

The Circle Maker

C h i l d r e n ' s C u r r i c u l u m

Leader's Guide

ZONDERVAN

The Circle Maker Children's Curriculum
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Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

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Introduction to the Curriculum

Welcome to The Circle Maker!

Prepare to take a wonderful adventure of prayer that will help children know and pray God's promises in new and life-changing ways!

The Circle Maker curriculum will give the children in your group the opportunity to learn biblical lessons, play exciting games, create cool craft projects, and more. We believe God's Word is way too awesome for church to be boring—have fun while focusing on God and His powerful promises!

Use this leader's guide to familiarize yourself with the curriculum and to begin thinking through the best implementation for your particular group. This curriculum was developed to allow for maximum adaptability within any learning environment. Leaders can use it for midweek or Sunday morning programming. Parents can use it in homes in one-on-one or small group settings. Teaching time frames and formats can be stretched or condensed depending on the attention span of your students.

We hope that you and your church will enjoy The Circle Maker. But most importantly, we pray that your children will experience God's amazing love, learn new insights from God's Word, and be inspired to become Circle Makers in the midst of their everyday, ordinary lives.

Keep Circling!
Mark Batterson

Lesson Components

The Circle Maker Children's Curriculum has been written to meet the needs and teaching styles required for three separate age groups: (1) preschoolers and kindergarteners, (2) first, second, and third graders, and (3) fourth, fifth, and sixth graders. Each lesson is divided into the following components:

Step 1 | Getting Started

Introduce and Give Context for the Lesson

Each lesson begins with creating a welcoming and fun environment to gather your children together. During this introductory time, you will pique their interest in your subject matter for the day through an interactive game, craft, discussion, or activity.

Step 2 | Present the Story

Share the Bible Lesson

The second curriculum component, Present the Story, provides an opportunity to teach God's Word interactively, and then discuss how to apply the lesson at home, school, and in the neighborhood.

During this step, you will also lead your group through the Circle Maker Motto, a weekly memory verse, and prayer. Each lesson requires different preparation and supplies, so read through the material beforehand and take note of anything you will need to gather in advance. Feel free to tailor the lesson to best meet the needs of your gathering that day.

Note: If your schedule allows for time to sing a few worship songs, you may want to do so before teaching the Bible story. You can either recruit some volunteers to serve as your worship team, or download and play a few of the kids' favorite praise songs.

Step 3 | Explore More

Reinforce the Main Theme

After the Bible story is shared, the students are invited to Explore More about the lesson through art, music, games, coloring, or other activities. Choose from among the many suggested activities to suit your available time, space, and resources; consider how to best engage the unique interests and talents of your students. Be prepared to gather supplies in advance.

Step 4 | Pray and Dismiss

Pray Together and Conclude the Lesson

At the end of each lesson, you will have a time of prayer in which you ask God to help the children put the principle they learned into practice. You will close your time by reminding your group to memorize the verse for the week and hand out a copy of the Family Table Talk discussion sheet and Family Prayer Calendar.

Tips for Leaders

Tips for the Activities

- **Know Your Group.** As the teacher, you will come to know your group and understand their skills and limitations. Some of the suggested exercises might not be suited to your situation or group, so adapt accordingly.
- **Feel Free to Enhance.** You can add more materials, decorations, or technology to any of the activities as you see fit. The activities have been designed to use as many basic materials as possible, but you can add other elements to make your time together more visually exciting and compelling.
- **Keep It Manageable.** Make sure that your groups are small enough during Getting Started (Step 1) and Explore More (Step 3) so that you and your volunteers can focus on helping the children and applying the teaching. If possible, try to keep the small groups with the same leader each time you meet. As the teachers get to know their group and the group gets to know them, the learning and discussion time will improve.
- **Make It Competitive ... or Not.** Some of the activities have an element of competition, but you can adapt these games so that no one has hurt feelings if their team loses.

Classroom Management Tips

- **Don't Ignore Hard Questions.** Children of all ages can and will ask questions that do not always have easy or immediate answers. If you do not know the answer, tell the class this and state that you will look up the answer later. You can always say, "I don't know the answer right now, but when I find out, I'll let you know what it is."
- **Plan Ahead.** Provide a copy of the lesson to your volunteers so that everyone is aware of the plan for the day. If possible, meet in advance to talk about the main teaching ideas, go over your activities, and pray for your time together.
- **Be Genuine.** Older children want to be respected and taken seriously, so try to speak genuinely to them in an uncondescending way. Remember that by fourth grade children are memorizing science vocabulary lists and writing social studies reports. They don't want you to "dumb down" your lesson. If you expect them to use their heads and think things through, they will rise to the occasion.
- **Let the Kids Do the Work.** Elementary-aged children are capable of thinking beyond the facts and details and understanding there is more to the story than what they can see. Help them distinguish between the facts of the story and the assumptions we all make. Don't rush them as they pull together their ideas and come up with their own viewpoints.

- **Review Class Rules.** Children respond well to three to five easy classroom rules that they can understand and follow. Consider making a poster board that you can hang in the room. Go over the class rules before you start the day. The poster should have words and pictures on it. Examples of rules include: (1) love each other at all times, (2) use your eyes and ears to listen, and (3) follow directions. When children are struggling, you can use the poster to remind them of certain behaviors that you would like to see.
- **Plan for Different Learning Styles.** Take into consideration that there are many learning styles. Some kids love to listen to stories being read aloud, while others like to move around and participate in the telling. Adapt your teaching time to fit the needs of your group.
- **Take Breaks.** If you are having trouble keeping your children's attention, provide stretch-and-wiggle breaks.
- **Capture Their Attention.** Create a method to regain your kids' attention if they get distracted, such as a clap pattern or saying something such as, "If you can hear me, raise your hand." For the younger children, you can make it into a rhyme, such as, "One, two, three, eyes on me." Teach your group to put their hands in the air or on their heads when you say the key phrase. Reinforce the behavior that you want to see by pointing out children who are responding in the way you want. For example, "Thank you, Benjamin, for putting your hands on your head," or, "I see Sarah is ready for the story." In this way, you are using other children to model the behavior you would like to see.

Choosing a Teaching Model-Environment

Depending on the size of your group and the space available, there are several options for organizing your group members.

One Classroom (Multiple Ages/Grades Together)

If you are planning on teaching multiple grade levels but don't have enough children to divide into age-appropriate groups, you can combine students in all grades together in one classroom. You will need at least two teachers or a teacher and a helper. They will be responsible for telling the story and leading each of the activities.

With widely varied developmental levels in your class, you will need to provide adaptations for the younger children. For example, it will take longer for a first-grader to complete an activity requiring manual dexterity. When you adapt an activity for younger children, try to split the students into two groups based on age. The older children can complete the original, more challenging activity, which will help to keep them interested as the weeks go by. You can also have older children help the younger kids or pair them together for activities.

You may choose to use one or all of the activities in Getting Started (Step 1) and

Explore More (Step 3). How many you use depends on the length of your meeting time. If you choose to use only one, it is typically best to choose an activity that appeals to your oldest children, and then adapt a version for the younger kids. For example, if the activity is a craft, have the older children do the craft as specified in the curriculum, but for the younger children, have parts and pieces cut out, prepped, and ready for assembly.

Multiple Classrooms (Grouped by Age/Grade)

As previously mentioned, *The Circle Maker Children's Curriculum* has been designed to teach three separate groups of children: (1) preschoolers and kindergarteners, (2) first, second, and third graders, and (3) fourth, fifth, and sixth graders. Ideally, you will want to have between six to twelve children in each classroom. In some cases, you may find that you have enough children to break these groups down further. For example, you may have enough children to break down your early elementary group into three separate classes consisting of first, second, and third graders. Assign one leader and one helper to each class, and consider having a department leader who oversees these teachers and classes.

You may do the activities in Getting Started (Step 1) either in separate smaller groups or as a large group. Depending on the activity, you might choose to alternate doing the activity in a large group and in small groups. After the teaching time, you can form your children into smaller groups to do the activities in Explore More (Step 3). If you choose to use only one of these activities, choose the one that is the most suitable for the ages, interests, and energy level of each specific group.

Involving Families

Christian parents and families want to nurture their students in their prayer life and faith, but often they don't know how to do so. For this reason, *The Circle Maker Children's Curriculum* includes a Family Table Talk handout for each lesson. These pages give families information on the lesson content and enable parents to engage their children in honest conversations about God.

Each Family Table Talk handout includes (1) a brief summary of what the children learned during that week's lesson, (2) several table talk discussion questions based on the theme, (3) the memory verse for the week (for both younger and older ages), (4) an encouraging quote from *The Circle Maker*, and (5) some ideas to help the kids be "Circle Makers in Action."

Additionally, a Family Prayer Calendar is available to inspire families to pray together every day while at home. Distribute the calendar Week 1, and then make it available for new families during the following weeks. (**Note:** You may want to also have calendars for parents who have misplaced their original copies.)

As a leader, be sure to encourage families to use these activities as much as they can. These pages are tools that will encourage families to grow together in knowing God's promises and praying His promises—even if they can only spend a few minutes each day reviewing them during the week.

The Circle Maker Overview

PRESCHOOL

EARLY ELEMENTARY

LATER ELEMENTARY

Session 1:
Becoming a Circle Maker
Memory Verse: Philippians 4:6b
Lesson: Joshua 6:1-6

GETTING STARTED
1. Coloring Sheet
2. Circle Maker Trumpets
3. Square, Square, Square, Circle Game

GETTING STARTED
1. Circle Maker Welcome Badge
2. Talk to Me!
3. Let's Be Circle Makers!

GETTING STARTED
1. Circle Maker Bracelets
2. Talk to Me
3. Circle Maker Human Knot

EXPLORE MORE
1. Prayer Plate
2. Remembering Jericho
3. Walls Came Tumbling Down

EXPLORE MORE
1. Praying God's Promises Prayer Chain
2. Prayer Cubes
3. Circle Maker Message Game

EXPLORE MORE
1. Prayer Jars
2. God's Promises Bookmark
3. Thumbs Up or Thumbs Down

Session 2:
Cloudy with a Chance of Quail
Memory Verse: Psalm 145:13b
Lesson: Numbers 11

GETTING STARTED
1. Circle Maker Crowns
2. Food from Heaven
3. Quail Knock-Down

GETTING STARTED
1. Circle Maker Bracelet
2. Find the Food
3. Quail Round-Up

GETTING STARTED
1. Circle Maker Catcher
2. Got Needs?
3. Airplane Game

EXPLORE MORE
1. Prayer Pail
2. God Provides Quail
3. Bean Bag Pass

EXPLORE MORE
1. Trust Baskets
2. Circle Maker Door Hanger
3. Circle Maker Wave

EXPLORE MORE
1. How Big Is Our God
2. Prayer Magnets
3. Circle Maker Manna Scrambler

Session 3:
Praying Hard and Praying Through
Memory Verse:
1 Thessalonians 5:17-18a
Lesson: Luke 18:1-5

GETTING STARTED
1. Never Stop Praying
2. Circle Maker Memory Game
3. Chutes and Ladders

GETTING STARTED
1. Circle Maker Prayer Mural
2. Circle Maker Toss
3. Unjust Judge Says

GETTING STARTED
1. Circle Maker Prayer Spinners
2. Unlock It!
3. Circle Maker Hula Hooplathon

EXPLORE MORE
1. Never Stop Praying Necklaces
2. Memory Verse Circle Toss
3. Circle Prayers

EXPLORE MORE
1. Prayer Frames
2. Popcorn Prayers
3. Circle Maker Relays

EXPLORE MORE
1. Circle Maker Prayer Journal
2. Circle Makers in Action
3. What Would You Do?

Session 4:
Praying Is Like Planting
Memory Verse: Psalm 130:5
Lesson: Daniel 10:12-13

GETTING STARTED
1. Circle Maker Certificate
2. I Can Pray to God!
3. Circle Maker Walk

GETTING STARTED
1. God Always Hears My Prayers Activity Sheet
2. Circle Maker Musical Chairs
3. Popcorn Game

GETTING STARTED
1. Prayer Rocks
2. Circle Maker Prayer Mural
3. Circle Maker Twister

EXPLORE MORE
1. Growing Seeds of Prayer
2. God Hears and Answers Prayer
3. Red Light/Green Light Game

EXPLORE MORE
1. Praying Is Like Planting Bookmarks
2. Memory Verse Shuffle
3. Circle Maker Prayer Journal

EXPLORE MORE
1. Prayer Pots
2. Tic-Tac-Circle
3. Circle Maker Charades