

CHOOSING CURRICULUM

(Adapted from "Choosing a Curriculum", Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT, and "A Ten-Question Tool for choosing a children's ministry curriculum", Faith Formation Ministries)

Selecting a curriculum is an important decision and careful thought and prayer should be given to your choice. The curriculum you choose should represent the values and theology of your church.

There are many teaching resources available and it can be difficult to navigate the variety and select the "perfect" curriculum for your group. It is helpful to know there is not a perfect curriculum because curriculum must be adapted to meet the needs of your church and the individual children in your ministry setting.

The following is a list of things to consider when choosing a curriculum.

Vision and Values



The vision, values and mission of your faith community will influence your choice of teaching material. Does the curriculum fit with the vision of your church? Does the curriculum line up with the values held by your church and allow leaders to operate within these values?

Theology



All curriculum is written from a particular theological perspective. You will need to ensure the theology of the curriculum is in alignment with your church's theological beliefs. Has the content been made age appropriate while still maintaining theological accuracy? How is the Bible treated? Is the meta-narrative of God's story and plan for humanity clear? Does it point to God's grace, salvation through Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit?

Scope and Sequence



Scope and sequence is the selection of stories included in a curriculum and the order in which they are presented. When considering a curriculum's scope and sequence, it helps to have a clear idea of your teaching philosophy and a plan for what you hope your curriculum will help you achieve. Is the curriculum topic based, or does it progress chronologically through the Bible? Are there clear themes? Are you looking for something short—for a few weeks or a term only—or are you looking for something longer, for several years? Are stories told more than once with greater complexity as children age their way through the curriculum? Is there a range of Old and New Testament stories?

Learning and Growth



To nurture a life-long faith, curriculum must allow space for heart transformation, not merely the acquisition of information. We want our children to be “God connected” not just “God smart”. Does the curriculum allow space for children to ask questions, wonder about God, and discover for themselves how to live into God’s story? Is there space for reflection? Does the curriculum provide opportunities for children to respond to God’s story in a way that shows God’s love in their community and the world? Is there an opportunity of children to open the Bible for themselves, and apply it to their lives?

When it comes to learning, one size does not fit all. Does the curriculum allow for different learning styles—listening, discussion, hands-on activities, quiet processing, variety of media? Is there flexibility to cater for different abilities so that every child is engaged? Does the material foster participation?

Family Engagement



Research shows the importance of the home in faith formation. Does the curriculum engage with families and equip them to nurture the faith of children at home? Does it support parents in taking responsibility for their child’s spiritual development?

Leader Support



Leaders need to be encouraged and equipped too. Does the curriculum include background information and/or a brief devotional to inspire and inform leaders?

Faith in Community



Your church community has a responsibility to be a supportive and nurturing a “tribe” for its children. Does the curriculum provide opportunities for leaders and children to develop meaningful relationships with each other? Are there opportunities for interactions with other members of the faith community (guest visits, service projects, celebrations etc.)? Are there opportunities for leaders to tell their stories and connect with the children?

Age Appropriate and Diverse



Is the curriculum appropriate for the age and faith development of your group? Does it provide good transitions between age groups?

Do the images and text in the curriculum reflect and celebrate the diversity in racial/ethnic groups, gender, socio-economic status, family structures, ages, appearance and abilities of God’s family so that children will grow in love and acceptance?

Do the lessons connect with children by paying attention to the culture in which children are living today?

Practicalities



Does it work with the number of children you have?

Is it designed for small groups, big groups or a combination?

Does it fit your budget?

Do you have the supplies and equipment to make it work?

Do you have sufficient volunteers to make it work?

How much preparation is required?

Is this practical for your volunteers?

How adaptable is it?

Can it be adapted to meet the needs of your context?