In the Beginning...Jesus

Introduction for Parents

The Bible is one complete, true story. Although it consists of 66 separate books, which make up the Old and New Testaments, it has one central and comprehensive message. What is this message? The saving work of God to reconcile sinners to Himself through Jesus Christ, that God may be glorified forever. Because Jesus is central in God's eternal plan of salvation, Jesus is central in all of the Bible, from start to finish. Although Jesus is not mentioned by name in the Old Testament, His presence is everywhere. In fact, the purpose of the Old Testament is to set the stage for Jesus' arrival.

In the Beginning…Jesus was written to assist children in understanding the "big picture" of the Bible. This curriculum has been designed to help children see that the focus of the Bible centers around the Person and work of Jesus. Through this study we hope that children will better comprehend the intentional flow of the Bible—the progressive revelation of God's plan of redemption and the eternal, sovereign nature of that plan. Furthermore, by beginning the study with Jesus and His death on the cross, we will emphasize the necessity of Jesus in fully understanding the Old Testament.

Finally, our prayer is that through the presentation of the Scriptures, the explanation of the gospel, and the work of the Holy Spirit, the children will recognize their own sin and helplessness, and turn and embrace Jesus Christ as their only hope, and be reconciled to God through His shed blood on the cross!

A Word about the Parent Resource Pages

As Deuteronomy 6:5-9 says,

> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (ESV)

Clearly the responsibility, as well as the privilege, of nurturing the faith of children rests primarily on parents. Parents have the greatest opportunity for teachable moments—everyday situations in which the truth of God's Word can be applied. Faith nurturing should not be seen primarily as a classroom experience, but rather as a consistent weaving of spiritual truth into everyday life. Parent Resource Pages have been provided for each lesson to help the church and home partner together.

Using the Parent Resource Page

The front side of each Parent Resource Page lists the following information for the corresponding lesson: Lesson Title, Themes, Scripture, Memory Verse, Today's Clue, and a section called *Home and Heart*. Please use this information and the questions listed to talk with your children about the

biblical truths presented. Encourage your child to think and pray about his response to hearing God's Word and what it reveals about God's character. The back side of each Parent Resource Page has an additional activity for your child to complete. As much as possible, we want to encourage your child to be reading and studying the Bible during the week. The *Discover More* section has additional scripture references to help your child go beyond what is covered in the classroom, along with a variety of means for recording what he or she has learned. Your child's teacher has an Answer Key for many of these pages to check your child's work. Please note that some of the answers are "translation specific," meaning that they are specific to the English Standard Version of the Bible.

A Note Concerning the "Clues"

According to Jesus, from the very beginning of the Bible narrative in Genesis, God carefully and intentionally wrote the "clues" concerning Jesus and His redemptive purposes into the storyline (Luke 24:27). Jesus' death on the cross was not some random act in history or even a plan God made up along the way as people and circumstances warranted. Jesus was God's plan from the very beginning. To help your child understand this important truth, the curriculum has been developed within the overall theme of a mystery.

As your child's class progresses through Lessons 1-30, the children will be collecting "clues" that hint at the solution to the mystery of Jesus' death on the cross. An example of a *clue* would be Isaiah 7:14 where we are told of a virgin who will give birth to a Son (which in the New Testament is then fulfilled by the birth of Jesus to Mary). Most of the clues listed in this study are not what are commonly called "prophecies" concerning Christ. (The example of Isaiah 7:14 would be considered a prophecy.) Rather, many of the clues are examples of *typology.* Bible scholar Graeme Goldsworthy defines typology as "the recognition that within Scripture itself certain events, people, and institutions in biblical history bear a particular relationship to later events, people, or institutions. The relationship is such that the earlier foreshadows the later, and the later fills out or completes the earlier" (*Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000, 77). An example of typology in the Old Testament would be Abraham sacrificing his one, loved son Isaac, as recorded in Genesis 22. As important as this event is within its own historical and theological context, namely, the example of the patriarch Abraham and his complete faith in God, the more important aspect of this story is that it points us ahead to God's sacrifice of His one and only Son Whom He loved so that sinners might be reconciled to Him.

Lessons 30-39 look at the New Testament to understand how the Old Testament clues find their fulfillment and completion in the Person and work of Jesus. These lessons also show the unity of the Bible narrative as we progress from the Old to New Testament. Through these lessons your child will see that the message of Jesus and His death on the cross was God's design from the very beginning of the Bible. The triune, sovereign God directed all people and events to serve His perfect purposes.

A Note about Memory Verses

During the year, your child will be encouraged to memorize two larger scripture portions in small increments—Isaiah 53:3-12 in Lessons 2-20, and John 1:1-18 in Lessons 21-39. The children will learn these scriptures verse by verse and week by week. Please encourage your child in daily Bible memory. If possible, memorize these verses along with your child. In doing so, you will be demonstrating the importance of memorizing God's Word, whether we are young or old. If you do not have a copy of the Bible in the English Standard Version, you can look up the scripture passages on the internet, using a website such as Bible Gateway or the Blue Letter Bible, which both offer free access to the scriptures in several different translations.