Children Desiring God Curriculum
Scope and Sequence Rationale

“We give our children big truths they will grow into rather than light explanations they will grow out of.”—Tedd and Margy Tripp, *Instructing a Child’s Heart*¹

Guiding Scriptures

Scope
Guiding the scope of the Children Desiring God curriculum content are two passages:

*Acts 20:26-28—Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, 27for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. 28Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.*

Given that Paul is stating that he has fulfilled his teaching/preaching responsibility because he instructed the believers in the breadth of the Scripture, it seems reasonable to deduct that faithful instruction necessitates the exposure to an essential core of biblical knowledge.

Though it could be argued that Paul is speaking of adults or, even more specifically, to the elders of the Ephesian church, and therefore this passage is not applicable to teaching children, *2 Timothy 3:15-17* would seem to indicate a wide scope of biblical instruction to children is both valid and necessary.

*2 Timothy 3:15-17—...from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.*

These two passages compel us toward an intentional, ample scope of instruction, acquainting children with the “full counsel of God” in age-appropriate lessons.

The Full Counsel
In attempting to respond responsibly to the call to teach the full counsel of God, Children Desiring God has identified and incorporated into the curricula the following six elements that comprise the essence of biblical instruction:

¹ Tripp, Ted and Margy. *Instructing a Child’s Heart.* (Wapwallopen, Penn.:Shepherd Press, 2008), 45.
• **Chronological Bible Stories**—God-centered Bible story narratives emphasizing key biblical truths

• **Biblical Theology**\(^2\)—the central “storyline” of the Bible, which emphasizes the historical/redemptive/Gospel work of Jesus

• **Systematic Theology**—foundational doctrines that summarize the Bible's teaching on various topics

• **Moral Instruction**—the commands of Scripture that communicate ethical instruction, guiding us in the righteous ways of God

• **The Gospel of Christ**—explicit systematic presentation of the essential truths of the Gospel leading to an understanding of saving faith

• **Book Study and Study Skills**—instruction in studying Scripture through the use of inductive Bible study skills

We believe that each of these elements is essential in any course of study instructing the next generation in biblical truth.

**Rightly Handling the Word of Truth**

Exposure to the whole counsel of God is vital, but children must also be taught to rightly understand the Word:

> 2 Timothy 2:15—Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

In a postmodern culture where it is acceptable to define your own truth, children must realize that truth is not “what a Bible verse means to me,” but rather that truth is found in discovering the author’s original intent interpreted in light of the whole message of the Bible, leading to the God-given meaning of the text. Therefore, we must guide the next generation to be students of the Word who have the necessary tools to interpret Scripture correctly, as Paul did for Timothy:

> 2 Timothy 2:7—Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

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\(^2\) The major difference between the story-based chronology and biblical theology is in scope and depth. The story-based chronology is wider in scope encompassing stories from the whole Bible; biblical theology focuses on those stories and parts of Scripture dealing specifically with redemption, and it teaches these in more depth than is presented in the story-based chronology.
In a “sound bite” world, we must impress on the next generation the discipline of Bible study—
careful observation of the text; thoughtful, objective interpretation; and appropriate life-
application—as well as the value of meditating on the Word “day and night” and memorizing
Scripture.

**Precept upon Precept**
The Bible, like everything we teach children, must be taught in distinct, incremental steps. Using
age-appropriate, intentional, step-by-step instruction enables us to teach big truths to children. In
the younger years, our aim is to fill children with much truth (information) in accordance with
the Scriptural teaching that

...faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ (Romans 10:17).

We then help them to connect Scripture to other Scripture, interacting with the biblical text as
they work toward understanding the text and formulating a doctrinal foundation to their faith.

**Sequence**
The developmental stages of children necessitate a thoughtful, purposeful sequence in
accordance with the biblical injunction of sequential learning:

*Isaiah 28:9-10—*"To whom will he teach knowledge, and to whom will he explain the
message? ... 10 For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line
upon line, here a little, there a little."

**Interacting with the Word as a Means to Encourage Faith:**
**Responding with the Heart, Mind, and Will**

God clearly demands certain responses in His Word, and His Word clearly and concretely relates
to the lives of all of us, including children.

*James 1:22—*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

The application process is initiated by **asking questions**, leading children to draw **biblical
conclusions** that are linked in practical application to the child’s life. The child must then be
encouraged to appropriate a **faith response** of embracing the truth and act on it through the
impulse of the Holy Spirit.

*Psalm 34:8—*Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes
refuge in him!
The Scope and Sequence

Though the various curricula are unique, there are some standards regarding the content of each curriculum. Every curriculum:

- presents God as the main character of the Bible, emphasizing what Scripture says about God (God-centered)
- proclaims Jesus as the one and only Mediator between God and man who is worthy of all honor and praise (Christ-exalting)
- has Gospel truth and a call to Gospel-dependent trust and obedience woven throughout (Gospel-driven)
- emphasizes the necessity, authority, and sufficiency of Scripture (Bible-saturated)
- encourages children to testify to and proclaim the greatness and goodness of God outside the Christian community (Missional)
- guides and challenges children to rightly respond to God (Application-oriented)

Though a specific sequence is recommended, the sequence is not imperative. All the curricula are interconnected with the same vision, philosophy, and doctrinal truths, so that there is support from one to the other even if the determined order is not observed.

Broad Overview

Sunday morning—foundational doctrinal core curriculum
Mid-week—practical application of the core doctrines learned on Sunday morning
**Sunday Morning: Foundational Core Curriculum**

*Note:* X denotes a major emphasis and not an exclusion of the other elements (e.g., all curricula contain Gospel truth and most teach Bible study skills).

**Symbols**—⌂ Foundational Bible Stories; † Redemption/Gospel; ▲ Character of God; ■ Sanctification; ❀ Three Ways God Reveals Himself to Man

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Chronological Bible Story</th>
<th>Biblical Theology</th>
<th>Systematic Theology</th>
<th>Moral Instruction</th>
<th>Gospel Presentation</th>
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Sunday Morning Scope and Sequence:  
Foundational Doctrinal Core Curriculum  

**Nursery—** A Sure Foundation: A Philosophy and Curriculum for Ministry to Infants and Toddlers  
*A Sure Foundation* consists of prayer topics to use in praying for the children, and a foundational introduction to the Bible through emphasizing simple Bible truths and a limited number of key Bible stories.

**Preschool—** He Established a Testimony: Old Testament Stories for Young Children, and He Has Spoken By His Son: New Testament Stories for Young Children  
These two preschool curricula emphasize chronological Bible stories with the aim of acquainting children with pertinent facts of a wide variety of Bible stories, the key themes of the Bible, the “glorious deeds of the Lord and His might, and the wonders that he has done” (Psalm 78:4).

**Kindergarten—** Jesus, What a Savior: A Study for Children on Redemption  
This chronological study on redemption explores the incomparable greatness and worth of God, the desperate condition of helpless sinners, and the all-sufficient work of Jesus Christ to redeem sinful people. 
*Jesus, What a Savior* is part of a three-fold sequence (along with mid-week curricula titled *He Has Been Clearly Seen* and *I Stand in Awe*) of presenting the three ways God reveals Himself to man in order to be seen and known—through His Son, through creation, and through His Word.

**First Grade—** The ABCs of God: A Study for Children on the Greatness and Worth of God  
This study answers the questions “Who is God?” and “What is God like?” by using the framework of the alphabet to introduce God's attributes and divine character.

**Second Grade—** Faithful to All His Promises: A Study for Children on the Promises of God  
Building on the foundation of trust in the character of God learned in *The ABCs of God* curriculum, *Faithful to All His Promises* emphasizes the reliability of the promises of God while helping children understand many of the promises. Promises are undeserved gifts given from a gracious God to bless His children. The promise to unbelievers is that “the way of the wicked will perish.”

**Third Grade—** In the Beginning... Jesus: A Chronological Study for Children of Redemptive History  
In this study, children are led to discover that the main purpose of the Old Testament is to point to Christ as the promised Messiah. As children are led through the biblical narrative, they will see how Jesus and His perfect work in redeeming sinners was God's plan from all eternity. This
curriculum builds on the chronological foundation introduced in the preschool curricula, *He Established a Testimony* and *He Has Spoken by His Son*.

**Fourth Grade—To Be Like Jesus: A Study for Children on Following Jesus**
This study focuses on what it means to follow Jesus. It explores the elements of salvation and progresses to an emphasis on the meaning of sanctification. This curriculum continues from where the *In the Beginning...Jesus* curriculum ends, at the cross.

**Fifth Grade—How Majestic is Your Name: A Study for Children on the Names and Character of God**
*How Majestic is Your Name* is a study of the character of God using the framework of His names with a driving emphasis on response to God. Like the *The ABCs of God* curriculum, this study answers the questions “Who is God?” and “What is God like?”, but it also places a major emphasis on the implications of God's character as it relates to personal application.

**Sixth Grade—My Purpose Will Stand: A Study for Children on the Providence of God**
This study of the providence of God pulls the knowledge acquired in earlier grades into the framework of the bigger purposes of God, seeing all the acts of God as part of an eternal plan. It picks up where the *To Be Like Jesus* curriculum leaves off on the established foundation of the character of God and where the *How Majestic is Your Name* curriculum leaves off on our personal response to a personal God. It also lays the foundation for the youth curriculum titled *Your Word is Truth*.

This curriculum has a purposeful focus of seeing a God-centered answer to the difficult questions of life, emphasizing the right, power, wisdom, and righteousness of God to rule the world. It incrementally teaches the definition of the providence of God as:

- **God is PRESENT and ACTIVE in all His creation.**
- **His EYE is watching,**
- **His HAND is working**
- **to uphold and govern all creation**
- **to fulfill all His purposes**
- **for His glory**
- **and the good of His children.**

**Seventh Grade—That You May Believe (for future release)**
This curriculum identifies and explains 10 Essential Truths in understanding the Gospel and the implications of those truths. It also employs salvation stories to illustrate the power of the Gospel and Jesus' life-changing work in the hearts of men.

**Eighth Grade—Teach Me Your Way: A Study for Youth on Surrender to Jesus and Submission to His Way**
This curriculum studies the Sermon on the Mount in order to challenge students to surrender to Jesus in salvation and submit to His process of sanctification. It broadens the students’ understanding of sanctification as taught in the curriculum titled *To Be Like Jesus* in the deeper context of heart submission to the commands of God. Personal application strongly emphasizes inner submission and conformity of the heart, rather than outward conformity to rules. The challenge of going beyond righteous habits to true righteousness is put before the students.

**Ninth Grade**—*Your Word is Truth: A Study for Youth on Seeing All of Life Through the Truth of Scripture*

*Your Word is Truth* ties together the curricula titled *My Purpose will Stand* and *Teach Me Your Way* by completing the following logical flow of biblical reasoning:

- **My Purpose Will Stand**
  
  Because God’s providence extends over all of history and the world…
  
  all of life is orchestrated by God…
  
  so the Bible must inform our understanding of God’s work in the world.

- **Teach Me Your Way**
  
  Since all of life is orchestrated by the providential hand of the sovereign Ruler of the universe…
  
  we must have a personal heart submission to Christ and walk in His ways as outlined in His authoritative Word.

- **Your Word is Truth**
  
  Facing all of our experiences in everyday life with a heart of submission to God and His ways…
  
  means that the Bible will inform our daily decisions…
  
  because nothing is outside the scope of the truth of the Bible, which is authoritative and relevant to all of life.
  
  Therefore, it is our joyful and wise duty to submit to the authority of God’s Word as we trust and rejoice in His wisdom, recognizing the Bible as the absolute, objective, unchanging, universal, noble truth of God.

**10th Grade**—*Open My Eyes: A Study for Youth on Studying the Bible* (for future release)

Students are taught to study the Bible by looking at the distinction of different genre biblical literature, and applying the inductive method of Bible study to discover the author’s intent leading to the God-given meaning of the text. There is an emphasis on the steps of observation, interpretation, and application, culminating in the end of response to the Word.
Midweek Bible Curricula:
Practical Application of Core Doctrines

Note: X denotes a major emphasis and not an exclusion of the other elements (e.g., all curricula contain Gospel truth and most teach Bible study skills).

Symbol—* Three Ways God Reveals Himself to Man

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Midweek: Practical Application of Core Doctrines
Most of the midweek curricula are the practical outworking of the Sunday curricula theology. They apply the great theological truths taught in the Sunday curriculum in very practical ways to everyday life.

Preschool—Stories not told in Sunday School or repeated from the two preschool curricula titled He Established a Testimony and He Has Spoken by His Son are used midweek, as well as the book, Leading Little Ones to God: A Child’s Book of Bible Teachings by Marian M. Schoolland. Leading Little Ones to God is a short presentation of simple Bible doctrines.

Kindergarten—He Has Been Clearly Seen: A Study for Children on Seeing and Delighting in God's Glory
A survey of the amazing variety and grandeur of God’s creation is presented as one of the avenues God uses to reveal Himself to man. This curriculum is part of a three-fold sequence (along with the curricula titled Jesus, What a Savior and I Stand in Awe) of presenting the three ways God reveals Himself to man in order to be seen and known—through His Son, through His creation, and through His Word.

First Grade—I Stand in Awe: A Study for Children on the Bible
I Stand in Awe is part of a three-fold sequence (along with the curricula titled He Has Been Clearly Seen and Jesus, What a Savior) of presenting the three ways God reveals Himself to man in order to be seen and known—through His Son, through His creation, and through His Word. This curriculum teaches the characteristics of the Bible, the main message of the Bible (redemption), and the purpose of the Bible (that we may believe).

Second Grade—(to be determined)

Third Grade—The Way of the Wise: A Study for Children on Wisdom and Foolishness
This study of the book of Proverbs very practically contrasts the two paths in life, the way of the wise and the way of the foolish. With a focus on the heart, it illustrates that the choices we make come from our heart affections.

Fourth Grade—I Will Build My Church (for future release)
This curriculum introduces children to the essence, purpose, and practice of the church, as well as emphasizing the importance of the local church. Children will be encouraged to be participants in the church, and not merely observers. It is a complement to the curriculum titled To Be Like Jesus, presenting the church as the community in which our sanctification is practiced and encouraged.
Fifth Grade—*Fight the Good Fight: A Study for Children on Persevering in Faith*
Students are taught in *Fight the Good Fight* that everyone is in a battle—either as an unbeliever fighting against God, or as a believer fighting the fight of faith with God’s help. The first five lessons present the message of salvation as students are encouraged to look at their heart condition. Then they are taught that every battle we are in is a spiritual battle, as the heart battlegrounds are exposed. The enemy’s tactics are revealed, and the student is instructed in battle strategy that leads to victory in Jesus.

Sixth Grade—(to be determined)

Seventh Grade—*Pour Out Your Heart Before Him: A Study for Youth on Prayer and Praise in the Psalms*
Through a study of many of the psalms, students are taught a three-fold pattern of pouring out their hearts to God in prayer, opening their eyes to see the greatness and goodness of God, and opening their mouth in praise to God. As they see this pattern emerge throughout many of the psalms, the students are encouraged to bring their struggles to God and trust Him as the Supreme Ruler of the universe who keeps covenant with His people.

This curriculum builds on the foundation of trust in God’s promises learned in the curriculum titled *Faithful to All His Promises*, and is supported by the confidence we can have in God’s character as taught in the curricula titled *The ABCs of God* and *How Majestic is Your Name*.

Eighth Grade—*Abiding in Jesus: A Study for Youth on Trusting Jesus and Encouraging Others*
Students are walked through the process of being ashamed in the presence of God, to peace with God through Jesus, to daily fellowship with Jesus, culminating in an understanding of the believer’s identity in Christ. The rest of the lessons teach students what it means to live in daily dependence on Jesus.

This curriculum is a strong companion piece to the curriculum titled *The Way of the Wise* and *Teach Me Your Way* as the means to walk in God’s ways comes through abiding in Jesus.

Ninth Grade—*Rejoicing in God’s Good Design: A Study for Youth on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*
In a world of gender confusion, *Rejoicing in God’s Good Design* equips students with God’s teaching regarding men and women. Men and women are created equal in essence, yet different in role according to the perfect design of the Creator. God created man with headship responsibilities to lead, protect, and provide, and woman as the companion-helper of man. In their attempt to rule rather than be ruled, Adam and Eve rebelled against God’s design for men and women in the Fall, resulting in shame, fear, disharmony, and God’s curse in their designated
roles. Men and women are still in rebellion against the Creator’s leadership and design, yet God’s good design instituted before the Fall still stands as the path to blessing.

This curriculum builds on the trust of the Creator established by His character in the curriculum titled *How Majestic is Your Name* and the confidence we should have in God’s established ways as outlined in the curricula titled *The Way of the Wise* and *Teach Me Your Way*. The *Rejoicing in God’s Good Design* curriculum encourages students to think biblically about the roles of men and women (introduced in the companion study titled *Your Word is Truth*) and explore them in depth.

**10th Grade**—(to be determined)

**Intergenerational Curricula**

*The Righteous Shall Live by Faith: A Study for Children and Adults on the Ten Commandments*

This curriculum is a study of law and grace through studying the requirements of a Holy God as shown in the Ten Commandments, and presenting Jesus as the Perfect Law-Keeper and Redeemer. The Ten Commandments are presented as the mirror of our soul and then the expression of a redeemed heart.

*Lord, Teach Us to Pray: A Study for Children and Adults on Prayer*

Prayer is presented as an encounter with the living God. It is where we experience fellowship with God and where God changes us. Using the model of the Lord’s Prayer, parents and children are instructed on the elements of prayer and are taught to bend to the Father’s will as we seek His face in prayer.