



# *How to Use God's Plan in Scripture (GPS)*

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## How to use *God's Plan in Scripture (GPS)*



*God's Plan in Scripture (GPS)* is a twenty-four-lesson program designed to take children on an amazing journey through the story of salvation.

As children navigate through the Bible, they will learn the major people, places, and events of the Bible and discover how they all come together to reveal the remarkable story of our faith.

The adult *Great Adventure Bible Timeline®* revolutionized Bible studies by dividing the Bible into twelve color-coded time periods that make it easier to follow its narrative thread. The *GPS* program brings that same color-coding and chronological approach to children in grades K-6+ and is perfect for teachers, parents, grandparents, and homeschool groups.

### Three Easy Steps

1. **Step One: Introduce the Story** – Use the **Teacher's Guide** to plan and navigate through the readings and activities for each lesson, beginning with an opening prayer and activity, found in the **Workbook**, to introduce the story.
2. **Step Two: Tell the Story** – Students read the Bible story summary in the **Storybook** to understand its deeper meaning and context. (A teacher or parent can read the summary for younger children.)
3. **Step Three: Search the Story** – Students reads the actual story in the **Bible** and use the **Workbook** to engage with the biblical passages. The teacher then guides students through a closing activity and prayer.

*Optional step: Before the closing activity, a play for each lesson is provided in the **Plays** book. The **Plays** offer a supplemental group activity that helps children process the stories of the Bible in a new and engaging way. Plays give children the opportunity to reinforce their knowledge of salvation history, while also practicing telling the story alongside their friends and classmates.*

## ***God's Plan in Scripture (GPS) aligns perfectly with The Bible Timeline®***

In a revolutionary approach to Bible study, Jeff Cavins developed *The Bible Timeline*®, which divides Scripture into twelve time periods that make the narrative thread easier to follow. Using a unique color-coded chart, *The Bible Timeline* covers the major people, places, and events of the Bible and shows how they all come together to reveal the remarkable story of our Faith. On this guided journey through salvation history, participants see how fourteen of the Bible's narrative books tell the story of salvation from beginning to end and give the keys to understanding the amazing story woven throughout Scripture.

Originally developed for adult study, *The Bible Timeline* has been adapted for high school students with *T3: The Teen Timeline* and for middle school students with *Encounter: Experiencing God in the Everyday*. Now, for the first time, *The Bible Timeline*'s easy-to-understand approach to studying the Bible has been adapted for grade school students.

In fact, the same lessons presented by Jeff Cavins in the twenty-four-part adult *Bible Timeline* have been adapted for younger children in *God's Plan in Scripture (GPS)*. This presents an opportunity for parishes to offer both programs simultaneously, with parents participating in the *Bible Timeline* adult course as their children learn the same biblical stories in *God's Plan in Scripture (GPS)* adapted to their age level. Adults and children alike will greatly benefit from learning how God's plan for us is revealed in Sacred Scripture.

## **Getting Started**

*God's Plan in Scripture (GPS)* can easily be implemented in different ways to meet the specific needs of your parish, school, family catechesis, or homeschool program. The twenty-four lessons of the program can be completed over the course of one academic year, one semester, or as a summer course.

The Introduction to the Teacher's Guide (pgs. 1–7) describes each of the components that go into a typical lesson and how they are to be implemented. These components allow the program to be extremely flexible in how it can be adapted depending on students' ages, class size, the amount of time available, and in-person versus remote instruction, as well as whether your class is of a single grade or several grades mixed together. This guide offers some additional ideas on how *God's Plan in Scripture (GPS)* can be adapted to your particular needs.

As you schedule your weekly meetings, we suggest allowing at least one hour per lesson. However, to effectively incorporate all of the lesson components, a two-hour lesson is ideal. Below are some ideas on how to adapt the *GPS* program to lessons varying in length from two hours and twenty minutes to as little as one hour.

## Sample lessons based on differing class times

There are thirteen different components that comprise a typical lesson. Some of these, such as the Opening Prayer, Review, Opening and Closing Activities, Tell the Story, and Search the Story are central to an effective lesson. While the amount of time spent on these activities may vary slightly, it is important to cover each of these parts thoroughly in order to get the maximum benefit from the program.

However, the authors of the program have provided a wealth of extra materials such as Snacks, Plays, and Extra Activities that can be used or adapted depending on the length of your class. Below are some sample lesson timings based on various class times.

### Lesson time: 2 hr. 20 min.

Key Verse, Welcome, and Opening Prayer	5 min
Review	5 min.
Opening Activity	5 min.
Tell the Story	15 min.
Search the Story	20 min.
Snack	10 min.
Play	60 min.
Closing Activity	5 min.
Extra Activity	10 min.
Review and Dismissal	5 min.

This sample lesson contains every activity offered in the program. It is ideal for classes that last a minimum of two hours and up to two hours and twenty minutes. The primary benefit of this lesson plan is that it allows the teacher plenty of time to explain the lesson, answer any questions, and have class discussions. By offering each of the lesson components, the teacher is able to address different learning styles that help make the lesson more accessible to all of the students.

In this sample class, one hour is devoted to the Optional Play. As the play generally takes ten to fifteen minutes to perform, this plan allows time for the students to review their parts, arrange the classroom as a stage, create props, practice the play, and finally perform the play.

This type of lesson is ideal for advanced students who would greatly benefit from performing the play, thereby reinforcing the main ideas of the lesson using different learning styles. In a class of mixed

students, the older students could prepare for the play while the younger students participate in the “Snack” activity and the Extra Activity. Younger students could then watch the play at the end of class.

**Lesson time: 1 hour 50 minutes**

Key Verse, Welcome, and Opening Prayer	5 min.
Review	5 min.
Opening Activity	5 min.
Tell the Story	15 min.
Search the Story	20 min.
Snack	10 min.
Play	30 min.
Closing Activity	5 min.
Extra Activity	10 min.
Review and Dismissal	5 min.

This sample lesson devotes the same amount of time to each component as the longer class above, but it reduces the amount of time spent on the play. As the play generally takes ten to fifteen minutes to perform, students will have time to do a quick read through before performing the play. Props and other materials will need to be prepared before class.

As in the first sample lesson, this lesson timing works well with older students who would greatly benefit from performing the play, thereby reinforcing the main ideas of the lesson using different learning styles. In a class of mixed students, the older students could prepare for the play while the younger students participate in the “Snack” activity and the Extra Activity. Younger students could then watch the play at the end of class.

**Lesson time: 1 hour 30 minutes**

Key Verse, Welcome, and Opening Prayer	5 min.
Review	5 min.
Opening Activity	5 min.
Tell the Story	15 min.
Search the Story	20 min.
Play	30 min.
Closing Activity	5 min.
Review and Dismissal	5 min.

In this lesson plan, the Optional Snack and Extra Activity are omitted. This type of lesson plan would be more appropriate for advanced students who would benefit more from the play than from the Snacks or other activities. As above, thirty minutes is devoted to the play. As the play generally takes ten to fifteen minutes to perform, students will have time to do a quick read through before performing play. Props and other materials will need to be prepared before class.

**Lesson time: 1 hour 20 minutes**

Key Verse, Welcome, and Opening Prayer	5 min.
Review	5 min.
Opening Activity	5 min.
Tell the Story	15 min.
Search the Story	20 min.
Snack	10 min.
Closing Activity	5 min.
Extra Activity	10 min.
Review and Dismissal	5 min.

This lesson plan omits the play but includes the Snack and Extra Activity. This type of lesson is more appropriate for the younger students who might have difficulty reading the play, and it would benefit more from the “hands-on” activities that reinforce the main ideas of the lesson.

### Lesson time: one hour

Key Verse, Welcome, and Opening Prayer	5 min.
Review	5 min.
Opening Activity	5 min.
Tell the Story	15 min.
Search the Story	20 min.
Closing Activity	5 min.
Review and Dismissal	5 min.

This lesson plan omits the Play, the Snack, and the Extra Activity, devoting the entirety of the class time to the lesson itself. For younger students, snacks could be provided while they do the Closing Activity.

## Scheduling Models

### Sample One-Year Plan

#### September

Lesson 1 – Finding the Story in Scripture

Lesson 2 – [Early World](#) Part I: God Creates Our First Parents

#### October

Lesson 3 – [Early World](#) Part II: God’s Family Grows

Lesson 4 – [Patriarchs](#) Part I: God Chooses Abraham to Become the Father of Many

Lesson 5 – [Patriarchs](#) Part II: God Blesses Isaac, Jacob and Joseph

Lesson 6 – [Egypt and Exodus](#) Part I: God Delivers the Israelites from Egyptian Slavery

#### November

Lesson 7 – [Egypt and Exodus](#) Part II: God Forms the Israelite Nation

Lesson 8 – [Desert Wanderings](#): The Israelites Follow God in the Desert

Lesson 9 – [Conquest and Judges](#) Part I: The Israelites Enter the Promised Land

#### December

Lesson 10 – [Conquest and Judges](#) Part II: The Judges Lead the Israelite Tribes

Lesson 11 – [Royal Kingdom](#) Part I: The Israelites Ask for a King

## January

Lesson 12 – **Royal Kingdom** Part II: God Builds a House Through David and Solomon

Lesson 13 – **Divided Kingdom** Part I: The Kingdom of Israel Divides: Events of the Northern Kingdom of Israel

Lesson 14 – **Divided Kingdom** Part II: The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah are Conquered: Events of the Southern Kingdom of Judah

Lesson 15 – **Exile**: The Exiles Mourn Over Jerusalem

## February

Lesson 16 – **Return**: The Exiles Return to Jerusalem

Lesson 17 – **Maccabean Revolt**: The Maccabees Defend the Faith

Lesson 18 – **Messianic Fulfillment** Part I: Jesus, Son of God, is Born of Mary

Lesson 19 – **Messianic Fulfillment** Part II: Jesus Teaches About the Kingdom of God

## March

Lesson 20 – **Messianic Fulfillment** Part III: Jesus Establishes the New Covenant

Lesson 21 – The Church Part I: The Holy Spirit Ignites the Church

Lesson 22 – The Church Part II: The Apostles Spread the Gospel

Lesson 23 – Church Part III: All Are Welcome in the Church

## April

Lesson 24 – The Church Part IV: The Kingdom of God Is Eternal

## Other Possible Schedules

The *GPS* program is designed to be flexible and can be taught in multiple scheduling formats such as a semester course, summer program, or VBS summer program. It can also begin in January and extend through the summer months, ending in July or August.

- **12-week semester course:** If the course is meeting on Saturdays or in the evenings, two lessons could be covered in each class. Each class would need to meet for at least 2–3 hours to adequately cover the materials for both lessons. Remember to give the students a short break between lessons. As an alternative, students could meet twice a week with one lesson being covered in each class.
- **12-week summer course:** The GPS program can also be taught over the course of a summer with the number of lessons covered each week adjusted according. For example, a summer course could meet twice a week for 12 weeks, or two lessons could be covered in a single class that meets once a week for 12 weeks. If your program covers two lessons in one class, then 2–3 hours should be allowed to cover the materials thoroughly. Remember to have a break between lessons.



- **3- or 4-week accelerated summer course:** A program could meet several times a week for a 3- to 4- week accelerated summer course. In accelerated courses, such as a VBS format, depending on the schedule of your program, more than one lesson could be completed in a day. However, if your program covers more than one lesson in a day, be sure to schedule breaks in between lessons.

## How to Use the Program with Mixed Grades

There may be instances in which *GPS* is implemented as an extracurricular program in a school or parish setting, or used as family catechesis or in a homeschool program. In these cases, there may be several grade levels studying together. In fact, many programs have reported great success in implementing *GPS* in such a mixed-grade setting.

When offering the program to mixed grades, each student should have their own copy of the Storybook, the Workbook (Beginner, Intermediate, or Advanced), and the *GPS* Plays. In the next section, we will discuss how the program can be implemented with younger, non-reading students.

Students in a mixed-grade setting can do several of the lesson components—such as the Welcome, Key Verse, Opening Prayer, and Storybook—together as a class. However, other components, especially the Workbook exercises, are designed for specific grade levels to help each student access the material based on his or her age and reading ability. For example, the Opening Activity introduces the students to the subject matter of the lesson using age-appropriate activities. For these components, the students may work as individuals, or the class may be divided into three groups (Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced).

In the *GPS* program, a single Storybook is used by all age levels. As the stories are read, the teacher or group leader may stop periodically to ask directed questions to ensure comprehension by all students and to explain the stories further as needed. Students can also be asked to summarize the stories in their own words. The students' responses provide an opportunity for the teacher to clarify any misunderstandings and to answer any questions that the students might have.

The Search the Story exercises, found in the Workbooks, help to reinforce the material learned in the Storybook and to check the students' comprehension. Again, students can work individually or can be divided into groups according to their particular levels. The teacher can walk around the class to assist any students that might be having difficulty. Answers can be found in the Teacher's Guide.

The Snack, Extra Activity, and Play are great opportunities to differentiate the students in a mixed-grade setting. For example, older students could practice the play, while younger students participate in the Snack activity and Extra Activity. Once the older students are finished, they can perform the play for the younger students who will make a great audience. Used in this manner, the Plays, by utilizing different learning styles, reinforce the lesson for both older and younger students alike.

The *GPS* program is ideal for home catechesis and homeschool programs either as a part of the curriculum or as an extracurricular program. Whether your child studies the program alone, with brothers and sisters, or as part of a larger homeschooling group, the components are the same. The Plays can also be highly beneficial in these settings with students (and parents) taking multiple parts. Even reading the Plays alone by an individual student can be highly beneficial as it reinforces learning.

Implemented correctly, a mixed-grade program can be an enjoyable learning experience for all students in your parish, school, homeschool, or home catechesis program.

## **How to Use the Program with Younger Students**

At the Beginner level, it is common to have students in class who are not yet able to read or who are just learning to read. In these cases, it is important to adapt your teaching methods in a way that makes the assigned Bible readings and the Storybook accessible for them. Many of these audio/visual/kinesthetic methods come naturally to parents and teachers who are accustomed to working with younger students.

### **Scripture Readings**

Children of all ages listen to the Scripture readings proclaimed at Mass. The designers of the *GPS* program believe it is essential for students of all grade levels to hear the actual words of Sacred Scripture. For nonreaders or students who are just learning to read, parents or teachers can read the Scripture to them and explain the readings in a way that they can understand. Children should be encouraged to retell or summarize the story in their own words. A few directed questions can be asked to determine comprehension and give the opportunity for further clarification.

### **The Storybook**

The Storybook is the central component of the program. It is designed to tell the story of salvation in an easy-to-understand, engaging way that complements and reinforces the assigned Scripture passages for each lesson. The Storybook helps students learn the major events of the Bible in twenty-four lessons.

A single Storybook is used at the Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced levels. Students who can read the Storybook should have their own copy. In the case of nonreaders or students who are just beginning to read, parents and teachers should have a copy so that they can read and discuss the Bible stories with them.

As with the Scripture readings, teachers can read, explain, and discuss the Storybook lessons in an age-appropriate manner. While doing so, they can invite the students to look at the illustrations in the Storybook, which help to reinforce their understanding of the lesson. It is helpful to ask the students to retell or summarize the story in their own words. A few simple directed questions can help to gauge comprehension of the material and offers an opportunity for further clarification.

## The Beginner Workbook and Classroom Activities

The Workbook exercises and activities help to reinforce the Bible stories that the children have just learned, aid in the students' comprehension of the lesson, and show how the stories of salvation history are relevant to their daily lives. While most of the Beginner Workbook exercises are intuitive, the teacher should carefully explain the exercises and then walk around the class to ensure that the students understand the exercises and are doing them correctly. One technique is to ask the students to explain the choices they make in the activities. For example, if they draw a line from Noah and the Ark to the rainbow, they could explain that the rainbow is a sign that God promised not to flood the entire world again, or that it is a sign of the covenant that God made with Noah.

The activities in the Teacher's Guide have been carefully designed to address different visual, audio, and kinesthetic learning styles in a fun and engaging manner. These are especially important for nonreaders who learn from the teacher's reading of the material, age-appropriate explanations of the stories, the illustrations found in the Storybook and Workbook, a variety of fun activities, and games. By adapting the program to nonreaders, your younger students can easily understand the basic stories of the Bible.

## 15 Tips for a Successful Program

1. **Pray.** *GPS* is not primarily an academic course; it is a prayerful experience in which students encounter God in Sacred Scripture and learn the story of God's plan of salvation and how it applies to their daily lives. Prepare yourself for class with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you. Always begin and end your class with prayer.
2. **Create an inviting environment.** Your demeanor, attitude, tone of voice, and body language should be welcoming, positive, and respectful. It should be obvious to the students that you are happy to be there, that you are happy they are there, and that each one of them is respected and appreciated.
3. **Attendance.** To benefit fully from the *GPS* program, it is essential that students be present for every lesson. Attendance should be taken at the beginning of class, and the teacher should follow

up with any students who are habitually absent. Since the lessons build on one another, the teacher should speak to students who missed class about making up that particular lesson.

4. **Communication.** Periodically, even weekly, teachers may send updates to the parents about what their children are learning. These can be done by take-home materials or by email. Let the parents know what Bible readings are on the checklist for the next week so that they can go over the readings with their children, especially the younger children. Individual emails or phone calls would be appropriate for particular words of praise or encouragement, or to share any concerns.
5. **Accessibility.** The Bible may seem daunting for some young students. Focus on the exciting stories of the people, places, and events of Scripture and utilize the many tools offered in the program such as the color-coded *Bible Timeline*, the illustrations, the exercises, the activities, the Plays, etc. Help the students to understand that the Bible is the story of God’s love for his people.
6. **Excitement.** When reading from the Bible or the Storybook, you should have emphasis and passion in your voice rather than speaking in a monotone. If you are excited and highly engaged in the material, then your enthusiasm will become contagious, and the students will become enthusiastic as well.
7. **Yes/No Questions.** Fast-paced yes/no questions can be useful in getting students engaged, especially at the beginning of the class. Rather than asking these questions to one student at a time or having the students shout out the answer, give the students flash cards that they can hold up at the same time or have them indicate “thumbs up” or “thumbs down.”
8. **Think/Pair/Share.** Students write down their answers and then share and discuss with a partner. Some answers can be shared with the class. Students can also work with a partner and discuss their answers together.
9. **Questions.** Students should be encouraged to ask questions, and teachers should take each of their questions seriously. However, it is important to keep questions or other discussions on topic. Questions that consume too much class time, are off topic, or are personal in nature should be handled after class. If students are hesitant to ask questions, then one helpful technique would be to ask each student to write a question about the lesson on a piece of paper. The questions should not be yes/no or one-word-answer questions. A few students could be called on randomly to read their questions to the class.
10. **Difficult questions.** As you are preparing the lesson, it is good to foresee and prepare for difficult questions. For example, students may wonder why God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, or how all of the animals in the world could fit on Noah’s Ark. These are reasonable questions that deserve succinct, honest, and age-appropriate answers. If you don’t know the answer to a particular question, do not be afraid to say, “I don’t know. I’ll look into that and get back with you next class.” Be sure to follow up.

11. **Open-ended or discussion questions.** Open-ended or discussion questions are an excellent way to check students' understanding of the lesson and how it applies to their lives. Care should be taken that all students are called on randomly and that discussions are not dominated by the more talkative students.
12. **Reviews.** It is important to summarize the main points of the lesson at the end of class and to review the last lesson at the beginning of each class. These reviews reinforce learning and help students retain what they learned.
13. **Check their progress.** Teachers should walk around the classroom as the students are completing their Workbook exercises in order to assist anyone who might be struggling. Additionally, teachers should review all work that is turned in to ascertain if the students are fully completing and comprehending the work.
14. **Relevance.** Always strive to show how the lessons are relevant to the lives of the students. For example, the stories of great biblical characters (good and bad) can be an example of how the students should trust in God from a young age, have courage in the face of evil, and know that God loves us.
15. **Address different learning styles.** Every student learns in a different way. The Storybook, Workbook, and Plays address these different learning styles and should be implemented so that all students can receive the maximum benefit of the program.

## **Adapting the Program for Remote Learning**

As this program is being released in 2020, many parish and school religious education programs are being offered remotely. Fortunately, *GPS* can be easily adapted for the remote learning environment. By implementing a few simple practices, your remote classes can become a fun and engaging experience for all involved. Here are some ideas:

- There are many benefits to going through the program as a class in a teacher-led setting. Therefore, instead of asking students to do the lessons on their own, classes can meet as regularly scheduled via Zoom, Skype, Google Meet, GoToMeeting, or other online meeting platforms. Leaders will need to ensure that each participant has the necessary course components and send out meeting invites.
- Although the lessons are online, the *GPS* program should still be a prayerful experience for all involved. Remember to pray together at the beginning and end of the lesson.
- To avoid background noise, participants should have their audio muted when they are not speaking.

- Engage students by asking yes/no questions or multiple choice questions that the students answer simultaneously by indicating thumbs-up/thumbs-down or by using yes/no or A/B/C/D flashcards.
- Calling on students randomly to summarize topics, answer open-ended questions, or to discuss material helps keep the students engaged and on task.
- It is important to check the students' progress. Students can send in photos of their completed workbook exercises or send their answers via email. Follow ups would be appropriate with students who aren't completing their work or who are doing it incorrectly.
- Play some soft background music when the students are working individually in their workbooks. Have the students take turns in giving the answers to the workbook questions.
- The Plays can still be implemented in a remote lesson. Students could be assigned parts the previous week so that they can practice on their own. Rather than reading from their chairs, students could stand in front of their cameras and act out their assigned parts of the play. Remind the students to use emphasis in their reading. Remember to have fun!
- Activities can still be effectively implemented online, although a little ingenuity may be required. For example, teachers can inform the parents about what items are needed for the snack. Students can then have the snack while the teacher explains the significance to the lesson.
- Always strive to make the lessons prayerful, fun, engaging, and fruitful.