



A Guide to Hybrid Sunday School

Tips and Ideas for Engaging
Elementary Children
and Their Families

(Elementary and Upper Elementary)



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 LIFELINKS

LifeLINKS’s teaching resources are available in print and in digital bundles. We encourage you to explore all the files—including Real Life Downloaded—and see what works best for your ministry.

LifeLINKS Elementary Resources at a Glance

Elementary

- *Elementary Teacher’s Guide*
- *Elementary Creative Teaching Aids* (Posters, games, puzzles, PraisePac songs, and more)
- *Bible Discoveries* student book
- *Discovery Pack* craft book
- *Friends* take-home paper

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- [Elementary/Upper Elementary Lesson Videos](#) (3-4-minute video segments that highlight the monthly teaching theme)
- [Elementary Video Connection Guide](#) (Equips teachers to connect the Lesson Video and monthly theme to each lesson)
- [Elementary Family Devotion Guide](#) (Encourages families to grow and learn together as they watch the Lesson Video)

Upper Elementary

- *Upper Elementary Teacher's Guide*
- *Upper Elementary Creative Teaching Aids* (Posters, games, puzzles, PraisePac songs, and more)
- *Bible Adventures* student book
- *Pix* take-home paper
- [Real Life Downloaded](#)
- [Elementary/Upper Elementary Lesson Videos](#) (3-4-minute video segments that highlight the monthly teaching theme)
- [Upper Elementary Video Connection Guide](#) (Equips teachers to connect the Lesson Video and monthly theme to each lesson)
- [Upper Elementary Family Devotion Guide](#) (Encourages families to grow and learn together as they watch the Lesson Video)

*The Ministry Spark website has many articles and tips that you might find helpful as you reopen your church and navigate the new and exciting world of online resources that you can use to reach your students. This site is not created by 21st Century Christian and, as such, we do not endorse all of the content you may find there.

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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. Allow time to socialize 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).
- Download the [Lesson Videos and guides](#).
- Let families know how to access the lessons and the activity packs.

FOR EACH LESSON

- Prepare your heart with prayer and then read Understanding the Bible and the teacher devotion from the teacher's guide.
- Familiarize yourself with the lesson focus, Bible Basis (Scripture passage), and Memory Verse.
- 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 any songs, crafts, and activities ahead of time so you are comfortable presenting them on-screen.
- Let parents know ahead of time if there are any resources/materials their children may need for the lesson.



Teach the Lesson

BEFORE THE LESSON STARTS

- Start your stream 5 to 10 minutes before your scheduled start time. This gives families time to sign in and know their connection is working.
- If you know who is online, greet them by name.
- Use PowerPoint or Google Slides to display a welcome message. Or show a countdown video.
- Show a list of items that kids will need for the lesson. Remember that less might be more during this time.
- Adapt an Early Bird option from the teacher's guide for students to do as they arrive.
- Give students time to share what they discovered about Seeing God through the Week since the last lesson.

DURING THE LESSON

Step 1: Bible Readiness/Connecting with God's Word

Give your students time to share about themselves and their lives while building relationships. These conversations can help you introduce the lesson focus as you move to Step 2.

- Spend a few minutes sharing with kids and families about the previous week. If you didn't talk about Seeing God through the Week earlier, this would be a great time to do that.
- Check to see how adaptable the activity is to an online session. If the activity isn't adaptable, you might try to open with an icebreaker video. We've pulled together dozens of icebreaker videos in our bonus curriculum content (coming soon)!
- For Upper Elementary, you could use Real Life Downloaded for this step. This free downloadable resource brings trending topics into Sunday school. Find a new version each week at [RealLifeDownloaded](#). Check out the *Ideas for Using Real Life Downloaded in a Virtual Setting Online* at the end of this guide.

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- Take time to go through the discussion questions. Begin with your own examples; then ask children and families to share.
- To help facilitate discussions, make sure each child has had an opportunity to share his or her thoughts.

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Step 2: Bible Study/Studying God's Word

Elementary uses a simple Bible study format to teach the Bible lesson. The reading, story, or drama found in *Bible Discoveries* is combined with finding answers in Bible passages.

Upper Elementary is a Bible study written just for them. Most of the Bible passages are printed in *Bible Adventures*, but students are also encouraged to use their Bibles as they work through the study.

- Share your screen or make a slide of the Bible study pages in the student book. You can follow the directions in your teacher's guide to work through the pages.
- Show the Lesson Video before having kids find the Bible passages in their Bibles. Use the lesson tie-in from the Video Connection Guide to tie to the Bible study.
- For Elementary, share your screen to show the digital version of the Bible Overview Chart. Or include the Bible Overview Chart in your PowerPoint or Google Slides. Follow the directions in the teacher's guide to talk about the chart.
- Give kids time to find the passages in their Bibles. Walk through finding the table of contents, the book of the Bible, the chapter, and then the verse.
- Call on students by name to answer the questions if you are doing a live lesson. If your lesson is prerecorded, pause for a few seconds after each question to give students time to reflect on the topic, and then discuss the answer.
- For Elementary, use the review questions for family discussions. Post the questions on a slide and allow a few minutes for families to work through the questions on their own.

Elementary Bible Story Review Activity

- Check to see if the activity can be adapted to use on-screen. You may have to skip this part of the lesson if it doesn't work.

Memory Verse Practice

- Show the Memory Verse as a slide.
- Repeat a few times as kids learn the verse and motions.
- Adapt some activities by having families be the small groups for the activity.
- Use an online memory verse game to learn the verse. Check out the Bible memory games in the bonus curriculum content (coming soon)!

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- For more great ideas, check out this post on [MinistrySpark.com](https://www.MinistrySpark.com): “[13 Creative Bible Verse Memory Games and Activities for Kids](#).”*

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Step 3: Bible Activity Choices/Interacting with God's Word

Exploring the Bible study at their own level helps kids understand and incorporate God's Word into their day-to-day lives.

- If you are using a craft or a craft book, show a sample of a finished project. Provide instructions and invite students and families to do their projects at home during the week. Ask them to send you a picture of their finished craft.
- If an activity uses student book pages, share the pages on your screen or as part of a PowerPoint or Google Slides. Explain how to use the pages, and invite families to work through the activities during the week.
- Adapt an activity option and do it together as a group.
- Send home activity options that don't work virtually—families can do them together during the week.

Bible Response/Applying God's Word

Students choose the best way to live out their faith in their everyday experiences so they can be doers of the Word.

- For Upper Elementary, if you used [Real Life Downloaded](#) in the beginning of the lesson, use the Step 4 section now.
- If you have sent home the student book page for a lesson, share it on your screen or show it as a slide.
- Students who don't have a student book page can write or draw on a piece of paper their ideas for what they will be doing.
- Give kids time to share how they are going to take the lesson into their week.
- Talk together about Seeing God through the Week. Challenge kids to look for how God is working in their lives.
- Encourage families to talk about the lesson during the week, including reading through the take-home papers.
- Use the suggestions in your teacher's guide to finish your lesson with prayer. Or use one of the prayer suggestions found in our bonus curriculum content (coming soon)!



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 child
- Ministry announcements
- Student books
- Craft books and activities
- Take-home papers
- PraisePac song MP3s
- Elementary coloring pages from PraisePac
- [Family Devotion Guide](#)

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 building?
- Can volunteers deliver them in person?
- Are you able to mail them to families?
- Will they be picked up for use during a family worship service?

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

- Continue communicating with your families! Text or e-mail parents some quick tips on how to use features pulled from *Friends* and *Pix* take-home products.
- If you don't include copies of the take-home papers in activity packs, use the contents to create special mailings for kids.
- Give families access to download the PraisePac files so they can sing at home the songs from class.
- Make the most of your digital bundle files. In the Teacher Overview folder, you will find specific resources to share with parents as well as fun postcards to send to children.
- Share the Lesson Videos with families by sending them the [Family Devotion Guide](#) for Elementary or Upper Elementary. Links to the videos are included in the Devotion Guides. The devotions build on the Unit Theme and Memory Verse and provide opportunities for families to worship and praise God together.
- Encourage families to find and use a children's Bible and study books that will help their child grow in understanding God's Word. Here are some resources we recommend:
 - [Twenty-First Century Christian Bible Storybook](#)
 - [God's Story for Me Bible](#)
 - [HeartShaper Bible Storybook](#)
 - [The Picture Bible](#)
 - [The Action Storybook Bible](#)
 - [The Action Bible](#)
 - [The Action Study Bible](#) (available in NIV® and [ESV®](#))
 - [The Big Picture](#)
 - [Inspiration to Ink: The Big Picture of How We Got the Bible](#)
 - [Amazed by Jesus: The Big Picture of the Life of Christ Vol 1](#)
 - [Amazed by Jesus: The Big Picture of the Life of Christ Vol 2](#)
- This is a great time to start a daily family devotional. We recommend:
 - [The Jesus Resolution](#)
 - [Living the Jesus Resolution](#)



IDEAS FOR USING REAL LIFE DOWNLOADED IN A VIRTUAL SETTING

Maybe you have been using Real Life Downloaded (RLD) in an online setting like Zoom or Google hangouts or a video stream. Maybe you're using RLD as part of a phone conference session. Are you showing the videos? Are you physically mailing or emailing the adult version to people to read?

Whether you use RLD to prepare your group before you meet or to extend the learning into the week, here are a couple of additional ideas for using these weekly products to enrich your virtual class—both in your group time as well as during the week.

Using RLD While You Meet

Whether you're meeting in small in-person groups or online, these tips will help you get the most out of RLD.

- **Weekly Check-in**
Before you start the lesson, allow at least a few minutes for a weekly check-in to help the group feel connected with each other.
- **What Stuck with Me**
As part of your check-in time give students time to share what stuck with them throughout the week about the previous lesson. It's okay if they say they can't remember.
- **Would You Rather**
Read through the lesson ahead of time. Come up with a "Would You Rather" question that ties into the lesson. These should be either/or questions such as: Would you rather eat pizza for lunch or have a PBJ? Give students time to respond to the question before moving into Step 1.
- **Guess Who**
Turn a sharing time part of the lesson into a trivia time! Before the lesson, text or email to students ask them to send back their answers. For example: Tell about a time that you have been disappointed because you're had to stay home. Have them respond with their answers. Share the answers during your group time and let students guess who sent in each answer. You might get creative with some unique prizes for participants.

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- **Breakout Rooms**

If you're using a tool like Zoom and your group is comfortable with the technology, try sending small groups to different rooms (like [Zoom Rooms](#)) for a short discussion time. Then bring everyone back together to summarize the discussion before moving on with the next part of the lesson.



Using RLD During the Week

These ideas can be used to prepare your students before you meet or afterward to help keep the lesson going.

- **Switch-Up Step 4**

Using a closed website or social media group, have students send in photos, videos, original art, and original memes of how they are applying the lesson throughout the week.

- **Through the Week**

Create a text group or another social media group. Send out questions or discussion starters about the lesson. Invite students to respond to each other. Remind them that all answers are valid!

- **Thought for the Day**

Send out a Bible thought or verse—you could simply alternate between the Bible basis, memory verse, and lesson focus—a couple times a week to your group.

This [article](#), while focused on children’s ministry, offers several suggestions you might add to your own personal teaching-virtually-tool set.*

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