

# Spiritual Leadings

## *And* Practical Considerations

### *A Christian Educator's Guide To Curriculum Review*

By Verda Campbell And Cammy Jones



*Curriculum* reviews needn't be overwhelming or even a mysteriously unclear task. Using prayer, in seeking direction through the power of the Holy Spirit, and some common sense knowledge and direction, ministry can effectively take the guesswork out of the decision.

1. The first step is to ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to follow God's will in the whole process, revealing what would be most effective in your situation to lead children to know and become more like Christ. The right curriculum can be a valuable tool, but by itself, even when used to its full potential, it will not change lives. The Holy Spirit alone has the power to transform lives.

2. The second step, if possible, is to find a team or committee willing to take on the work of finding an appropriate curriculum for your Church. This may not always be possible, but there is an effectiveness and objectivity that comes with being a part of a team that a singular volunteer cannot usually display.

3. The third step is to follow the straightforward set of questions you'll find on the following pages, add up your scores, and see which curriculum would be the best match. Just remember the first step! While you may think your perfect match has been found in the numbers, the Holy Spirit may lead you to a different decision.

## What Kinds of Questions Will the Following Survey Ask of Us?

**Questions of Scriptural Accuracy:** The Word of God is the basis of our faith, giving life and power to transform people into the image of the Lord Jesus. Since we believe that the whole Bible is the inspired, authoritative Word of God, and is living and active, we must teach it accurately and responsibly, acknowledging also the doctrine within our specific Church.

**Questions About the Goal:** Your ministry must have clearly outlined goals so that you know what you are trying to achieve, and whether or not you are being effective. Using a curriculum with compatible goals is an essential way to reach those goals, and makes the journey so much easier.

**Questions About the Method:** The presentation of a lesson has a great deal to do with how effective it is for the learner. Weaving together the knowledge of learning styles, developmental stages, human psychology, and educational materials provides the solid foundation for a program that can be used effectively. Questions of Method will be categorized under Learning Styles, Content, and Appeal.

**Questions of Personnel:** To be able to use a particular curriculum, you will need to know and understand the personnel (volunteers, facilitators, coordinators) your program has available. Being honest in your assessment of their dedication, time, understanding and abilities will make it easier to implement the curriculum that you ultimately choose. You may wish to consider doing a Strengths Finder test (available online for free) to see what specific talents each of your personnel has, as this will also help you in deciding where your forte's and weaknesses are in the way of curriculum delivery.

**Practical Considerations:** There is a need to look at the overall practicality of any given curriculum. Considering things such as space, supplies required, delivery methods, usability over a long period of time, and cost are only a few factors. These could be some of the most essential reasons to either opt for or against a particular curriculum choice. For example if the Curriculum you are looking at uses a lot of videos, you will want to make sure that your children's ministry has access to a large screen TV. If there are computer programs for the children to interact with, do you have the proper technology available? These basic factors, and many more, will ultimately become the final part of one of the most important decisions your review committee will make.

## How to Use this Survey

We recommend that you make several copies of the survey pages, one for each curriculum you intend to review. Space has been left under each question for notes or an answer. You can then assess whether the answer you have given works for your church (4 points), might work for your church (2 points), or would not work for your church (0 points). At the end of each section you can tally your score. This will also allow you to compare each curriculum's strengths and weaknesses. Remember to be prayerful as you go through, and assess each question in light of your own church's context.

**Curriculum Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Assessed:** \_\_\_\_\_

Questions: Scriptural Accuracy	0 pts	2 pts	4 pts
Is it Bible based and does it directly reference Scripture?			
Does it include a background study and references, such as maps, interpretations, definitions, and verse context?			
Does it incorporate the "Master story" of the Bible - referring to it and teaching it in lessons, covering the span of the Bible over time?			
Is it theologically in line with your Church's beliefs?			
What is its view of the church, the Christian community, family, and society? Does it fit within the context of your Church?			

*"Since we believe that the whole Bible is the inspired, authoritative Word of God, and is living and active, we must teach it accurately and responsibly, acknowledging also the doctrine within our specific Church."*

Scriptural  
Accuracy  
Total:

Questions: The Goal	0 pts	2 pts	4 pts
Does the big picture, as well as each lesson, focus on Jesus and the gospel?			
Is it grace based?			
Is there an emphasis on spiritual growth and transformation, and not just on relating stories or simply entertaining children?			
What does the name of the curriculum tell you? Is the content consistent with its theme?			
Are there solid application principles employed, with opportunities to live out the biblical truths?			
Does it involve the whole family, and encourage the parents to nurture spiritual formation in their children?			
Does it fit the mission, vision and goals of our church, and of our children's ministry?			
Would it be part of the whole ministry of the greater church?			

*“Using a curriculum with compatible goals is an essential way to reach those goals, and makes the journey so much easier.”*

The  
Goal  
Total:

Questions: Method	0 pts	2 pts	4 pts
Learning Style			
Does it give opportunities for each style of learning (imaginative, analytical, common sense, dynamic)? How well, and how much? <sup>1</sup>			
Does it incorporate different methods of learning (auditory visual, tactile/kinesthetic)? How well & how much? <sup>2</sup>			
Is it age appropriate?			
Can it be modified for multiple age groups? How are the ages grouped?			
Does it emphasize relationship in its teaching style?			
Are there opportunities for children to work together?			
Is there time for contemplation/processing within the lesson?			
Are hands-on activities included? Is there time for children to explore and learn independently?			
Are there opportunities for experiential learning, such as role-playing, drama, or immersion in transformative social experiences (such as food banks, shelters, or missional type work)?			

*“Weaving together the knowledge of learning styles, developmental stages, human psychology, and educational materials provides the solid foundation for a program that can be used effectively.”*

The Method Total for Learning Style:

Content	0 pts	2 pts	4 pts
Is the curriculum easy to read and use?			
Does a lesson flow?			
Is it consistent in message, work, activities and visuals?			
Are there enough options for teachers to choose from, to be able to adapt to their own class situations?			
Does it need to be substantially modified to work within our church?			
Does it include music? (CD's or downloadable, words or sheet music available)			
Is it mainly focused on crafts?			
How is the application component handled? Open-ended or close-ended questions?			
Is there time to think, share, develop ideas to extend the learning to their own lives? Is there a plan for follow-up, or extended application over time?			

*“The presentation of a lesson has a great deal to do with how effective it is for the learner.”*

The Method  
Total for  
Content:

Child Appeal	0 pts	2 pts	4 pts
Is it interesting to children of each age group?			
Does it appeal to all the senses to some degree?			
Is there a balance between familiarity and new experiences?			

The  
Method  
Total for  
Child Appeal:

/12

Personnel	0 pts	2 pts	4 pts
Does it encourage teachers/volunteers to learn and grow personally as well?			
How many people are needed to run a single age group? Do we have enough personnel?			
How much preparation is needed by facilitators/volunteers? Is this feasible?			
Do we need additional or specialized training for volunteers? If yes, are we able to do so?			
Are all our facilitators/volunteers required to know a lot, or can some simply have a giving heart?			
How do volunteers like using it?			

“Being honest in your assessment of their dedication, time, understanding and abilities will make it easier to implement the curriculum that you ultimately choose.”

The  
Personnel  
Total:

/24

Practical Considerations	0 pts	2 pts	4 pts
What are the space requirements? Does it fit within the venue of our church?			
What are the long-term costs of the program? For one year? For five years?			
Is the packaging environmentally friendly and appealing?			
What are the basic supplies needed?			
What unusual supplies might be needed?			
How is it delivered? Online? Paper format? Are there online resources for kids to use?			
Are there videos? (for teacher/volunteer training, for use in the classroom) Do we have/need a TV?			
Is there an interactive app or computer component? Do we want one? Do we have/need any tech?			
What are the copyright restrictions? Am I permitted to make copies for each facilitator/volunteer?			

*“There* is a need to look at the overall practicality of any given curriculum.”



Practical Considerations (continued)	0 pts	2 pts	4 pts
Is it simply trendy, or a curriculum that will be as effective in two or three years?			
What do other people have to say about the curriculum? (online research of what users have to say, other than customer reviews on the website)			
How much time does each lesson take? Will it fit into the time constraints of my service?			
Is a sample lesson available? If we used it with our class was it well received?			
How many lessons are included? Will we need to source a new curriculum each year?			
Does it follow the Lectionary? Can it be modified to follow our church's sermons and scripture readings?			

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ticular curricu-  
lum choice.”

Practical  
Considerations  
Total:

/60

Survey Tally - Using the percentage for each section, average your scores for the Curriculum total.

Scriptural Accuracy Total: \_\_\_\_\_%

The Method Total(Child Appeal): \_\_\_\_\_%

The Goal Total: \_\_\_\_\_%

Practical Considerations Total: \_\_\_\_\_%

The Method Total (Learning Style): \_\_\_\_\_%

The Personnel Total: \_\_\_\_\_%

The Method Total (Content): \_\_\_\_\_%

**Curriculum Total: \_\_\_\_\_%**

*This* guide has tried to be comprehensive, and yet easy to use. If you think of other questions that are of concern, by all means consider those as well. The curriculum adopted will hopefully serve your church for many years, so you want to be as thorough as possible, and sure of your choice. However, note any changes that are made to the curriculum as you are using it, and evaluate those changes against your standards. Keep in mind that if your ministry or Sunday School circumstances evolve, such as large growth, more or fewer teachers/volunteers, or a revision of your church's focus, you may want to revisit your choice of curriculum. It is also good idea to review your curriculum annually as to its effectiveness in your ministry.

*The* last step is the same as the first: ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in this process, and then follow His leading.

*Trust God to bless and transform lives, as you use the tools of an excellent curriculum.*



By Verda Campbell And Cammy Jones  
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### Endnotes

1. Marlene D. LeFever, *Learning Styles*, (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2004), Part III.
2. Marlene D. LeFever, *Learning Styles*, (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2004), Part IV.

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1. Jensen, Eric. *Teaching with the Brain in Mind 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.* USA: ASCD, 2005.
2. LeFever, Marlene D. *Learning Styles*. Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2004.
3. May, Scottie, Beth Posterski, Catherine Stonehouse, and Linda Cannell. *Children Matter: Celebrating Their Place in the church, Family, and Community*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005.
4. Veerman, Dave. *How to Apply the Bible*. USA: Zondervan, 1993.
5. Yount Jones, Christine. "The Curriculator." Last Accessed Nov. 12, 2013.  
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