

5.3 How can we plan Bible lessons around a theme?

To develop Bible lessons around a theme is as easy as ABC:

- A. Consider possible themes based on the life needs of your class members, and with God's guidance through prayer, choose one of the themes that would greatly help your class.
- B. Find a Bible story that shows the theme (or a series of lessons to make a unit). Use a concordance if necessary to find the Scripture. * See notes on using a concordance at the bottom of the page.*
- C. Choose a lesson aim that goes along with the theme, and develop the lesson or lessons.

Let's see how this works in practice:

- A. My students are having a problem remembering to say thank you. I pray about their needs and feel led to teach on thankfulness and especially expression of thankfulness.
- B. I think of the story of Jesus healing the ten lepers, but only one returning to thank Him. I look up the word "returned" in a concordance to find the story in the Bible in Luke 17:11-19.
- C. I choose the lesson aim to go with the theme. In this case, I choose "I want my students to know that God is pleased when we show our thankfulness, and to begin to thank all those who help us." Then I go on to develop the rest of the lesson.

To develop holiday or special occasion lessons:

Even when planning theme lessons for holidays, still consider what will most help your students when choosing the theme. For instance, Christmas in itself is only a holiday, not a theme. Possible themes around Christmas might be, "The Missionary Star," "Wise Men Still Seek Him," "Worship Him," "Give Glory to God," "Humility," "The Prince of Heaven is the Babe of the Manger," "Bring Him Your Best Gifts," and many more.

The lessons are developed in basically the same way, except that the lesson Scriptures from which you can choose are more limited. (For Easter you want Scriptures on the Resurrection, etc.) Remember, however, that almost everything about Jesus was prophesied and prefigured in the Old Testament, so the group of Scriptures from which you can teach is not limited to the most commonly-used ones. For instance, you could teach about the crucifixion from Isaiah 53. There are also many other related Scriptures that are not taught from as frequently as others which could be used. For instance, for Christmas we usually think of Matthew 2, The Wise Men, and Luke 2:1-10, the birth itself and the account of the shepherds. But in Matthew there is also Matthew 1, the angel coming to Mary, Mary's response, Mary's visit to Elizabeth, and the birth of John the Baptist, the announcer of Jesus. In Luke there is also the presentation in the temple, and Simeon and Ana recognizing and praising God for the Messiah.

* An exhaustive concordance includes EVERY word in the Scripture. (It's a big book.) An abridged concordance includes SOME of the MOST IMPORTANT words in Scripture, and is a smaller book. Every concordance is based on one particular version of Scripture, the most common being the King James Version. Other versions, for instance, the NIV, have their own concordances because different words are used. Many Bible software programs for computer have search modes that act like concordances.

One way to begin is to list possible Scriptures applying the holiday or special occasion. Then list possible themes from those Scriptures. For instance, if the lesson was to be based just on the coming of the shepherds (Luke 2:8-20), here are examples of some themes we might consider:

- Jesus Includes the Lowliest
- Angels Are Messengers of God
- Angels Give Glory to God, not to Men
- Good News for All People Everywhere
- Jesus Is the Savior
- Jesus, the Promised Savior (Christ)
- Jesus, Lord of All
- Don't Be Afraid When God Speaks
- Humility (swaddling clothes, the manger)
- Jesus, our Peace
- When God Speaks, Move" (or they would have missed the baby)
- Making Known Abroad What You Have Seen & Heard
- Give Praise to God
- The Savior Has Come
- It's No Secret –God Sent Angels to Announce It

Having made a list of possibilities, you think and pray over the list until God draws your attention to one of the points. Usually you can think of ways it could help your class. Take that point, set the list aside, and develop that one idea into a lesson.

Here's an idea:

Special days are not limited to Christmas and Easter. Think about the holidays that are celebrated in your country and culture. The Bible could have something to say about many of them, and you could help your students relate what the Bible says to your culture by presenting lessons along those themes.

List some cultural holidays for which you might want to develop Bible lessons:

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LET'S REVIEW

- The theme should answer one of the _____ of your class members.
- You can find where Bible verses & stories are located by using a _____, and looking up one of the _____ in the verse.
- Every Scripture passage or Bible story could yield _____ different themes.
- After listing possible themes, you choose one by thinking about which ones would help your students and by _____.

LET'S PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Pretend you notice that your students are not caring properly for the earth God gave us. Use the ABC steps to develop a lesson on good stewardship of the earth. Begin here.