



God's Action Plan



Teacher Guide

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Dear Partners in the Faith,

This course contains thirty Bible stories selected from the Old and New Testaments. *God's Action Plan* is revealed in all of Scripture as we read of God at work for the benefit of His people—guiding, preserving, and saving them. As the Old Testament points to the Savior, Jesus Christ, and the New Testament reveals the fulfillment of our salvation in Him, God's action plan continues to unfold according to His grand design.

In 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul writes, “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” How wonderful and mysterious are the ways in which God has worked and continues to work in the course of human history.

The greatest marvel of all is the manner in which God chose to save fallen humanity, sending His Son to become one of us so that He might live and die in our place. His resurrection from the dead assures us of the completeness of the victory over sin, death, and all that would lead us to lose saving faith.

In the unfolding of His saving plan for humanity, God has chosen ordinary people—Paul, Augustine, Martin Luther, and contemporary Christians like you and me. As the Holy Spirit works through God's Holy Word, He continues to nurture the saving gift of faith in our hearts and empowers us as we bring the message of forgiveness, new life, and salvation to others.

As a teacher of the Christian faith, you have the unique opportunity to share God's action plan with the young people in your class. God has promised to do wonderful things through you as His Word is witnessed and taught.

You are in our prayers. May God bless your ministry to the young people you teach.

Your partners in ministry,
The Editors

Introduction

A Look at Your Role

You Are a Teacher of the Faith!

God has gifted you with a tremendous privilege. As a teacher of the faith, you have the opportunity to teach the most important truths anyone can ever learn. You can tell the Good News of Jesus, our Savior, who lived, died, and now lives again. He offers us forgiveness for our sins, the chance to begin all over again with the slate wiped clean, and a happy home with Him in heaven. As a teacher of religion, you can show what Jesus means to you in your actions as well as in your words. You can show that you care about each student, genuinely and individually, just as Jesus loves and cares for you. You can handle disappointments and frustrations in ways that show the power of God's Spirit in your life. You can demonstrate what Jesus' forgiveness means to you in your willingness to forgive others.

The challenges of the classroom are many; at times, they may seem overwhelming. We live and teach in a world damaged by sin and its contaminating effects in the lives of our students as well as in our own lives. But the good news is that no one who follows Jesus need ever feel he or she is going it alone. We serve a God "who daily bears us up; God is our salvation" (Psalm 68:19). In His Word, He promises to strengthen and encourage us for the challenges we face. He promises to give our work meaning, our efforts effective outcomes, and our lives joy.

You Are Part of Something Big!

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He told His disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20). Christian schools focus on disciple making. They are workshops in Christian living, where discipleship is practiced as lessons are taught, relationships are established, and the issues of everyday life are experienced. This curriculum has

been designed to assist those teaching the faith so that through the Word and Spirit of God, people of all ages may

- know the one true God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and the forgiveness and salvation offered through Jesus' death and resurrection;
- come to faith and grow into Christian maturity;
- identify ourselves as members of the Body of Christ, the Church;
- live in joy, contentment, and harmony with God, ourselves, and all others;
- express faith in the worship of God and in the service of God and others;
- value all of God's creation and care for it wisely and well;
- witness their faith in Jesus, their personal Savior and the Savior of all people;
- live in the Christian hope of a new and eternal life in Christ Jesus.

With an emphasis on these goals, the *God's Action Plan* curriculum focuses on Christ. It seeks to assist teachers in providing students with optimal opportunities for growing in their faith and Christian life. By God's grace, those teaching in Lutheran schools join in one voice with the writers, editors, marketers, and others who helped prepare this curriculum in the sentiment of 1 John 1:3: "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."

A Look at Your Students

You Are a Teacher of Students in the Seventh or Eighth Grade!

What are seventh- and eighth-graders like? Consider the common physical, social, psychological, intellectual, and faith-development characteristics of children between the ages of 13 and 14 listed as follows.

Physical/Social/ Psychological Characteristics

Your students will

- know much about the world;
- feel concerned about what other people think of them—especially their peers;
- seek ways to make friends and get along with family and friends;
- desire increasing independence from family;
- demonstrate interest in the opposite sex;
- have anxiety about their personal appearance;
- be preoccupied with self;
- wonder or worry about their bodies' physical changes or lack of physical changes;
- shift moods rapidly;
- be physically awkward at times (especially boys);
- embarrass easily;
- be self-conscious.

Intellectual Characteristics

Your students will

- show concern about complex social issues such as world hunger or nuclear war;
- imagine themselves in the place or circumstances of others;
- develop problem-solving strategies;
- think through possible solutions to a problem before reaching a conclusion;
- respect a teacher who says "I don't know" more than a teacher who tries to fake an answer;
- commit themselves to a worthwhile cause in order to experience a sense of self-worth;

- act indifferent to conversations initiated by a teacher because of fear of peer rejection, although they enjoy the teacher's attention;
- enjoy working in small groups and have the skills necessary to do so successfully;
- learn best when the teacher uses a variety of methods.

Faith-Development Characteristics

Your students will

- think in the present, not the future (How can I apply this biblical information to my life right now?);
- question their faith;
- make decisions concerning the importance of a faith relationship with God;
- question ideas learned in childhood;
- have difficulty comprehending God's unchanging love for them, which is not dependent on how good or how bad they are;
- show interest in discussing social issues (drugs, divorce, suicide, etc.);
- recognize and point out inconsistencies in the lifestyles and values of people, especially adults;
- need assurance that they are significant to Christ and His Church;
- respond positively to adults who genuinely care for them, try to understand their feelings, and accept them as valuable persons.

No child will display all the characteristics listed. Your students are growing in different areas at different rates. A person who is exceptionally gifted in social skills may have difficulty with intellectual skills. Others may seem intellectually gifted but may lack in spiritual maturity. On certain days, you may observe behaviors that make you question whether any of the attention you have given to your students' spiritual nurturing is making any difference. On these days especially, remember that growing faith and producing the words, actions, and attitudes that evidence the presence of faith are the work of the Holy Spirit. Trust in God's mighty power to work

faith and spiritual maturity in the lives of all for whom Jesus died. Hold up your students in prayer, encourage them in the faith, and trust in God to work the results.

A note about Baptism: Typically, you will have a number of students in your class who have not been baptized. Perhaps some of your students' parents have questions and concerns about what your church body teaches about Baptism and when, how, and under what circumstances this blessing from God is to be received. In your approach, take care not to leave unbaptized children with feelings of inadequacy or guilt. As Scripture tells, we are saved through faith, and we are brought to faith through God's Word; do not imply that unbaptized children are excluded from the community of faith. However, do not react by simply avoiding Baptism, especially when the topic flows naturally from lesson discussions. Instead, stress the clear teachings of God's Word that Baptism welcomes sinners into the family of God, where they receive Jesus' gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation; that God desires Baptism for all people; and that Baptism applies the words and promises of God together with water, which connects with the recipient by faith. Also, prayerfully look for opportunities to talk with parents of unbaptized children about Baptism. Many children and their families receive the blessings of Holy Baptism each year through the ministry of Lutheran teachers. Speak readily of the joy of being a baptized Christian and of the joy that those in faith have as they look forward to someday being baptized.

A Look at God's Action Plan

You Are Teaching a Thirty-Session Survey of the Bible

God's Word reminds us that our faith unites us with Christ just as it unites us with other Christians. Our faith in Jesus makes the Christian classroom a unique and wonderful place, different from any other classroom. Jesus Himself has promised, "For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them" (Matthew 18:20). Classrooms dedicated to Jesus look, feel, and sound unlike all other classrooms.

The lessons in *God's Action Plan* do not merely guide and equip the teacher for helping students learn God's Word. They also provide practical, engaging ideas and suggestions for rooting and connecting all that takes place in and extends from the classroom, reaching into the other areas of the curriculum as well as onto the playground, to the playing field, into the home and neighborhood, and ultimately around the world.

Each lesson has been planned and developed so that it may be taught in approximately thirty-five to forty-five minutes. In order to plan and teach these lessons, you will need the ESV Bible (English Standard Version), a Teacher Guide, and Student Books. You will also want to have *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* available for quick and easy reference.

These materials have been developed to emphasize biblical stories and themes presented in a chronological sequence. The goal of the materials is to help students grow in their knowledge and understanding of God's Word and to recognize it as a Means of Grace as well as the norm and source for Christian teaching and the source of power and guidance for living the Christian life.

A Look at the Teacher Guide

Unit Organization

The lessons included in *God's Action Plan* have been organized into four units. Two of these units contain lessons on stories found in the Old Testament, and two contain lessons dealing with stories from the New Testament.

Music suggestions in the curriculum refer to *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)* and particularly to those hymns recorded in the two sets of CDs called *Hymns of the Month (HOM)* and *Hymns of the Season (HOS)*. This will provide an organized and progressing hymnody curriculum. Suggestions are also made for *All God's People Sing! (AGPS)*, particularly from the list of fifty songs recorded on the accompanying CD set called *Jesus' People Sing*. Of course, be sure to include other hymns and songs that appropriately fit the lesson theme and give glory to God alone!

Unit Introduction Pages

The following Teachers Guide features, provided in each two-page unit overview, will assist you in your planning.

Contents: This list of the lesson titles in the unit provides the teacher with at-a-glance information about the scope and content of the unit. At the close of the unit, you may want to use some of these titles to assess student learning, asking students to write two or three sentences in answer to several of these questions.

Theme: This summarizes the main theme of the unit, while also providing helpful suggestions for emphasizing, applying, and extending unit concepts.

Worship: This section provides suggestions for relating your opening devotions with the unit theme.

Extending Unit Concepts and Integrating the Faith throughout the Curriculum: These activities will help students apply and extend lesson concepts in their lives. Activities may be selected according to student interest, readiness, and the availability of time and resources.

Test: Unit multiple choice and short answer questions are provided at the back of this guide.

A Look at Teaching the Lesson

Lesson Overview

The first page of every lesson in the Teachers Guide begins with a section called “Background.” This provides additional information for the teacher’s own growth and development, while also giving high interest facts that may be helpful in presenting and discussing the lesson.

A special feature is the classroom devotion, which can be read to the class. The life application stories always have a direct relation to the day’s theme and can be used as introductions to the lesson itself.

A long sidebar always lists key information for your preparations for the lesson, including the “Central Truth,” which is a statement that provides the main theme of the lesson. Each lesson also has three “Objectives.” As you review these statements, keep in mind the importance of including Law (God’s expectations of us, which remind us of our sinfulness), Gospel (what God has done for us in Christ Jesus to restore us

to Himself), and our response (how we respond to the Gospel in the new life God empowers us to live). You may choose to read these statements to students at the beginning of the lesson or refer to them at the lesson’s conclusion. Research suggests that students are more likely to achieve lesson objectives if the objectives are clearly identified for them.

There is also a “Materials” list, noting items needed to teach the lesson. “The Basics” (used in each lesson) include the Student Book, an ESV Bible, and a pencil. The “Bible Prep” list is very important. It includes the Bible references students will need throughout the lesson. Post them on the board in advance so students can bookmark these verses before school. This will make the lesson flow more efficiently and it will also “level the playing field” so as not to single out students unfamiliar with using the Bible.

The Lesson Plan

God’s Action Plan lessons make use of various technologies to achieve lesson objectives. Included on the second and third pages of each Teacher Guide is a reduction of the two Student Pages and the Reproducible sheet, each with answers included. You will find a lot of the questions and directions given in the Teacher Guide rather than in the Student Book because this series has an emphasis on group discussion and group work. Please note the **red print** as it appears in the Teacher Guide as a reminder to make sure students receive a clear presentation of the Gospel in the teaching of the lesson. The Student Book is not meant to be a workbook where you assign pages; instead, students will use these pages to respond to and to record group interactions.

All lessons follow the same easy-to-teach format of three distinct parts: “Into the Lesson,” “Into the Word,” and “Into Our Lives.” The “Into the Lesson” section is designed to capture students’ interest and to delve into the lesson concepts. The “Into the Word” section provides the Bible story or Bible study that supports the theme of the lesson. Finally, the “Into Our Lives” section encourages students to react, or respond to and apply, the concepts they have learned. One reproducible page has been designed for each lesson and is included as the fourth page of each lesson. A copy of each lesson’s reproducible with answers provided is also included with each lesson.

These materials have been prepared with the goal of replacing academic activi-

ties with more of a focus on reflection, discussion, and application. By God’s grace and through the working of His Spirit, your students will experience the oneness in Christ that occurs when God’s people gather around His Word in times of study, reflection, and prayer. The goal of those who have prepared these lessons is to help make the portion of the day devoted to the study of God’s Word unique and distinctive—the students’ favorite time of the school day.

Student Book

Two facing pages of the Student Book have been dedicated to each lesson. These pages are also reproduced in this Teacher Guide with answers provided for easy teacher reference. The emphasis of these materials on God’s Word and discipleship is readily apparent upon a quick review of these pages. All studies of God’s Word, life-related activities, and memory verses have been chosen and included with the overall goal of helping students learn more about God’s love for them in Jesus Christ.

A Couple of Special Resources

The Faith Alive Bible

Designed especially for young people, and recently revised for use with One in Christ materials, this ESV Bible is full of features to help readers discover the wonderful messages and promises in God’s Word.

- Every word in the Bible is loaded with meaning for everyone, but these 4U boxes will help you understand what certain passages mean FOR YOU personally. Check out the “4U” sections and discover God’s Word FOR YOU!
- Cross Connection icons mark verses that point the reader to Jesus’ death on the cross and to the forgiveness, life, and salvation Jesus earned for us there.
- Boxes containing Who, What, Where, When, and Why facts about God’s Word and the story of our salvation from sin, death, and the devil can be found throughout this Bible to help readers understand and appreciate the real people, places, and life in Bible times!

UNIT 1—GOD’S GRACE TO HIS PEOPLE IN ANCIENT TIMES

Theme

The first unit of *God’s Action Plan* deals with God and the relationship He established with the earliest people. Beginning with the account of creation and the fall into sin; continuing with the great flood; and extending through Abraham to the call of Moses, the exodus, and the giving the Law, we will see how God shows Himself always about the business of rescuing and providing for His people. Throughout our reading and discussing of these earliest sections of God’s Word, we will see God first giving and then later reinforcing and setting the stage for the fulfillment of His promise to provide a Savior to pay for human sin.

As you begin this school year, let the

theme of unit 1 set the tone for your classroom and for the relationships you build with your students. Through the words you speak, the things you do, and the attitudes you project, help your students to know and become curious about the God you serve and the Savior to whom your school is dedicated. We have a mighty God who never ceases to love and provide for us and for all people. He demonstrated the extent of His love when He sent His Son to save us from our sins and to earn, for us all, an eternal home in heaven. Help your students to satisfy their curiosity and desire to know more about their God and Savior by encouraging them in their study of God’s Word in establishing and maintaining an active devotional life.

UNIT 1

1. Creation and Fall
2. The Great Flood
3. God’s Promise to Abram
4. The Offering of Isaac
5. The Call of Moses
6. The Exodus
7. The Ten Commandments
8. The Serpent on the Pole

Worship

Each lesson in this curriculum has a classroom devotion that teachers may read to students during the opening of your day. (The devotion always has a direct connection to the day’s Bible lesson. If you already have an established plan for opening devotions, you can still use the one suggested in the Teacher Guide as an introduction to the lesson.) It is suggested that your devotions this month close with the words of Martin Luther’s Morning Prayer. (It can be found

in *Lutheran Service Book [LSB]*, the *Faith Alive Bible*, *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation*, and several other sources.) You will probably notice that, through frequent use, most students will know the prayer by memory by the end of the month. (Putting the prayer to use is a much more effective means for memorization than as an assignment.) Though you can feel free to choose a variety of hymns and songs, suggestions will be made mostly from the *LSB* hymnal and the songbook *All God’s People Sing! (AGPS)*. It will always be noted if the

hymns are on the recorded set of *Hymns of the Month (HOM)* or *Hymns of the Season (HOS)*, available from Concordia Publishing House (CPH), which will give students a good background in Christian hymnody and will also help them to more readily participate in church worship services. Note that the CPH recording *Jesus’ People Sing! (JPS)* consists of fifty songs, all from *AGPS*.

Extending Unit Concepts

Community Building

Whose Favorites?: Have each student compose a list of their favorites, including (but not limited to) season, fruit, vegetable, animal, bird, fish (all God’s creations). Collect the papers, mix them up, and read them one at a time. Let students guess to whom each list belongs. Comment on the individuality of each of God’s children.

Zoo!: Divide students into two teams, one with tags of some sort, one without. Each team should have an elected

“keeper.” Players on each team are divided equally as cows, chickens, pigs, and donkeys. Establish the goal or similar area at the end of each court as each team’s “pen.” Have animals run randomly about the play area. At the sound of a whistle, all students must stop and remain where they are but begin to make the sound of their animal. The “keepers” are now instructed to locate their animals and lead them, one at a time, back to the pen. The “animal” remains silent once in the pen. The first team to be collected and silent in the pen wins. (Now

we know what it might have been like for Noah.) All animals and keepers should relax with a treat.

Dominoes: Give students at least twenty dominoes each and instruct them to create a design by standing them close together on end. After observing the designs, have them gently push one of the end dominoes so that they all collapse. Discuss examples of how one sin leads to another in the lives of God’s Old Testament people as well as in our own lives.