

Teaching the Bible with Children, Youth and Families



Executive Producer *Jodi Hanson*
jodi@selectlearning.org

Producer *Linda Staats*
linda@homegrownfaith.net

Select Learning

www.selectlearning.org



Introduction and Overview

Preparation Guide

Unit Bibliography

Profiles of Presenters

Select Learning

INTRODUCTION

We are grateful to The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) for engaging in a major initiative to encourage its members to read and study the Bible. The initiative, called *The Book of Faith*, invites everyone, “Open Scripture. Join the Conversation.” This course is an expression of that initiative. It is designed and intended for use in all Christian congregations and communities of faith.

The seeds for this course were planted by a group of lay and professional Christian educators sitting around a table, late at night during an ELCA Lifelong Learning Partners gathering in Carefree, AZ. Their passion and concern for 'teaching the bible with children, youth & their families' is the heart of this series. This course is designed for parents, grandparents, Christian educators, Sunday school and adult education teachers, pastors, youth ministers, Book of Faith Advocates, caring adults and faith parents of all ages - all who want to nurture and pass on the Christian faith now and to the next generation. Future units in this series will feature how Scripture can be meaningful for children and youth and families through worship, effective age-level learning, friends in faith and in serving others.

OVERVIEW

The first Unit in this series focuses on equipping our homes as centers for faith development.

Equipping Households of Faith comprises four sessions:

1. Foundations for Households of Faith
2. Connecting Church and Home
3. Faith Practices in the Home
4. Placing in Your Hands the Holy Scriptures

Desired outcomes for the participants:

- Gain fresh insights into the importance of the home as a center for faith formation.
- Understand the congregation's vital role to equip homes as households of faith.
- Ability to assess and apply effective approaches for faith development in the congregation and in homes, using tools and resources gained during these sessions.
- All ages inspired and equipped as teachers of the faith.

Course Resources

Each of the four DVD sessions includes:

- Video Presentation (20-25 minutes)
- Facilitator Guide (three-pages)
- Participant Learning Guide (two-pages)
- Bibliography, References and Resources

In each video presentation you will hear from someone who is known for their expertise or knowledge on our topic as well as someone who is applying the ideas in their home or congregation. All the people you will meet have one thing in common – a passion for the Bible as the source for equipping households of faith!

The format for each session includes:

- A Welcome and Opening Prayer
- Preparation Questions
- Viewing the Video
- Discussion and Simple Activities
- A three-step process called, “Make It My Own-Take It Home”

Learning Guides are provided for each session. One set is for the Facilitator with suggestions for group discussion and simple learning activities. Accompanying handouts are available for the Participants. Participants, guided by the facilitator, are encouraged to explore the content more deeply and absorb each session for themselves.

Each session is designed for a 50-60 minute period of time. For shorter periods of time, the facilitator may select fewer questions from each section of the Learning Guides. The material may easily be extended to a longer time period or additional sessions. Two Extended Conversation questions are included for each session. A Bibliography and suggestions for additional Resources accompany each session. The planning team and participants are encouraged to explore the resources as time and interest allows.

Make It My Own-Take It Home is the last section in the Learning Guide for each session. Spend at least a few minutes in this section each time you meet. If the goal is for participants to gain knowledge and skills for strengthening the home as a place for faith formation, then the time to plan next steps is essential.

The word “change” is intentionally not used in the “Make It My Own” section. Encourage participants to avoid using this word during the session and when telling others what they are learning. The word “change” often creates anxiety for other staff members, the Christian Ed team or household members who are not taking part in this course. Instead, the following C.T.A. approach is used as a means for people to summarize what they have experienced and organize how they will take it home and into the congregation:

- **Celebrate:** “What are you already doing at home or in the congregation that fits what you have experienced today?” This creates an approach to learning that builds on existing strengths.
- **Tweak:** Begin with something one is already doing and then simply make a few adjustments. Tweaks are the easiest and most fun to implement.
- **Add:** Excited about what they are learning, participants can be overwhelmed with new ideas. This step helps the learner focus on one, no more than two ideas and builds in a higher possibility of success and receptivity by others.

PREPARATION

A session can be hosted at church or in someone's home. Welcoming participants and helping them to feel at ease is essential for an effective learning environment.

Prepare the Space

- Arrange the space so everyone can see and hear the DVD presentation. The chairs may need to face one direction to view the DVD, then rearranged into a circle, horse shoe shape or around tables for conversation. This is a discussion based learning process. The ability to see and hear one another is important.
- Set-up and test the DVD or any electronic equipment you are using. Cue up the session and have it ready to go. Nothing is more frustrating or time consuming than technology that doesn't work.
- Set up newsprint and/or white board with appropriate markers.
- Create a Gathering Table to convey the theme and focus for each session. On the table place a candle and a Bible. The Facilitator's Guide will suggest additional items you might add to the table, unique to each session. Remember that some people are visual learners and others are auditory, verbal and kinesthetic. Since we vary in how we access information, it is best to plan for a variety of learning styles.

Welcome and Hospitality

- Have someone greet participants as they arrive. Even if participants know one another, have name-tags prepared. Always expect guests and first time visitors.
- Copy the Participant Learning Guide, one for each person. Provide writing utensils and extra paper for notes.
- Ask participants to briefly introduce themselves. If time permits, invite participants to share why they are attending the course. Each time you gather include a non-threatening question that will help people get acquainted and remember one another.
- Prior to the session, invite someone to prepare an opening prayer that models what you would like participants to gain in their faith.
- Decide if food and beverage will be a part of your gatherings. Plan to meet various health and dietary needs.

Facilitation Process for Small Group Discussion

The group discussion is a series of questions or simple activities based on what participants have just viewed. Some people are natural at reflecting and sharing in a group. For many reasons, others are more hesitant or less comfortable. Because individuals process information many different ways, always incorporate a variety of learning methods.

(Facilitators may want to view *Teaching the Bible, Hosting the Conversation*, another Select Learning course, which examines the dynamics of adult learning and enhances teaching skills.)

Here are some simple tips for the planning team and facilitator(s) to follow in creating an environment that is inclusive of adult learners and invites people to respond in a variety of ways:

- Create sacred and safe space. First, let people know that they always have permission to “pass” on any question or exercise you invite them to do. Simply ask people to say “pass” and continue to participate by listening. Second, ask people to honor one another’s sharing by not sharing what they hear beyond the group gathered, unless it is their own story.
- If there are eight or more participants in your group, divide people into smaller groups or huddles for some of the discussion questions.
- “Turn to the person sitting next to you and share . . .” is a fine approach for questions that can be answered briefly and everyone would be comfortable answering. This also works when time is short.
- For questions with the goal of more in-depth personal sharing, divide people into groups of three, four or no more than five. If a group is larger than five, it is difficult for some to hear and it takes too much time to share. If there are only two in a group, one may be a non-talker and that creates an uncomfortable situation for the two participants.
- Invite people to write down a few words or draw an image in response to a question. This invites those who are less verbal or who need to think before they respond to feel more at ease and included.
- Whether people are in small groups or one large group, always provide a few moments of quiet for people to think of their response before you invite open sharing. There are folks who immediately know what they want to share and begin talking as soon as the facilitator has asked the question, while others in the group are still contemplating what they might say. This step provides the “gift of sharing and listening” for everyone.
- Mutual Invitation, a process created by Eric Law, is a means for the facilitator to share the “power,” of deciding who speaks next. One person shares a response to the selected question, then that person invites the next one to share, continuing until all have had the opportunity to speak. Even if someone chooses to pass, they still have the privilege of selecting the next speaker.
- Always inform people if the content of their small group conversation will later be summarized for sharing with the entire group.
- When appropriate, list responses to group questions on newsprint or a white board. This provides a visual element to the learning process.

- To add a fun and tactile element to the flow of conversation, provide a soft round object that can be easily handled and passed from one speaker to the next. Something like a hacky-sack or “stress-ball. In some cultures a person has the floor to speak as long as they hold the designated object, this is referred to as a “talking stick.”

The Planning Team

Finally, if possible, create a team to assist in preparing, presenting and facilitating the *Creating Households of Faith* course. Invite people to join the team based on their gifts. Involving many people in the planning will generate energy and excitement for the course. Listed below are a number of team roles. Each role might be played by a separate individual or one person may have multiple roles.

Team Chair

- Ability to formulate, direct, coordinate and carry out a plan for a specific purpose.
- Gift of administration.

Facilitator(s)

- Will one person be present at all the sessions? Do you need a back-up?
- Consider having male and female co-facilitators so different voices and perspectives are heard. This is especially important when covering any topic related to Christian Education as too often people think faith formation is primarily the role of women.
- Take time to watch the DVD and prepare for each session. Check that handouts are ready for each session, even if prepared by someone else.
- Look for these abilities or qualities: a pleasant speaking voice, able to make everyone in a group feel safe, able to deal with the “talk-too-much” person as well as draw out the “quiet and thinking” type, and sensitive to group dynamics.
- The gift of confidence to step forward, give directions and motivate people to participate and be inspired.

AV/Technology

- Someone who will take care of all the AV details and will be non-plussed if anything goes wrong.
- The gift to create, maintain and make things work.

Hospitality

- People to meet and greet, prepare name-tags, food and/or beverage, signs that direct people where to enter and location of room.
- Set-up and clean-up. Cleanliness of bathrooms and other public areas. Communication with staff responsible for facility maintenance or cooperation of others who care for the church or share your home.
- The gift to joyfully welcome and receive guests as Jesus would.

Chaplain or Intercessor

- Prepares the prayer for the beginning of each session.
- The gift to pray with a certainty that we are well in God's care.

Gathering Table Coordinator

- This person will be responsible for creating the Gathering Table, assembling and displaying items to set the theme and focus for each session.
- Gifts for organizing and helping behind the scenes.

Promotion

- How, where and to whom will the *Equipping Households of Faith* course be promoted?
- Posters, bulletin inserts, church newsletter, phone calls, local newspaper, personal invitation, temple talks, etc.
- A combination of the gifts of artistry, evangelism, writing and web mastery.

Study Leader

- As part of the role of host(s) for *Equipping Households of Faith*, consider reading or researching one or more of the books and resources listed in the bibliography for Unit I.
- Gift of wisdom, knowledge and encouragement.

Blessing

In this Unit on *Equipping Households of Faith*, participants will hear many stories, from presenters and from one another. It is a joyful, meaningful privilege to hear each other's stories of faith!

*To be born into
A whole new Life
To be who they really are
Who God always made them to be –
their own true selves –
God's dear
Child
Because you see, the most wonderful thing
about this Story is – it's your story, too!
(From the Jesus Storybook Bible)*

We welcome your stories and feedback as you open your Bibles, engage in conversation and practice your faith at home and away.

Linda E. Staats

Producer and Host for *Equipping Households of Faith*

linda@homegrownfaith.net

BIBLIOGRAPHY, REFERENCES and RESOURCES

Unit 1:

There are multiple prophetic voices and organizations in mainline Christian denominations who over the past forty years have called, and continue to call, upon the church to rethink its approach for faith formation. Although there is no one text book for this Unit, anyone engaged in the teaching and practice of lifelong faith formation is encouraged to sample the following resources, in addition to the specific resource listed for each session. These resources provide historical and theological grounding in addition to solid research for the vision and continued urgent work of establishing strong church-home connections and equipping adults as teachers of the faith in homes and daily life.

Books and Articles

Anderson, David W. *From the Great Omission to Vibrant Faith*. Minneapolis: Vibrant Faith Ministries, 2009. <http://www.youthandfamilyinstitute.org>

Brueggeman, Walter. "Will Our Faith Have Children?" *Word & World* 3/3 (1983): p272-283. Luther Seminary. www.luthersem.edu/word&world/authorindex.asp

Dean, Kenda C. *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church*. New York: Oxford Press, 2010. <http://kendadean.com/>

"Effective Christian Education Study," Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1990. www.searchinstitute.org/congregations/ResearchReportsArticles.html

Martinson, Roland, Wes Black and John Roberto. *The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry*. St. Paul: EYM Publishing, 2010. www.exemplarym.com

Strommen, Merton P. and Richard A. Hardel. *Passing On The Faith*. Winona: St. Mary's Press, 2008. <http://www.faithwellmt.com/site>

Smith, Christian and M.L. Denton. *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. New York: Oxford Press, 2005. www.youthandreligion.org

Westerhoff, John H. *Will Our Children Have Faith?* Revised & Expanded Edition. Harrisburg: Moorhouse, 2000. www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/view.cfm?n=john_westerhoff

Web Sites

Lifelong Faith <http://www.lifelongfaith.com/index.htm> Visit the on-line Resource Center. Each book or journal listed is relevant and the best in its field. Highly recommended.

The Pew Forum on Religion and Research <http://pewforum.org/> Keep up-to-date on unbiased research.

PROFILES OF PRESENTERS

Cora Aguilar is grateful and thankful for being given the blessed opportunity to work in God's vineyard as a Pastor Developer in Maricopa, Arizona. <http://maricopalutherans.org/> Cora was born and raised in the Philippines. She has a MS in Nutrition Research and a MS in Theology from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. In the Philippines she worked as a researcher at the Food and Nutrition Research Institute and volunteered in her congregation and school as a Sunday school, Bible class & catechism teacher. These experiences led to her passion for ministry. Before her call to Maricopa she served for 12 years as pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church in Hayward, CA. pastorcora@hotmail.com

Dawn Alitz is the Director of Faith Formation at Light of the World Lutheran Church, a mission-start congregation in Farmington, Minnesota. www.lotwl.com She is passionate about creating partnerships between homes and congregations where trusted relationships can flourish and faith is supported and practiced. Dawn received her Master's and PhD from Luther Seminary where she has also served as adjunct instructor for Christian Education and Children, Youth and Family courses. She is trained as a Spiritual Director. She shares her home with her husband and two daughters. dawn.alitz@gmail.com

Andrea Fieldhouse serves as Director of Family Ministry in a suburban congregation in Excelsior, MN. Her main call is helping parents to talk and live God and faith with their children. Following graduation from Moorhead State with a degree in psychology, sociology and human development, she served as a Youth Director for 12 years before being called to Faith Inkubators to train and write. Andrea serves as a Spiritual Director and loves leading women's retreats. One of her greatest joys is being an aunt to 6 nephews and a niece. <http://www.everyday-everywhere.org/public/bridges.php>

Richard Hardel practices the faith and living well in Christ as husband, father, grandfather, godfather, and friend. <http://www.faithwellmt.com/site/> For over 20 years Dick served as a Lutheran pastor in congregations in South Dakota and Florida before serving as Assistant to the Bishop in the Nebraska Synod - ELCA. In 1994 he accepted the call to serve as the Executive Director of The Youth & Family Institute where his ministry was based until 2007. Dick is an author, editor, publisher, educator, pastor, creative thinker, retreat leader, national and international speaker, columnist, coach, consultant, and clown. Dick and his wife Carolyn reside on a mountain top in MT. rhardel@faithwellmt.com

Liz Otteson lizotteson@mac.com is wife, mother of two children, leader of women's Bible study, and a practitioner of passing on faith in her own household. She has created a useful family planner, "Framed in Faith," that keeps the focus on Jesus in all elements of family life. Liz is an active member of Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church, Minneapolis. She participates in parenting classes and Parents Share. Liz and Marilyn Sharpe share the joy of teaching Liz's family planner to parents.

Marilyn Sharpe has a vision for congregations and households partnering to nurture faith in all generations. <http://marilynsharpeministries.com/> A wife, parent and grandparent, she knows first hand the joys and sorrows, the triumphs and challenges of being a family. Marilyn's first book, *For Heaven's Sake! Parenting Preschoolers Faithfully*, captures the wisdom of parents and best parenting practices as they nurture faith in God's youngest children. She writes a monthly parent column for the Metro Lutheran in the Twin Cities. With a BA from Wellesley College and an MA from Harvard, she takes extraordinary joy in both learning and teaching. MarilynSharpeMinistries@comcast.net

Linda Staats is passionate about the church-home connection and passing on faith to the next generation. www.homegrownfaith.ning.com With a MS degree in Human Development and the Family, Linda weaves faith development into all of life's ages and stages. Linda combines research, theology and people's own holy stories to engage and empower all generations for serving at home and in the world. Her career reflects her joy of teaching, equipping and supporting others. Linda serves half-time as Assistant to the Bishop for Youth & Household Ministry in the ELCA Rocky Mountain Synod and as a member of the ELCA Book of Faith Advocate Leadership Team. linda@homegrownaith.net

Richard Staats enjoys the challenge and rewards of remodeling a historic home in central Phoenix and sharing the Good News with friends and neighbors. Dick is a retired ELCA clergyman who served in congregations and as a Director of Lutheran Social Ministry. He loves to introduce people to storybook Bibles and teach the Bible as God's one story of Jesus. With a MA degree and focus in Marriage and Family Counseling, Dick's continued reading, research and writing fuel his passion and ministry for all couples and partners. Dick is currently writing a Manual for Marriage and Couple Care. He is a teacher, workshop and retreat leader. dick@couplecare.com