



DISTINCTIVES OF THE GOD'S BIG STORY CURRICULUM

The following outlines the values and core convictions that shape the GBS curriculum. GBS is:

Christ-Centered

GBS places Jesus Christ and his atoning death and resurrection at the centre of everything. Each element of the lesson plan is designed to shine a spotlight on Jesus, whether we are in the Old or New Testament. However, it is not simply enough to learn *about* Christ; therefore, our aim is to share God's word in such a way that the child will meet Jesus and come to know him personally as the one who rescued them and welcomes them into the family of God.

This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:11-12

Trinitarian

GBS is consciously Trinitarian. Who is God? God is one divine being eternally existing in three divine persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (question 38 in the ACNA Catechism, *To Be A Christian*). Throughout, the curriculum seeks to uphold the Fatherhood of God, the Sonship of Jesus Christ, and the power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Rather than simplify curriculum so that it talks mainly about Jesus, GBS aims to help children begin to appreciate the beautiful complexity of the Trinity because God has revealed himself this way, the Bible teaches it, the Creeds reinforce it, and faith is formed more deeply as we stand under it.

Gospel Driven

The very first catechism question we teach the children in God's Big Story is "What is the Gospel?" The answer from the ACNA Catechism, *To be A Christian*, says, "The Gospel is the good news of God loving and saving his people through his Son, Jesus Christ."

This is THE good news we have to share with children. It is central to everything we teach. Children will come to know God's goodness and love and Jesus' incredible sacrifice that rescues them from sin and brings them life.

Gary Parrett says, "The content we consider essential for children and youth is the same content we consider essential for all members. Simply put, we must nurture our children in the gospel."¹

And as Martin Lloyd-Jones says, "We must be careful that we do not modify the gospel to suit various age groups. There is no such thing as a special gospel for the young, a special gospel for the middle-aged, and a special gospel for the aged. There is only one gospel, and we must always be careful not to tamper and tinker with the gospel as a result of recognizing these age distinctions. At the same time, there is a difference in applying this one and only gospel to the different age groups; but it is a difference which has reference only to method and procedure."²

Scriptural

Since we believe that the Bible is God's written Word, inspired and authoritative, true and trustworthy, coherent, sufficient for salvation, and living and powerful as God's guide for belief and behavior, the use of the Bible in our curriculum is central to everything we do.

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17, ESV).

We believe this verse is true not just for adults but for also children. In the Bible we find the truth about who God is and what He has done for us. We learn about God's great actions throughout history and we meet the person of Jesus, our Lord. Scripture contains God's words to us and it has the power to transform us.

God's Big Story curriculum is committed to understanding each biblical text in the context of its biblical book and in the greater context of the biblical narrative (*the story of God's salvation in Christ from Genesis to Revelation*).

We acknowledge that not all Scripture is appropriate or helpful for young children, so we have selected bible stories in such a way as to consider the age and stage of development of the children we are teaching.

A Training Curriculum

GBS is intentionally designed to be a training curriculum for teachers as they prepare week by week. Each lesson includes Teacher's Background Notes which aim to be devotional as well as instructive.

¹ Gary Parrett and Steve Kang, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful*, p. 314.

² D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989), 2.

Ordered

Each year of GBS has been ordered such that the content builds year upon year. Each lesson and unit reviews, reinforces and deepens the children's understanding of what has already been taught.

Developmentally Appropriate

GBS uses a variety of ways to engage the child as they see, hear, sing, move, and participate each week. The form of the lessons allows teachers to adapt songs and response activities to meet the needs of children with different learning styles and also children of different ages and stages. For example, rather than just reading scripture orally, it is also visually presented in a creative dramatic way with wooden figures and other props.

All About Formation

The aim of GBS is that every child would come to know God and out of that knowledge, come to love him, and out of that love, seek to live for Him. As children learn about God by engaging in the Bible, we also long for them to love God completely and joyfully and forever. True love is life changing. If children know and love God, they will begin to live their lives for him, serving and pleasing him completely, and submitting to his loving rule over our lives.

Set in the Context of Worship

While we acknowledge that theologically our whole lives are meant to be an act of worship, there is something wonderful and sacred that happens when we gather together for corporate worship. This is especially true when we gather with children, so we have set GBS lessons in the context of worship rather than using an instructional 'school' model. Each lesson incorporates simple Anglican liturgies, singing of hymns and song, declarations of faith including catechism questions and answers, the Creeds, and prayer into our lessons.

Christianity, its beliefs and practices, must be modeled, taught, and experienced. Children must be allowed to explore, express, and practice their own faith through the act of worship in order for their relationship with their Lord to grow.

As J.I. Packer has said, "*We should never forget that theology is for doxology: the truest expression of trust in a great God will always be worship, and it will always be proper worship to praise God for being far greater than we can know.*"³

³ J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide To Historic Christian Beliefs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1993), 53.

Our goal is both to teach clear Biblical truth about who God is and what he has done in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, and allow room for children to contemplate and respond to this truth with appropriate praise and worship. We need to *“turn each truth that we learn about God into matter for meditation before God, leading to prayer and praise to God.”*⁴ In light of this, each GBS lesson also allows time for the kids (and teachers) to respond to what they have learned through worship.

Anglican

Finally, GBS is Anglican in ethos and practice. For instance:

- Anglican Liturgy: Simple Anglican liturgies, hymn and ancient prayers and creeds are incorporated into the lessons. These are introduced to the children at an age-appropriate time.
- Anglican Church Calendar: The sequencing of the lessons throughout the year is patterned after the Church Calendar.
- Anglican Doctrine: The GBS curriculum teaches doctrine from an Anglican perspective using both the Book of Common Prayer and the new Anglican Church in North America Catechism called *To Be a Christian: An Anglican Catechism*. Most GBS lessons seek to tell the biblical story and draw the theological doctrines from that story rather than teach doctrine directly to young children. GBS focus on teaching younger children the doctrines of who God is, what the gospel is, what prayer and the church are. For older children, we teach more directly doctrine through the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles Creed, and the sacraments. Memorization of key questions of the catechism is taught through song and action over the course of each year.

God's Big Story has been carefully written to reflect these distinctives. The curriculum allows the fruit of these convictions to blossom each week, in the expectation that under God, the children who are taught will blossom as Christians.

⁴ J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), chapter 1.