

First Steps

Introduction to the syllabus

Unit	Lesson	PDF file name (for individual lessons)
Unit 1: God made me	1. God made my hands and feet	FS_unit1_lesson1.pdf
	2. God made my eyes and ears	FS_unit1_lesson2.pdf
	3. God made me	FS_unit1_lesson3.pdf
Unit 2: God made everyone	1. God made my friends	FS_unit2_lesson1.pdf
	2. God made my family	FS_unit2_lesson2.pdf
	3. God made everyone	FS_unit2_lesson3.pdf
Unit 3: God made everything	1. God made the flowers and trees	FS_unit3_lesson1.pdf
	2. God made food	FS_unit3_lesson2.pdf
	3. God made all the animals	FS_unit3_lesson3.pdf
	4. God made—revision	FS_unit3_lesson4.pdf
Unit 4: God loves me	1. God loves me	FS_unit4_lesson1.pdf
	2. God always loves me	FS_unit4_lesson2.pdf
	3. God is with me all day and night	FS_unit4_lesson3.pdf
	4. God is always with me	FS_unit4_lesson4.pdf
	5. God loves me lots and lots—revision	FS_unit4_lesson5.pdf
Unit 5: God loves everyone	1. God says that he loves us	FS_unit5_lesson1.pdf
	2. God loves my family	FS_unit5_lesson2.pdf
	3. God loves my friends	FS_unit5_lesson3.pdf
	4. God loves all the people I see	FS_unit5_lesson4.pdf
	5. God loves everyone	FS_unit5_lesson5.pdf
Unit 6: God is kind	1. God gives us rain	FS_unit6_lesson1.pdf
	2. God gives us sunshine	FS_unit6_lesson2.pdf
	3. God gives us food	FS_unit6_lesson3.pdf
	4. God helps us to be happy	FS_unit6_lesson4.pdf
	5. God is kind—revision	FS_unit6_lesson5.pdf
Unit 7: God hears	1. We can talk to God	FS_unit7_lesson1.pdf
	2. God hears us when we talk to him	FS_unit7_lesson2.pdf
	3. Thanking God	FS_unit7_lesson3.pdf
	4. God wants us to say sorry to him	FS_unit7_lesson4.pdf
	5. God hears—revision	FS_unit7_lesson5.pdf
Unit 8: God is great	1. God is everywhere	FS_unit8_lesson1.pdf
	2. God made everything	FS_unit8_lesson2.pdf
	3. God can do anything	FS_unit8_lesson3.pdf
	4. God loves everyone	FS_unit8_lesson4.pdf
	5. God is very important	FS_unit8_lesson5.pdf
Unit 9: Christmas	1. The Bible and Jesus	FS_unit9_lesson1.pdf
	2. Mary and Joseph	FS_unit9_lesson2.pdf
	3. Jesus is born	FS_unit9_lesson3.pdf
	4. Shepherds visit	FS_unit9_lesson4.pdf
	5. Wise men visit	FS_unit9_lesson5.pdf

Why a curriculum for 2-3 year olds?

The *First Steps* syllabus has been written with a particular group of children in mind, a group I have always referred to as ‘transition crèche’—that is, the two to three year olds who are too young to join the traditional Sunday School (which is often restricted to children old enough to be attending pre-school or school during the week), and yet who are getting a bit old for the traditional church crèche facility. In the crèche they can sometimes make life difficult by being too rough for the babies and bored with the toys. Often parents of children this age will also be pressing the Sunday School supervisor to let their children start Sunday School, because they know their children are ready for some Christian input.

Indeed, what better time to start teaching children than when they are very young? Paul reminds Timothy that he had the privilege of knowing the holy Scriptures ‘from infancy’ (2 Tim 3:14-15).

The *First Steps* syllabus will not suit every church, and those churches that use it may use it in different ways. For instance some churches may use it for a full year (for 2-3 year olds) while others may decide to use it for just the second half of the year (with the 2-3 year olds). Other churches might use it for a mid-week ladies Bible study crèche or to add some Christian content to a toddlers playgroup.

You may notice some degree of repetition with the early units of *Learning about God* (the following year’s syllabus). This is intentional, as some churches may decide not to have a ‘transition crèche’ class (*First Steps*) and may as a result begin with *Learning about God*. However, the children in those churches which do use *First Steps* will benefit from the slight repetition in the second year.

So what is the goal of this syllabus? We want to help young children learn about God so that they can develop a relationship with him at their level. In particular, we want to help children of this age to know that God is great, that he made the world around them, and that he loves them. They are also introduced to Jesus in the Christmas story. When teaching this age group, it is always helpful to begin with their world—God made me, my family and friends—and to move from specifics (God made me) to generalities (God made everyone). And so you will see this pattern reflected in the syllabus.

An explanation of the lesson notes...

Bible reference...

The lessons are usually general teaching on a particular topic, rather than a Bible story or passage. This is done so that we build the foundations of understanding—foundations which will be needed for later learning and which will help the children have a relationship with God in the present. The Bible reference may therefore be only one or two verses. In your preparation, think about what the Bible as a whole is saying about the topic of the lesson.

Lesson aim...

The lesson aim is a brief expression of what you are trying to teach the children in a given lesson and hence what you want them to learn. It is an explanation for the teacher—it is *not* expressed in terms which the children could necessarily understand.

Main message...

The main message is a brief, simple statement of the main learning point in the lesson—what you want the children to go away remembering. It is expressed in terms which the children should understand. This is what we want to focus on and reinforce in a lesson.

Introduction...

The introductions have been written with the intention of preparing the children for hearing and understanding the story. In your particular set-up, it may not be possible to do the 'Introduction' with the group of children together—so you may need to make adaptations as appropriate.

I sometimes mention using a basket. If you do the introduction and read the story to one or two children at a time, a basket is helpful so that you have what you need in an easily transportable form.

Story...

You will notice that the *First Steps* lessons are very short. Each story is aiming to communicate the main idea in a simple, concise way. Children of this age enjoy (and thrive on) repetition, so I suggest that you say the story more than once. You might, for instance, say the story once using things in a basket as visual aids, and then a second time using the story card.

Use of the Bible

All the ideas and themes are from the Bible—although ‘Bible stories’ as such are generally not taught at this age. Some lessons specifically refer to the Bible, but many don’t. It’s because of where the children are at in terms of child development and what is going to be meaningful to them and able to be understood. The Bible is used more next year (*Learning about God*) and the whole of *Introducing the Bible* is working through the Bible.

You will, however, need to have a class Bible (Good News Version). At the beginning of stories it is helpful to show the Bible and mention how what they are learning comes from the Bible.

Vocabulary

Every attempt has been made to keep vocabulary simple and within the child’s understanding. I have tried to use words which would be known by most children. Please understand that it is impossible for me to know which words would be familiar to every child using this material. Always be on the look out for words which your particular group of children might not know. If you see a word which you don’t think your children will know, please either substitute another word or explain the meaning of the word.

As adults we tend to forget how limited the experience of young children can be. For instance, if a child does not live near a beach, has never visited a beach, or never looked at a book with a beach, in it, they may not know what a beach is. Yes, it might have been on the television screen, but unless someone is sitting beside them saying “that is a beach”, they will be none the wiser.

In the Christmas lessons, I have tried to explain the meaning of words like ‘shepherd’ in the introduction to the story, or have simply used an expression like ‘animals’ food box’ to replace ‘manger’.

I spent much time trying to think of suitable words, which would more widely be known, to describe God and Jesus. They include ‘special’, ‘important’ and ‘great’. When describing God and his son, Jesus, we need to convey some idea of their uniqueness.

With regard to vocabulary, some stories use the words ‘us’ in the story and replace this with ‘me’ on the story card. The reason for this is that the story is addressing a number of children. I don’t want the children to think that when the teacher says ‘God made me’, that God made the teacher only and not them! The story card is intended to go home with the child and be read at home and be specific to the child. Therefore, ‘God made me’ is suitable for the story card.

Please consider the children in your class when preparing the story. If you have children with a physical disability, a single parent or a family member with a chronic illness or disability, some stories might need to be modified.

Story cards...

The *First Steps* lessons are each centred on a story card, which I hope will be useful in the crèche-type set-up. You will need a folder with plastic sleeves. Here's how it works:

For the teacher

- the story can be told to a group of children with the introduction, followed by the story, using the story card as a visual aid;
- or the story can be told to children in smaller groups (maybe two at a time) using the folder with the card in it, while the other children are playing.

For the child

- the story card can be completed (using suggestions under the activity section) and sent home each week;
- or the story cards for the whole unit can be kept for each child, gathered together at the end of the unit and then sent home.

For everyone

- each week add the story card to the class folder so that it can be read as revision over future weeks. Children of this age love gathering around and looking at story books and they also love hearing stories many times over.

Pray...

I have tried to write simple, brief prayers which could be either said by the teacher only or repeated by the children. The printed prayers are designed to be prayed after the story. You may want to pray for other matters relevant to your class then or at another time in the lesson.

Action rhymes...

Action rhymes appear in many lessons. The reason for action rhymes is that children remember far more if actions accompany words. An action rhyme is an enjoyable and age-appropriate way of helping young children learn precious truths about God.

You might find that you can think of your own action rhymes that are appropriate to the world in which your children live. So if snow or banana plantations or beaches, to name a few, are a central part of the world in which you live, you might be able to think of a special rhyme that is relevant to the children in your group. God made lots and lots of things and there are many things in God's creation which are not covered in the action rhymes. So I'd encourage you to think of your own from time to time. Just remember, they don't have to rhyme!

Another thing which you might like to do is add another verse to a rhyme. So an action rhyme could 'grow' a bit more and include names of children in your group (so long as you don't have a huge group!), or animals which live in your part of the world etc.

Activity suggestions...

Due to the age group, I have chosen activities which will be within the range of skills of most of the children. However, there are a variety of activities for you to choose from. Some will be more difficult than others. Some will require finer motor skills than others. Some will require more teacher preparation. Some will take longer for the children to complete. Others will be finished in an instant!

It is not necessarily intended that you choose only one activity. You might choose two, or even three. For this age group, many of the activities will be very short. Two short activities are preferable to one long activity in which the children become bored and frustrated, and so walk away leaving it incomplete.

The skills the activities use are:

- drawing (ie. scribbling on a blank page)
- colouring in (ie. scribbling on top of something!)
- pasting (ie. plonking or pressing something onto paper)
- stickers (ie. pressing something sticky which stays—often a favourite with young children).

Please remember...

Children aged 2-3 years will not be able to do precise or artistic colouring or drawing, but they enjoy the activity of scribbling. Their version of ‘colouring in’ is scribbling. It often results in a messy, unattractive end result. So you might have to lower your standards! Their main focus in doing such an activity is the process rather than the end product. Giving them an opportunity to make a contribution to an activity by scribbling gives them a feeling that it is theirs. Some children will proudly show it to Mum and Dad, while others won’t be all that interested and may even leave it behind. Parents will be pleased with the end product regardless of what it looks like—they like to see their children doing activities and don’t want to see a beautiful work of art which has obviously been done by the teacher.

Just one word of warning: dark crayons, especially dark blue and black, are unhelpful because they have the habit of covering up important things, like text.

Pasting

When pasting, it is important that you offer the children only one colour of paper at a time if you are intending that they paste two different colours in two different places. For example, if the children are pasting green paper squares as leaves in a tree, and brown paper squares as bark, then only offer them green paper to begin with and only put glue on the branches. Then take the green paper away and only offer them brown paper and only put glue on the trunk.

Glue sticks are a good method if you can afford them. I recommend that the teachers apply the glue as that means that the glue will end up where you want it to be. A teacher can quickly apply glue to a large area using large glue sticks. But young children with a glue stick in their hand can leave a sticky mess on lots of things! Many will think nothing of covering the table with glue! The problem is that children often love glue sticks, so use them with close teacher direction. If it doesn’t matter where things are placed, it might be

a good opportunity for them to use the glue stick as a treat. Where it does matter, it's your turn. Help the children to realise from the first week of Sunday School that the glue sticks are yours and not theirs. If you let them use the glue sticks then it is a treat, and they are to be used how you want them to be used. We don't want weekly tantrums over glue sticks!

Stickers

You can buy quite cheap round stickers and star stickers from some supermarkets and department stores. Alternatively, you can make stickers using computer address labels which you scribble on to add colour (before the lesson).

Other equipment and materials

I do not use scissors in the activity suggestions. Where things need to be cut out, I regard this as part of the preparation for the teacher. I do not use traditional paints, as they require a fair amount of setting up, cleaning up and special equipment, and paint has a habit of going where it shouldn't.

I try to use as many materials as possible that you can collect easily (eg. cardboard rolls, egg cartons etc.). I have tried to keep purchasing costs to a minimum. I know I mention some craft items which need to be purchased, for instance paper plates and patty cases. But these can be purchased cheaply from a supermarket, or you can simply cut out a cardboard circle to replace paper plates and coloured circles to replace patty cases (paper cases for making cup cakes).

Another thing to keep in mind is that most craft items mentioned in this syllabus can be purchased from an educational supplier.

Recyclable junk

I refer to a number of items which are things which would normally end up in the garbage bin. The advantage is that they are free and that they add variety. One problem with this is that the 'junk' that I refer to in these lessons is to some extent specific to a time and place. What I mean is that some items will become obsolete in years to come and be replaced by something else. Other items might be used abundantly in my part of the world, and unheard of in your part of the world. So some flexibility and creativity is needed. I'm also aware that some objects are given different names in different regions. To help overcome this you will find a file, 'Activity materials.pdf', on this CD-ROM with pictures of the objects and what I call them.

So, my suggestions are:

- Make a habit of collecting recyclable 'junk' which could be used in craft. Have a junk box or bag in which these items are placed. You might want to have a collection box at Sunday School where parents can contribute items as well.
- Junk items have been limited by what's available at the time and place of publishing this syllabus. Look around for new recyclable junk and adapt activities accordingly.

- Look ahead to lessons in the coming weeks and make the necessary preparation to collect items required (you might need to specifically ask parents to collect an item like softdrink bottles or egg cartons).
- If an item is unavailable, take spare moments in the day waiting in queues or sitting on buses, to think creatively of alternatives. You might come up with a different method of doing a craft activity or think of using a different item.

Playdough

A few activities make use of playdough. If your children are likely to eat it, or don't have the fine motor skills to manage it yet, then perhaps avoid using it.

Use of envelopes

In the activity suggestions, I sometimes mention placing items in an envelope for each child. Let me explain why. If you want every child to have one circle, one square and one triangle, you can't put a pile in front of them and ask them to take one each. One child might have 10 circles, while another has none, and chaos will ensue. Instead, place the items required for each child in an envelope. By either giving the children the envelope, or emptying it's contents beside them, the children will have what you want them to have.

Time

Please keep in mind that when your class does an activity, it may take a short (often, very short) amount of time to complete. It can be discouraging with this age group that you will spend far longer preparing an activity before the lesson, than it takes for the children to finish the activity in the lesson. Remember that your preparation time was worth it!

Always do the activity in an orderly fashion. Have all the children doing one thing at a time with only those materials needed on the table. Then take those materials away before proceeding to the next step.

Child's name

Ensure that each child's name is on their work (either write names on the activity soon after the children begin or have names on stickers which you can quickly stick onto their work).

Safety

Always be mindful of safety during the activity time. Keep all scissors, staplers and split pins out of the children's reach. Whenever using split pins, stick masking tape over the top of the split pin to avoid injury, because the ends can be quite sharp. Place tape over staples, too—we don't want exploring, little fingers to find sharp staples. I try to remind you of this in the notes—please forgive my repetition.

Also, on the issue of safety, ensure that the class area is safe, that furniture is stable, and that there aren't a host of invitations for climbing and exploring and injury.

Never leave children without a teacher present—they must always be in your sight. Have someone responsible for taking children to the toilet if they need to go. Many children

many still be in nappies at this age. It's helpful if you know which children are likely to need the toilet.

While talking about child safety, you also need to be aware of the child protection policies of your church and the laws in your state or country (especially if you are the Sunday School co-ordinator).

Booklets

A number of simple, folded booklets have been included in the material. The purpose of these is actually not for the Sunday School lesson as such, but for the children to take-home. The booklets are intended for the parents to read to their children at home, thus reinforcing what they are learning at Sunday School. The booklets are intentionally small. 'Little' children often like 'little' books, and as the story card is A4 size, it's nice to have something little for the children to enjoy.

The booklets are listed under the 'Activity Suggestions'. You might want the children to colour their booklet in the lesson. The size of the booklets means that they are not ideal candidates for colouring in. The down-side of colouring a booklet is that the children could scribble over the top of it in such a way as to render it unreadable, thus defeating the purpose. The advantage of colouring their booklet is that the children will feel that it specially belongs to them. I'll leave it to you to decide. The booklets have been illustrated in such a way that they do not need colour—they are intentionally small drawings for little people!

Paper size

If you look at the paper that most 2-3 years olds are drawing or painting on it is usually at least twice or even four times the size of A4 paper. We are limited in this lesson format to A4 paper (which is 210mm wide by 297mm high). An advantage of this is that many Sunday School classes have limited tables and would not cope with large pieces of paper anyway. However, you can have the option of using larger paper, and at times this is suggested, and there is a caption to paste onto larger paper if you wish. For all those activities which are drawn on A4 paper and you would rather be larger, you could enlarge the pages on a photocopier, or some could be enlarged by hand.

When you print the lessons, ensure that you print them at full size. Adobe® PDF® has a 'Page Scaling' option and if this is set to anything other than 'None' then the pages will not be printed full size. This can cause problems with some activities, particularly the booklets.

Some countries do not use A4 as the standard paper size (i.e United States and Canada). While A4 paper (210mm x 297mm, 11-3/4" x 8-1/4") is not often advertised it is available from many office / stationery supply companies in those countries and will fit in almost all modern printers. If you have trouble finding it locally then you will be able to find it via an on-line store.

Your class

Just as every child is different, so is every class. As the teacher, you will come to know your group of children and understand their skills and limitations. Therefore, you might read some activities and think, “How could she possibly think that my children could do that!”. You will need to make an assessment of what is likely to work in your situation with your group of children. Some of the more ambitious activities may only work if you have extra adults to help the children.

As the year progresses, it would be helpful for you to keep a record of activities which are worth repeating (or not). Remember, too, that a year is a long time in a 2 year old’s life, and lots of skills will develop over the course of the year.

Selection of activities

There is a choice in each lesson so that you can choose the most appropriate for your class. You might notice that some activities appear a few times throughout the year. This is intentional. You might choose the activity in one lesson and not another lesson. There is also some repetition because certain activities are popular for this age group.

For more help...

For more tips, safety hints, explanation of the ages and stages of children, and ideas for teaching young children, see my book, *Their God is so BIG*.

Final thoughts...

One difficulty I have had in writing this syllabus is that I keep thinking of more things which could be included. But publishing deadlines have given me a helpful limit! I do not think that I will ever consider this material ‘finished’! I hope that you will provide feedback (through Matthias Media), so that I can continue to make improvements in the future. And I hope that I have left room for you to think of your own ideas to complement those printed.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Kathy Manchester, Marianne Campbell and Maureen Seldon for providing the illustrations for the story cards and activities.

It is my prayer that this material can help you teach two to three years olds about our great and loving God. I pray that God will give you wisdom and help in the wonderful and precious ministry of teaching little ones. I also pray that God will help us learn more about our heavenly Father as we help little ones learn about him and his love for us.

Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—the LORD, who remains faithful forever.

Ps 146:5-6

Stephanie Carmichael
November 2005.