



Curriculum and You

by Sharon Ellard

Which is more important in your Sunday School—the curriculum or you?

If someone had asked me that question 35 years ago, I would have answered, “The curriculum!” After all, curriculum was created by professional writers and editors. I was an untrained, teenage volunteer. Surely printed curriculum was more important than I was in discipling children.

I've changed my mind.

Jesus commissioned people to make disciples. He chose twelve men whose only training was following Jesus. Jesus sent these men to teach disciples to obey everything He had commanded. The essential components of their ministry were their obedience and the power of the Holy Spirit.

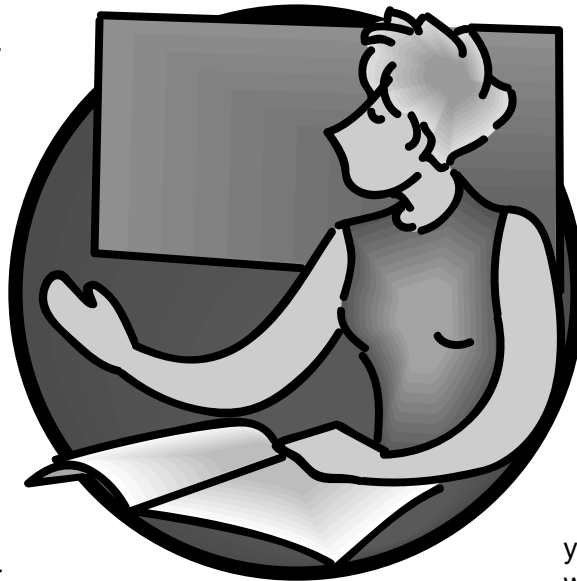
Today, early childhood teachers are blessed with printed curriculum. Curriculum helps us understand how young children learn. Curriculum helps us teach the Bible systematically. Curriculum saves time. It saves money. Curriculum is attractive and interesting. It helps us focus the children's interest on God's Word.

You Are More Important

Yes, curriculum is an impor-

tant teaching tool, but you are more essential than curriculum.

You are the one who represents God's love, acceptance, and care to the children. **You** are the one who knows both the children and God, so you can tailor every lesson to introduce specific children to God. **You** are the



one who can talk with God about the strengths, needs, and challenges in each child's life. **You** are the one the Holy Spirit will use to draw children to Jesus.

The truth is, the children in your class could still learn to love, trust, and obey God without a printed curriculum. They could not be disciplined without a

teacher, however. **You** make a big difference in children's lives. Remember that as you tailor curriculum to fit the students in your Sunday School.

Tailoring Curriculum for Your Students

Begin with Prayer

Teaching is an act of faith—faith that as we teach God's Word, God's Spirit will transform our students from the inside out (Romans 12:2). So, pray that God's Spirit will guide your lesson preparation for the specific children you teach.

God is a personal God who knows each student in your class. His plans for them were complete before they were one day old (Psalm 139:16). His Spirit can guide your preparation to coordinate with those plans.

Decide What to Emphasize

Will you emphasize the quarterly or the Bible?

If you decide to emphasize the **Bible**, you will hold it in your hands as you teach each Bible story. You can place a slip of lesson notes in your Bible to keep you on track, but if you want the children to know the lessons come from God's Word, they

need to see the Bible often during Sunday School.

Will you emphasize the lesson or the children?

If you focus on the **lesson**, you may feel frustrated with interruptions. If you focus on the **children**, you will express grace, mercy, and acceptance as you rejoice with happy children or comfort tearful children or problem solve with upset children. As you respond in these Romans

12 ways, children will see how to love one another as Jesus loves them. They will begin to imitate biblical behavior.

Will you emphasize Bible facts or Bible living?

If you emphasize Bible facts, you will repeat every Bible verse and review every Bible story until the children can repeat them. If you focus on Bible living, you will choose methods that match everyday living. You may stack

one block at a time as you say one word at a time of a verse about growing in faith. Then, when the children see blocks at home, they will be reminded of the Bible verse.

Bible curriculum is a tool to help you in the process of discipling children. Just remember: you are not teaching the curriculum; you are teaching the children!

Questions for Further Study—

1. Evaluate your own teaching style. Have you been depending on the curriculum, rather than yourself, to disciple children?
2. Do you tend to emphasize the quarterly or the Bible?
3. Do you tend to emphasize the lesson or the children?
4. What changes do you feel you should make in your teaching style?



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