



A Guide to Hybrid Sunday School

Tips and Ideas for Engaging
Elementary Children
and Their Families

(Early Elementary, Middle Elementary, PreTeen)





INTRODUCTION

Children's ministry has never changed at a faster pace than it is changing right now. But what hasn't changed—and will never change—is our goal to bring God's Word to children and families.

This guide is designed to help you use the curriculum you know and trust as your children's ministry adjusts to another new normal. We've provided tips and ideas to help you adapt the lessons for teaching and engaging with families—whether you're meeting online, meeting in person, sending lessons home, or taking a hybrid approach.

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TEACHING—A HYBRID APPROACH

When we use the term “hybrid teaching,” we’re referring to combining virtual tools—tools that enable you to communicate and interact online with students and families—with physical options.

Check out this article on [teaching virtually](#). You’ll find technical suggestions as well as tips to keep your kids engaged online!

Even when your ministry is ready to return to your church building, some of your families won’t feel comfortable coming back right away. Consider offering—or continuing to offer—an at-home Sunday school option. Providing lessons and resources for children at home is a great way to invest in and connect with the families you serve!

We’re also creating bonus curriculum content (coming soon) that is free to you as a current customer. It will be full of resources to help you engage the children and families you serve.

Prepare to Teach

EXPLORE HEARTSHAPER

HeartShaper’s teaching resources are available in print and are also included in the Digital Convenience Kit files. We encourage you to explore *all* the files—especially if you don’t typically order all these resources—and see what works best for your ministry.

HeartShaper Elementary Resources at a Glance

Early Elementary

- *Early Elementary Teacher Guide*
- *Early Elementary Resources* (Bible story and application visuals, Bible Memory posters, audio tracks, printable files)
- *Early Elementary Teaching Pictures*
- *Early Elementary Activities* pages
- *Weekly Bible Reader* student magazine

Middle Elementary

- *Middle Elementary Teacher Guide*
- *Middle Elementary Resources* (Bible Memory and unit posters, Bible time lines, maps, application visuals, audio tracks, printable files)
- *Middle Elementary Activities* leaflets
- *Kidz Chat* student magazine



PreTeen

- *PreTeen Teacher Guide*
- *PreTeen Resources* (posters and application visuals, audio tracks, printable files)
- *PreTeen Activities* leaflets
- *Live Wire* student magazine

FOR EACH QUARTER

- Decide which portions of a lesson will work best for teaching in your current reality. We've provided suggestions below. Remember that activities that call for pairs or groups of kids will be more difficult to use online.
- Set a time limit for each lesson. Include time for socializing before and after the lesson.
- Organize the digital files you will be using.
- Decide how you will get activity packs to families (physical pickup/drop-off, download links, or both).
- Let families know how to access the lessons and the activity packs.



Don't forget to read the special-needs tips and helps provided in the teacher guide and *Resources* printable files. Plan activities that include and work for all children.

FOR EACH LESSON

- Prepare your heart with prayer and the teacher devotion in the lesson.
- Familiarize yourself with the lesson focus, Scripture passage, and Bible Memory.
- Read the Bible background information.
- Prepare and organize your materials and digital files so you can access them easily while you teach.
- Consider creating a PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation for the lesson. You might get ideas from the sample PowerPoint presentation and guidelines in our bonus curriculum content (coming soon)!
- Practice leading the Bible Exploration with props and visuals so you are comfortable presenting them on-screen. Ask students to gather some of the props to share at appropriate times during the lesson.
- Determine which materials you will provide to the kids for use during the lesson.
- Let kids and parents know ahead of time if there are additional materials they will need (Bibles, pencils, etc.).



Teach the Lesson

BEFORE THE LESSON STARTS

- Begin streaming your lesson 5 to 10 minutes before the scheduled start time so kids can join in.
- If you know who is online, greet them by name.
- Show a countdown video or use PowerPoint or Google Slides to display a welcome message.
- Show a list of items that kids will need for the lesson. Remember that less might be more during this time!
- Choose a fun icebreaker video to share on-screen and capture kids' attention. We've provided dozens of icebreaker videos in our bonus curriculum content (coming soon)!

DURING THE LESSON

Focus In

Introduce kids to the lesson theme and focus. You might want to keep this part of your virtual lesson shorter so there's plenty of time for the Bible lesson and application.

- Do one of the suggested activities, adapting it as needed to engage kids online.
- Encourage parents and siblings to participate or give help as needed. Families together at home can act as the "small groups" suggested in some activities in the teacher guide.
- If an activity refers to a poster or printable file, be ready to hold it up or share it on-screen. You can find digital copies of these pieces in the *Resources* printable files.
- Ask questions and suggest fun ways for kids to answer (stand/sit, thumbs-up/thumbs-down, move to the left/right).

Explore His Word

Early Elementary kids explore Bible stories. Use the *Resources* visuals (digital or printed) and suggested props to make the Bible stories come alive for kids.

Middle Elementary kids explore the Bible chronologically. Students will need their Bibles and any printed materials you have sent to them before class.

Preteens learn how to apply God's Word to daily life situations. They will need their Bibles and any materials you have sent to them before class.



Bible Exploration

- Ask kids to find the Bible story/lesson passage in their Bibles. For HeartShaper's Middle Elementary and PreTeen, Scripture pages are included in the *Resources* printable files. If you are hosting a live session, share the Scripture pages on-screen and invite kids to volunteer to read verses aloud when appropriate.
- Ask questions that encourage kids to think about the Scriptures. Let them share their reactions to what took place in the Bible story or event.
- Show the student activity page or leaflet for the lesson and lead kids through the Bible activity. (Or challenge them to complete the activity during the week.)
- Additional activities can be found in the *Resources* printable files. The Optional Bible Skill Builders help students learn how to find Bible passages and understand how Bible books are organized. Do these activities if you have time, or suggest that kids do them with their parents later.

Bible Memory

- Show the *Resources* unit Bible Memory poster (physical or digital).
- Encourage kids to find and read the verse(s) in their Bibles.
- Do an activity to help them learn the verse.
- For some great ideas, check out this post on [MinistrySpark.com](https://ministryspark.com/13-creative-bible-verse-memory-games-and-activities-for-kids/): "[13 Creative Bible Verse Memory Games and Activities for Kids](https://ministryspark.com/13-creative-bible-verse-memory-games-and-activities-for-kids/)."

Make It Real

Do one of the suggested activities to help kids understand how the Scripture applies to their lives.

- Continue to reinforce the lesson focus. You'll find the focus statement at the top of the page in each section of the lesson in the teacher guide.
- If object lessons are suggested in the teacher guide, they can be a good choice for this step. Be sure to practice them beforehand. You could also send the instructions to students beforehand and ask them to practice and present the object talks during your session.
- Play the audio tracks and discussion starters as suggested in the teacher guide. These can be found in the *Resources* digital files.
- Skit scripts can be found in the *Resources* printable files. Use these if your students (or you) like to act and want to practice a skit to present online during the lesson.
- For Early Elementary, use the *Resources* visuals or show the teaching picture that goes with the lesson. You can either hold up the printed version or share your screen to show the digital file.



- For PreTeen, consider using the *Activities* leaflets conversation starters on pages 2–3. Use one or two of the examples given, and then ask kids to share similar situations from their lives. (They don’t have to mention real names.)

Live It Out

This part of the lesson helps kids begin to practice the principles they’ve learned from the Bible. It may involve doing a craft, planning a project, or participating in a prayer activity.

- Show any prepared craft sample or explain a suggested project.
- If you don’t have time to do a suggested project during your online session, show or describe the project and challenge the kids to do it during the week. Send instructions to their parents through a text or e-mail. At the start of your next session, ask kids to share what they’ve done. Or have parents send you videos or photos that show what their kids have done; share these on-screen at the start of your next session.
- Make prayer an important part of your time together—not just a quick add-on. Encourage kids to share prayer needs. (They don’t have to give names.) Your teacher guide includes great prayer activities you can use.

Closing the Session

- Remind kids and their parents of any resources you have provided to help them continue the Bible learning at home (*Activities* pages or leaflets, take-home student magazines, project materials).
- Tell the kids when you will contact or see them again. (Example: “Ask your parents to check their e-mails. I’m going to send something special to you before next week.”) Be sure to follow up on this!



EQUIPPING FAMILIES

Help Families Prepare for Virtual Ministry

If you're teaching virtually using Zoom, Facebook Live, prerecorded videos, etc., be sure to let parents know what to expect and what you need from them.

- Where and when can they access the lessons?
- Do they need to be with their children during the lesson?
- How can they keep their child engaged spiritually even if they miss a week?

Create Activity Packs

Activity packs are bundles of resources for students and families that encourage them to interact with the lesson. You could send these packs home or provide them to kids attending a family worship service.

Here are some resources you might include in the packs:

- A personal note to the student
- Ministry announcements
- Student activity pages or leaflets
- Scripture pages and Optional Bible Skill Builders (in the *Resources* printable files)
- Student take-home magazine
- Activities that correlate to the lesson—coloring pages, crafts, puzzles, etc.—like those in our Big Book series:
 - [Big Book of Bible Story Coloring Pages \(Elementary\)](#)
 - [Big Book of Bible Story Coloring Activities \(Elementary\)](#)
 - [Big Book of Bible Puzzles \(Preteen\)](#)

Decide when and how you will provide the activity packs to families.

- Once per quarter? Once a month? Every week?
- Will they be physical or a digital download?
- Will families need to pick them up from the church?
- Can volunteers deliver them in person?
- Are you able to mail them to families?

These answers will be specific to the needs of your ministry and are likely to change as the needs of your ministry change.



Engage Families at Home

- Encourage families to find and use a children's Bible that will help their child grow in understanding God's Word. Here are some children's Bibles we recommend:
 - [God's Story for Me Bible](#)
 - [The Beginner's Bible](#)
 - [The Action Bible](#)
 - *The Adventure Bible* (NIV) [Hardcover](#) or [Paperback](#)
 - *The Hands-On Bible* (NLT) [Hardcover](#) or [Paperback](#)
 - [The Children's Bible \(ESV\)](#)
 - *The Action Study Bible* (available in [NIV](#)[®] and [ESV](#)[®])
- Instead of including copies of take-home papers in the activity packs, use the contents for special mailings to kids. Kids will look forward to receiving comics, jokes, and puzzle pages.
- Make the most of your printable files. In the *Early Elementary Resources* Classroom Helps and Teacher Helps folders, you'll find bookmarks, Bible books posters, and postcards you can print and mail to children.
- Don't miss the online helps available for teachers and families:
 - [Family Connections](#): These quarterly letters keep parents informed about what their child is learning from God's Word. Modifiable—just add your ministry name and information!
 - [Holiday Helps](#): Use these craft ideas in the classroom or send them to families to do at home.
 - [Faith & Family](#): These weekly pages correlate to the lessons that kids are learning in their HeartShaper class and can help parents continue faith conversations at home during the week. Choose from these age levels: [Faith & Family for Early Elementary](#), [Faith & Family for Middle Elementary](#), [Faith & Family for Preteen](#).

