule as King for ever. Jesus invites us to be his friends and live with him for ever.
6. Life and the Last Garden	One day Jesus' friends will live with him for ever in a perfect world, where there won't be anything bad or sad. We will be enjoying being with God, and we will say, "Thank you, Jesus!"

If You're Teaching 5-12-year-olds...

Session Structure

For each of the parts of the session outlined below, the lesson plans provide examples and ideas. Each full session plan also begins with an individual lesson outline going into more detail on the goals of each segment for that particular session.

With minor variations*, each session includes:

SESSION ELEMENT	PURPOSE
Introductory Activity	Introduce or set up an idea that will help the children understand the Bible ideas and/or apply the truths they will think about.
Recap	Provide a brief review of previous sessions.
Opening Prayer	Model prayer seeking God's help to understand and act on his word.

Bible-storytelling and Explaining	<p>This first Bible teaching section is intended to be the briefer of the two (the sample scripts can be delivered at a slow pace in around 5 minutes). It involves the leader telling and explaining part or parts of the story of God's presence with his people.</p> <p>Example scripts are provided that tell and explain the Bible story, using a mixture of paraphrased storytelling, Bible verses and explanation. The lesson plans also provide suggestions for how to engage the children visually or with movement in the storytelling.</p>
Game	<p>Different ideas are given for games that allow an opportunity to move about / take a break in concentration, but which also reinforce or set up a teaching point.</p>
Bible Study and Discussion	<p>This second Bible-teaching section gives children an opportunity to listen to or read Scripture for themselves and think about what it is saying.</p> <p>In each lesson there are two different suggested studies, one for younger and one for older children. If you have the full age range in your class, these could be done in separate groups before you come together for the "For everyone" section.</p> <p>Studies for younger children do not require them to read and involve a variety of activities to help them engage with and understand the passage. Studies for older children require them to do more close textual work and articulate their understanding for themselves.</p> <p>The age ranges suggested are just a guide, and you may want to modify or combine ideas for your particular children.</p>
Application	<p>Depending on the session, this will involve a very short talk from the teacher or whole-group discussion or pair work or an opportunity to think individually. The aim is to encourage the children to consider what difference the truths you have been learning about make to our lives today.</p>
Prayer	<p>Model or give opportunities for responding to God and his word in prayer. Various suggestions for what this might involve are given, ranging from very supported/scaffolded to more open times of prayer.</p>
Craft/Activities	<p>An opportunity to exercise some God-given creativity and enjoy a reminder of the lesson! Various suggestions are given, ranging from those requiring pen and paper to crafts that need some minimal resourcing to more time/resource-heavy and/or complex projects.</p>
At Home	<p>Encourage families to keep thinking and praying together during the week about what the children have learnt at church. Suggestions are given for resources and ideas that could be shared with parents.</p>

* The introductory discussion, recap and opening prayer may vary in order from lesson to lesson depending on which best leads into the first Bible-teaching section. In Session 4 there is an additional storytelling element after the Bible study, to dramatise the climactic tearing of the temple curtain.

Series Overview

SESSION	GOD'S WORD TELLS US...	SO WHAT?	BIBLE PASSAGES
1. Life and the First Garden	It was wonderful to live in God's garden, and it was wonderful to live with him. God's design for humanity is to enjoy living in his presence.	Knowing and enjoying God is what we are made for. Let's praise him for his creation and ask him to teach us that knowing him is the best thing about living in this world.	Talk: Genesis 2 v 8-10 Study: Genesis 2 v 7-9, 15-16, 19, 22; 3 v 8
2. The Choice We've All Made	Like Adam and Eve, we all sin. Our failure to love and obey God means we cannot live with him. And it spoils life now too. We can't solve the problem of sin.	When we realise we sin, and that sin spoils our friendship with God and spoils life now, we can say sorry. And we can remember the good news that God has promised to fix the problem of sin.	Talk: Genesis 2 v 17; 3 v 1-6, 8, 22-24 Study: Romans 3 v 9-18, 23
3. A Curtain Says "Keep Out!"	God is committed to being with his people. In the Old Testament, repeated sacrifices made it possible for the sinless God to live among sinful people. But the temple "Keep Out" curtain was a reminder that people were still separated from God.	God didn't turn his back on people even after people turned their back on him. Let's praise him for everything this shows us about his loving character.	Talk: Genesis – 1 Kings Study: Leviticus 15 v 5, 7-10, 15-22