

# Selecting Curriculum

We so often refer to the printed resources that we use in the church as the “curriculum” when in reality the whole design or plan for the education program is the curriculum.

## Types of printed curriculum:

Dated - is intended to be used on a certain date and is available on a limited time basis

Undated/elective - available and may be used almost any time. Usually they are planned for use over 4 – 6 weeks but sometimes extend to a full year.

Many of the adult classes prefer the undated resources because they can select their subject of study. You may select to use undated material for youth, but it is important to be sure that through the course of middle school and high school you have a good balance of Bible study and current issue studies. Youth are very centered on what’s happening in their life, and so even the Bible study needs to have an emphasis on application to their lives.

Youth and adult resource categories: those that study a specific area of the Bible and apply that to life situations and those that lift up life situations and then apply biblical teachings to that. You will also run into a Bible study that is strictly centered on the Bible and has no application to our lives today. Such studies will turn off many of our young adults today.

Informational or formational teaching. Informational dwells on presentation of the materials and the learner primarily feeds back the information. Formational will give background, but it will help the learners think through how the materials apply to their lives and will involve a lot of interaction between the learners. Informational often tells people “what to think” where formational helps them know “how to think” and to think on their own.

Bible 101 course for adults each year in your church. This is a very basic introductory course that gives a lot of Bible background and even opportunity to practice finding passages in the Bible.

Selecting materials: 1. Establish a policy that all curriculum materials should be approved by your education committee or board, or by a responsible individual on staff. You can screen the materials first to save some time, but you need the approval of the committee or designated person when there is a complaint about what is selected.

2. Be sure your teachers understand why you must look at an over-all plan for curriculum instead of allowing each teacher to simply pick up something that appeals to them. You want the learner to have a well-rounded learning experience, from the beginning to the end. Noah’s ark is a delightful story and children like repetition, but there are other important stories in the Bible. Youth and adults also need a well rounded program.

3. Be sure you are knowledgeable about your church’s doctrinal views. Some denominations are strong about certain beliefs, and some leave the interpretation of everything besides the basic beliefs up to the individual. If the material dogmatically pushes a belief that is optional in your denomination, then selection of that material does not do justice to your church or to your learners. Even if you agree with the belief, you must see that the material leaves the option open for each learner to explore.

You can feel comfortable about using dated material printed or approved by your denomination. However, there are good materials that are not published by any specific denomination. If you do use them, recognize that you need to supplement the material with information about your own denomination.

Here are some questions to ask when evaluating curriculum materials:

- How does the material carry out the purpose of Christian education in your denomination?
- How does the material help fulfill your church’s mission statement?
- How does the material help the learners connect what they are learning with other aspects of the church, such as worship, stewardship, mission, and outreach?
- Does the material approach a variety of learning styles? (not just fill in the blank and word puzzles, or adult discussion)
- Does the material avoid racial and ethnic as well as male and female stereotypes?
- Does the material help the learners connect what they are learning to their lives?
- Does the material encourage informational or formational teaching? (see above)
- Am I letting the flashiness of the material convince me without looking at the theology and age level appropriateness?

-- adapted from Nuts & Bolts of Christian Education by Delia Halverson, pp. 39-40

