



Bible Study Servants' *Guide*





INTRODUCTION

The “Growing Branches” Bible Study program that is between your hands was put together by the Church of St. George and St. Abanoub in Milton, Ontario, Canada under the auspices and guidance of H.G. Bishop Mina, Bishop of Mississauga, Vancouver & Western Canada.

The program is designed to cover the Bible from Genesis to Revelation on an annual basis. It was put together to cover grades 3 to 8, meaning that every child, entering the program by grade 3 and leaving it after grade 8, will have a chance to be exposed to the whole Bible 6 times, from different angles and perspectives according to their growing needs: spiritually, mentally and emotionally.

It is crucially important to deal with the Bible differently. The Bible is not a normal book like any other book. The Bible is the word of God. Although it was written by tens of people over the span of about 1500 years, yet we believe that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God



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may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17); and also that "prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21).

Approaching the Bible to prepare a lesson must be accompanied by a prayer, and enough time to refer to some commentaries – it is always recommended to get back to some of the early Church Father commentaries to find out how our Orthodox Church understood the Scripture – also, it is important to get some personal intake from the lesson being prepared. This is why the presenter of a Bible Study is a Servant to the word of God rather than a 'Teacher'. A true servant will learn for him/herself first and then transfers to his kids the holy Christian life and concepts.



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STRUCTURE OF THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum covers both Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT). OT is divided into 9 eras and NT into 3 eras.

The following is a brief idea about the 12 eras:

CREATION: The creation of the world and man, and early events.

PATRIARCH: The birth of the Hebrew people through a family of patriarchs, covering a period of 200 years.

EXODUS: the exodus of the Hebrew people as they are delivered out of 230 years of slavery in Egypt.

CONQUEST: The conquest of the promised land by the Hebrew people upon their return from Egypt.

JUDGES: 400 years during which Israel is governed by rulers called judges.

KINGDOM: An additional 400 years period during which Israel becomes a full-fledged nation ruled by a monarchy.

EXILE: 70 years period during which Israel's leaders live in exile, having been conquered by foreign countries.



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STRUCTURE OF THE CURRICULUM

RETURN: The return of exiled Jews to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the temple.

SILENCE: A final 400 years period between the close of the OT and the opening of the NT.

CHRIST: Covers a period of a little more than 33 years. These are the years that our Lord Jesus Christ lived on earth. They detail the Divine plan for mankind redemption and salvation by Jesus Christ who is God incarnate.

CHURCH: The formation of the Christian Church by the apostles after Jesus' ascension into the heavens. In His unconditional love, God accepts all nations, Jews as well as Gentiles.

REVELATION: It reveals events to come leading to judgment day and reveals the rewards for those who conquer, and also reveals the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem.



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STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLICAL ERA

Generally, each era is presented in 4 lessons, which makes 48 lessons for the entire curriculum. However, as this program runs only from September to June of every year, and to allow for family travel and other activities like Mahragan during the 2 months of summer, and also because of the stops due to Christmas break, March break, Holy week, etc.; it ends up that the actual available weeks are much less than 48 weeks.

For this reason, an idea was introduced to run 2 Bible Study convention days per year. Usually, a Saturday is picked just after an era is completed, and the Kids are invited to this day that begins with a Liturgy, then between lessons and different activities, 1 complete era can be covered in this day. Thus, 2 eras (worth of 8 lessons) can be covered in the 2 convention days. If more weeks need to be cancelled, then 2 consecutive lessons in the same era can be combined and presented in 1 week instead of 2, to allow for some time compression.



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STRUCTURE OF EACH LESSON

Each lesson in the curriculum book has the following parts:

PASSAGE READING: this Bible Reading has all the lesson content in it. This reading is intended for the Servants and not the kids. Every Servant has to read and study this passage to be able to prepare the lesson. As a Bible Study, we encourage the kids to read in the Bible every time we meet in the class. The Servant can pick a paragraph or few verses to be read by the kids during the lesson time every week. It is important that the kids read the Bible regularly, and the Servant must correct them if they read something wrong. Also, it is important to encourage the kids to ask if they do not understand a certain part. There is a wrong idea that the OT is so difficult to understand and is so complicated. If the Servants would answer all their kids' questions, this will change this wrong idea over time.

LESSON CONCEPT: this is the main objective of the lesson. What we aim to deliver to the kids through the study of this part of the Bible.



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STRUCTURE OF EACH LESSON

LESSON SUMMARY: this part highlights what are the most important parts that the Servants will focus on through their preparation. Some lessons include many events; the Lesson Summary will focus on what to be included in the preparation to cover the “Lesson Concept”.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: these are questions put together to let the kids think and analyze the events so that the story under study is very well understood.

BIBLE VERSE: this is the golden verse of the day. In most of the lessons it comes from the “Passage Reading”. We recommend that the Servant will keep repeating the verse through his/her lesson, so that by the end of the lesson the kids don’t find a difficulty in memorizing the verse. It is also recommended to memorize the verse reference. Kids have an excellent ability to memorize, let us fill their minds with God’s words.



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STRUCTURE OF EACH LESSON

LIFE APPLICATION: these are practical, everyday situations, where we can apply what we have learned through this lesson. It is preferable that these Life Applications would be embedded over the whole lesson (i.e. they are not presented as one block at the end of the lesson). This will help the kids realize that God's word is applicable to our lives. For many situations that we are not sure what to say or what to do, the word of God is a light to our path and a safe haven.

CHURCH CONCEPT: through each lesson we can find a link to something that we see or hear or do inside our Orthodox Church. This is a simple way to show that our Church is Biblical and is also Apostolic. Furthermore, it helps to explain why we practice some rites, as for the kids their meaning may not be very clear.



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FINAL WORD

Every service without spiritual growth is missing its goal. For this reason, it is very important that the Servants meet regularly with the Priest responsible for the Bible Study service for a spiritual word that edifies, directs and reveals some needed service principles. Also, a prayer meeting after the service every week is very important. We need to thank God for He has permitted us to transfer His word to His own children. We need to put in front of Him any difficulties that we have encountered in the service, because He is fully capable of resolving them and to guide us to serve Him and His children faithfully.



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Thank You!

