



# THE GO! GUIDE

Making the Most of Your GO! Experience



## Congratulations!

If you're reading this, it means you're a part of the GO! team. It also means you're in store for a God-filled, fun-soaked adventure that will both *inform* and *transform* the kids in your ministry. High five! The following guide is intended to help you understand and make the most of your GO! experience.

Before you dive into the "nitty-gritty" of the curriculum, it's worth understanding the gears of spiritual formation that churn in the background of every GO! lesson. Simply put, each GO! lesson is designed to be an interactive experience that transforms kid's minds, hearts and hands. For this reason, the GO! lessons strive to help kids know God and His Word (*the mind*), love God completely (*the heart*), and serve God in their daily lives (*the hands*).

As you become more familiar with the GO! lessons, you'll probably notice that every section of the lesson is designed to help kids engage with God through their minds, hearts or hands. Some sections are designed to help kids learn about God and His Word. Some sections are designed to help kids experience, reflect on and respond to the love and grace of their Savior. And some sections are designed to equip kids to apply their faith in the real world. A well-rounded approach to children's spiritual formation should have elements of each of these. One of the wonderful things about the GO! curriculum is that it can so easily be adapted to fit the needs and time restraints of your ministry. As you make additions or subtractions, though, be sure to keep in mind the balanced approach that's inherent in the lessons and important in the spiritual development of the kids in your ministry.

## The GO! Scope and Sequence

In case you're not familiar with the term, a scope and sequence refers to the scope of the material being taught and the sequence in which it's being covered. It's just a fancy pants way of saying, "Here's what we're going to learn and here's the order in which we're going to learn it." Each year of the scope and sequence begins in August and takes kids on a chronological journey through the entire Bible. This helps kids understand not only the different stories told in the Bible, but how those stories fit together to form the meta-narrative of Scripture. In the GO! curriculum, that meta-narrative is referred to as the "Big Bible Story."

The GO! scope and sequence is designed to fit within the traditional Christian calendar. From August through November, kids will explore the stories of the Old Testament. During the month of December, they'll hear stories surrounding the Good News of Jesus' birth. From January to Easter, they'll discover the life and ministry of Jesus. During the Easter season, they'll learn about the death and resurrection of Jesus. From Easter through May, kids will travel from the early church to the return of Jesus. And finally, for the months of June and July, we step out of the meta-narrative for a short time to cover the epistles, poetic books and other areas of scripture not covered in our telling of the Big Bible Story.



## The “Big Bible Story” Timeline (Elementary only)

As a way of helping elementary-aged kids understand and remember how the individual stories of the Bible fit into the bigger story of God’s love and redemption, GO! provides you with the pieces to create a Bible timeline in your ministry space. Each lesson comes with a beautifully illustrated “Bible Character” sign that can be printed and displayed for the kids to see. Throughout the year, as the Big Bible Story unfolds, add the new character cards to the evolving timeline. Consider using a long bulletin board strip (aka. corkboard rail) or something similar to attach the character cards to the wall. As the timeline grows, kids will get a better understanding of how God’s story has unfolded throughout human history. (Note: some Bible characters are covered over the course of multiple weeks, but you need only to add those characters to the timeline once.)

## Customization

Who’s the boss? You’re the boss! (Don’t tell your boss I said that.) God has called *you* to serve the kids in your ministry and nobody knows your ministry better than you. It’s our goal to provide you with the best possible resources to make the biggest possible impact in your ministry, but if you make a change, we won’t be offended! In fact, we want to help you. Not only are the GO! lesson documents offered in a customizable format, the lessons are created to be modular so that you can take out, change or rearrange components however you see fit. Don’t have time for all of the small group activities? No worries! Take some out. Want to use a small group activity during the large group lesson? Cool! Copy, cut, and paste away! Want to incorporate a robot unicorn that shoots rainbows and sprinkles out of its nose? Ummmm...again, you know your kids better than we do, so we’ll leave that one to you!

Wouldn’t it be great if every church agreed on every tenant of faith? Yup! But they don’t. Sometimes the GO! Scope and Sequence dives into waters that are the source of theological differences between churches. Examples of this might include baptism, the Lord’s Supper, or the end times. When this happens, the GO! lessons are designed to be specific enough that kids have a good Biblical understanding of the issue, but broad enough that your church can incorporate their own beliefs and doctrine into the lesson. Because the lessons are customizable, you always have full control over how you tackle these issues.

## The Big Idea

“Hey, what’s the big idea?!” It’s a question we’ve all heard before. Normally it comes right before a good scolding. But not anymore! In the GO! curriculum, the Big Idea is the nucleus of the lesson. It’s the central thought out of which the entire lesson is created. You can always find the Big Idea of a lesson front and center on the title page.



In elementary, there are usually two parts to every Big Idea. The first and most important part is the “God truth.” This part of the Big Idea is born out of the Bible story and points us to one of the many Biblical truths about God such as “God is faithful” or “God is all-powerful.” The second part of the Big Idea is the “us intersection.” This part of the Big Idea helps us consider how the “God truth” should impact our lives. When put together, the Big Idea tells us who God is and how we can respond to Him.

In preschool, the Big Idea is simplified to be more age-appropriate. Although the lesson contains personal application, the Big Idea is made up of only the “God truth.” For example, “God always keeps His promises.”

## Leader Preparation and Training

We know how important leader training is. It’s one thing to find volunteers who are willing to give their time and energy, but, it’s another to give them the tools and training they need to succeed. When leaders get the training they need, not only are they more effective in their role, but they feel more valued and find the whole experience more rewarding. Training is one of the best ways to retain your volunteers. With that in mind, the GO! lessons provide leaders with two important tools to help them prepare for the coming lesson and to equip them for their role.

The first tool is the “Leader Devotional” which is intended to give further insight into the Bible story and to help your leaders prepare their hearts and minds for the coming lesson. The “Leader Devotional” changes with every lesson and is the same for both the Large Group and Small Group leaders. The second tool is called “Skill Building” and is intended to help your leaders develop the critical skills needed for their role in your ministry. The skills tackled in the “Skill Building” section change with each unit and are different for the large group and small group leaders.

One of the things you can do to help enhance the value of these tools is to talk about it with your leaders on a regular basis. Ask your leaders if the “Leader Devotional” prompted any thoughts or responses. Ask them how they might go about implementing a new skill from the “Skill Building” section. The more attention you give it, the more value your leaders will place on it.

## Set Up to Succeed

Having your lesson materials organized and preparing your ministry space ahead of time is one of the keys to implementing a successful lesson. When you’re organized, it sets your leaders up for success. It also communicates to your leaders and your kids that you care and that what you’re about to do is important. To help you achieve this end, GO! provides you with “Set-Up Instructions” in the Large Group lesson as well as a separate “Supply List” document for both Large and Small Group materials.



The “Supply List” is a quick guide to all of the materials needed for the lesson. It includes amounts needed as well as notes on how the materials will be used or how they can be modified to possibly fit your needs better.

The GO! team realizes that lesson materials can sometimes be costly and time consuming to gather and organize. With that in mind, we intentionally choose materials that many children’s ministries might already have on hand, might easily have access to, or can be purchased at a reasonable cost. Every ministry is different, though. So, if you see a way to modify the materials to better suit your ministry, feel free to make an adjustment. Because the documents are customizable, you can even make the change right there in the “Supply List.”

The “Set-Up Instructions” give you directions and tips for how to prepare your room for the coming Large Group lesson. Children’s ministry spaces vary greatly, so use your discretion in setting up your room. In the event that a Small Group lesson would require advanced set up, the set-up instructions are included at the top of that particular small group activity.

## Connect and Playtime Activities

The first part of the GO! lesson for elementary kids is the “Small Group Connect.” For preschoolers, it’s called “Playtime Activity.” These can be found in the Small Group lesson. This part of the lesson primarily serves two purposes.

First, it gives the leaders and kids an opportunity to connect with one another. Like most people, kids crave community. They want so deeply to know and be known by others. In fact, healthy, God-centered relationships attract kids to church the most. This time helps foster those relationships and keeps kids coming back week after week.

Secondly, the “Small Group Connect” and “Playtime Activity” encourage kids to begin thinking and talking about the lesson to come. It’s a fun and interactive way to peak their curiosity and help them wrestle with the topic or story.

## Large Group Storytelling

Now that your kids have begun connecting with each other and diving into the topic or story, it’s time for the Large Group lesson. The Large Group lessons place a heavy emphasis on active learning, so there will be few times during the story that kids will just be listening passively. By involving them in the story and the lesson, kids will not only be more engaged, they’ll have a much easier time retaining what they learn for a long time to come.



As you can imagine, there will be numerous times throughout the lessons that Scripture is quoted. Yay!! When quoting Scripture, the GO! curriculum primarily uses the NlrV translation of the Bible. The NlrV has the translational accuracy of the NIV version, but it's written at a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading level. In other words, it's scripturally accurate, but translated with kids in mind. If your church or ministry prefers a different translation, simply edit the scripture references in the lesson. We also provide blank media slides so that you can create your own slide with your preferred translation. You can find the blank slide with the other media in the Resource Folder. If you want to use the same font as the rest of the graphics, just look at the file name of the blank slide. It includes the name of the font. Most of the fonts can be downloaded for free from the internet.

At various points throughout the Large Group lesson, there are often graphics, videos, music and sound effects used to enhance and further the lesson. The Large Group lessons indicate what kind of media to play and when to play it. Unless stated otherwise in the Supply List, most of the media is provided in the downloadable Resource Folder that's included with each lesson. Prepare the media ahead of time by placing it in a media presentation software like Media Shout, ProPresenter, or PowerPoint. The Large Group Leader can either control the media remotely while teaching or (better yet) you can recruit a volunteer to work the media for them. In fact, this is a perfect opportunity for a young volunteer to get involved! If your ministry space has limited technical capabilities, something as simple as a laptop can help you display important media. If all else fails, we're totally cool with you printing out the graphics for use during the lesson.

Often times kids just don't get enough credit. If you give them the space, they can be tremendously deep thinkers. For elementary-aged kids, at the end of The Big Bible Story, the Large Group lesson includes a series of questions for you to ask your kids. Some of the questions are the same from week to week (such as "What does this story teach you about God?"), and some are different. Before you begin to unpack the story for the kids, use the story questions to help the kids unpack it for themselves. In fact, on some weeks you might find that their responses are so deep and profound you might want to blow-up the rest of the lesson. In other words, be ready to let go of the plan and let the kids guide where the lesson goes.

## Response Stations

Teaching kids Biblical truths and helping them to apply those truths to their lives is an incredibly important part of being a minister to children, but there's more. Teaching and applying involves the mind and the hands, but we have to involve their hearts as well. If we want for kids to develop an ongoing personal relationship with their Savior, we have to encourage them and provide them with opportunities to reflect on and respond to God.

### FOR ELEMENTARY

For elementary-aged kids, the Response Stations are designed to do just that. The Response Stations take place at the end of the Large Group lesson. Close the story time by praying in whatever way the



Holy Spirit prompts you. Following the prayer, explain to the kids which of the Response Stations will be available. Remind the kids that this is a time for them to talk to God, not their friends. Ask them to move about the stations very quietly so they don't disturb other people.

It's important that kids have the freedom to respond to God in whatever way the Holy Spirit leads them, but sometimes kids also benefit from a little bit of direction. The Response Stations regularly include prompts that correspond with the day's lesson and give the kids suggested ways to pray, write, or draw. Consider using dry erase boards at the stations with prompts so that you can write down the prompt for kids to see. Prompts are regularly provided for the Prayer, Journal, Bible Reading, and Art Stations, but you're free to include any station of your choice. Before releasing the kids to reflect and respond to God, give each one of them a copy of the GO! Home Guide (a.k.a parent take home sheet) that's included in the Resource Folder. They'll take this guide with them to the different stations and use it to record their thoughts, prayers, and drawings. More information is included about the GO! Home Guide later on.

The Response Stations are an amazing experience for the kids, but it's also a time where the leaders in your room can shine! Consider placing leaders at some of the different stations to quietly help the kids. At the Prayer and Journal Stations, leaders can be available to pray for and with the kids. Leaders can also assist kids at the Bible Station by helping them find the selected passage and for younger readers, by quietly reading the passage to them.

The following is a list of possible stations, but it's by no means comprehensive. Be creative! If you think of another station that helps bring kids into a relationship with God—go for it!

**Prayer Station:** This station provides an opportunity for kids to respond to God through prayer. Encourage the kids to pray in whatever way they feel led. If they need more direction, though, point them to the Prayer Station prompt. Provide pens or markers at the station for kids to write with on their GO! Home Guide. Make a leader available at this station to pray for and with kids and to assist younger kids with writing. It's also good to remind younger kids that it's okay if they don't know how to spell something, God knows what they're trying to write.

**Journal Station:** At this station, kids will have an opportunity to record their thoughts or write a letter to God. As with the Prayer Station, provide markers or pens at the Journal Station for the kids. It might be helpful to provide a flat, hard surface to write on such as a table or clip board. For kids who don't know what to write, a Journal Station prompt that corresponds with the day's lesson will be provided.

**Bible Reading Station:** It's important for kids to physically interact with the Bible. The more opportunities they have to touch and read straight from the Bible, the more comfortable they'll be using it outside of church for years to come. The Bible Station gives them this opportunity. For the kids who didn't bring their own Bible, provide a handful of Bibles here for them to use. You may want to include bean bags, pod chairs, or other comfortable seating as well as a lamp for reading. Also include markers or pens for the kids to record their thoughts about the scripture they read. Kids should be able to



explore any part of Scripture they would like, but the Bible Reading prompt will direct them toward the story or passage that was covered during the lesson. If your kids struggle to find the designated story in the Bible, as a part of the prompt you may want to include the page number where the story is found in the Bibles you provide.

**Art Station:** God is a creative God! So, it only makes sense that He would be delighted when we use the creativity He gave us to glorify Him. That’s what the Art Station is all about. This station is where kids can use their creative abilities to respond to God. Provide the kids at this station with various artistic mediums such as markers, crayons, colored pencils, and watercolor paints. As with all of the stations, kids can respond to God by creating whatever is in their heart, but they can use the Art Station prompt for ideas if they need.

**Music Station:** This station gives kids an opportunity to move deeper into a musical worship experience. Choose a quiet, slower-tempo worship song to play. The song can be played either on a small music player or if you have a worship leader who can play acoustic guitar, play the song live. If the kids might be unfamiliar with the song, print the lyrics out ahead of time and provide them to the kids. Before playing the song, have the leader share what the song is about. Afterwards, ask the kids at the Music Station what the song means to them.

**Poetry and Song Writing Station:** This is a chance for kids to use and develop some of their creative writing skills for God’s glory. Create a space for kids to sit quietly and write a poem or song to God. Allow them to quietly share their poem or song with each other or a leader. If any of your young song writers show promise, you may even want to connect them with a worship leader who can help put their lyrics to music.

**Giving Station:** If your ministry encourages kids to tithe, you may want to include this as one of your stations. Decorate a shoe box, jar, or other receptacle and place it at the giving station. Encourage kids to discreetly and quietly place their offering in the container.

**Question Station:** Kids are filled with incredible questions. Sometimes they just need permission and an opportunity to ask them. The Question Station gives kids a place to ask a leader questions about God, the Bible, or just about anything else on their mind. Depending on the questions that are being asked, this station might also provide a great opportunity for the leader to pray with and for the kids who are seeking answers and wisdom.

**Salvation Station:** The most important decision a kid could make is to give their life to Christ and become one of His followers. The Salvation Station can be a place for kids to ask questions about that decision and to surrender their lives to God. Periodically throughout the year, the GO! scope and sequence includes “Salvation Lessons” that walk kids through the “ABC’s” of salvation. During those lessons, we encourage you to include a Salvation Station to pray with kids, to help them process their decision, and to celebrate their commitment.



## FOR PRESCHOOL

For preschool kids, the “Response to God” activity is designed to help kids reflect and respond to God. The “Response to God” activity can be found toward the end of the Small Group lesson. During the “Response to God” activity, preschool kids are encouraged to draw a prayer picture on the GO! Home Guide (a.k.a parent take home sheet). The prayer picture corresponds with the lesson. It provides an opportunity for small group discussion as well as a prayer prompt for the kids.

## Small Group Activities

During the Small Group Activity time, kids have a chance to go deeper into the lesson and apply it by engaging with each other through activities and conversation.

For elementary-aged kids, every small group lesson is comprised of three activity options. Each small group activity is designed to achieve a different purpose. The Application Activity is designed to help kids process what they’ve learned during the lesson and to apply it to their lives. The Bible Memorization Activity is a fun and interactive way to help kids commit that day’s key verse to memory. More than that, this activity helps kids think through what the verse means in practical terms and how they can live it out. Lastly, the Group Prayer Activity gives small groups suggestions on how they can support and celebrate each other through prayer. You may have noticed that once again, all 3 activities support the GO! gears of spiritual formation. The Application Activity puts *hands* to the lesson, the Bible Memorization Activity involves the *mind*, and the Group Prayer Activity engages the *heart*.

For preschool kids, the small group lesson consists of six activity options. There are two Application Activities, a Bible Memorization Activity, a Bible Story Review Activity, a Prayer Activity, and a Coloring Sheet/Snack Time activity.

Your church or ministry might not have time to do all of the activities provided. If that’s the case, choose the activities that best support the values and goals of your ministry.

## GO! Home Guide

If you’ve ever handed out “parent take-home” papers at the door, you may have wondered just how many parents actually read them. Often times the answer is: not enough! So, what gives? Do the parents just not care? Are they not interested in their child’s spiritual development? Of course they are! Maybe the problem isn’t with the parents; maybe, it’s with the materials being handed out.

As any parent of a school-aged child can tell you, parents are bombarded with information from church, school, sports teams, and just about anything else a kid might be involved in. It’s easy for parents to get overwhelmed by all of the information coming home, but there’s one thing just about any parent would



pause to look at. When parents are given something created by their own child, something that gives them a window into their child's heart, mind and soul, they'll stop everything and pay attention. The GO! Home Guide was created with this in mind; it seeks to give parents more insight into their child.

Every GO! Home Guide includes the core information from the lesson such as the Big Idea, Bible Basis, and Memory Verse. This helps parents stay informed about what their child learned that day at church. More importantly, though, the GO! Home Guide has ample space for kids to create.

Elementary-aged kids will receive the GO! Home Guide when they participate in the Response Stations. They'll use the GO! Home Guide to share their thoughts, prayers, and drawings. At the end of the service, they'll take the guide home with them and give it to their parents. Now, instead of parents just seeing, "Today at church your child learned...", they'll also be seeing the profoundly beautiful outpouring of their child's heart, mind and soul. You can probably imagine how this might pique a parent's attention. More than that, it'll be the source of some amazing conversations between parent and child/ren!

Preschool kids will receive the GO! Home Guide as part of a prayer activity during their Small Group time. Kids will be asked to draw a picture on the GO! Home Guide. It might be a praise picture to Jesus, or a picture of their favorite part of creation, or a picture of something that they're sorry for doing. Whatever the picture is, it serves as a prayer prompt to help kids connect with God through prayer.

## Social Media Support

Every week, the GO! Facebook page posts a preview of the coming lesson that you can share with the parents of your church on your own Facebook page. We also provide regular training articles that help KidMin leaders, like yourself, do their job even better. If you want to share our posts with your parents, follow these steps so you don't miss any updates. Go to the [GO! Curriculum Facebook page](#), click the "Follow" button, then choose "See first." By doing this, the GO! posts will show up at the top of your newsfeed.

And if you're looking to connect with other GO! users, you can join our Facebook group called "[GO! Curriculum Idea Swap](#)." It's a forum where GO! users share ideas, suggestions, questions, and resources with each other!