

Creating a Scope and Sequence (a.k.a. "5 or 6 Year Curriculum Plan") for the Workshop Rotation Model

plus..."A Suggested 5 Year Scope and Sequence of Lessons"

This article was written by [Neil MacQueen](#), Rotation.org founder and raconteur. It was part of Neil's series of Rotation "how to" articles for which Rotation.org was created to give away. It has since been updated with many good suggestions from the Rotation.org community.

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Why this article?

The purpose of this article is to discuss HOW a church might arrive at a **LIST of Bible stories** that are to be taught in Rotation-style Sunday School (aka "Scope"), and **the ORDER of those stories** over a period of years (aka "Sequence"). In the traditional model, we let the publishers pick our stories for us. But it's not hard, and can be a wonderful OWNERSHIP opportunity for you and your volunteers to go through.

But it's more than just "picking" stories. It's about WHICH and WHEN too. At the end of this article, I lay out one possible Scope and Sequence which exemplifies Rotation thinking.

Anyone writing a curriculum makes these choices intentionally or unintentionally. It's not rocket science, but those of us in the Rotation Model have learned a few things over the years that you may find enlightening and helpful in designing your own Rotation Model's Scope and Sequence. And one of the things we've learned is to TAKE OWNERSHIP. Since writing this original article, I've seen many other good S&S's, and modified the scope and sequence suggested here. That's the nature of the thing! ...which makes this first part of this article all the more important: getting the "how and why" right.

We've also learned to **challenge cherished assumptions**. This article is going to do plenty of that.

In addition to HOW we teach, The Workshop Rotation Model is bringing renewed interest to WHAT we teach. Why? The slower Rotation Model pace of going through stories forces us to make choices about what to teach, and ***what we don't have time to teach in this particular program.*** Curriculums all make choices, but with the fewer stories covered by Rotation, the choices are much more critical.

The Math: In a traditional Sunday School with 52 stories a year for five or six years (1st -6th gr) -you can theoretically cover in the neighborhood of 250 stories without repeating any. At the Workshop Rotation pace of 10 to 12 Bible stories *a year times* five years, you wittle your Bible scope down to 50 some stories. Subtract from this number certain reoccurring seasonal stories, such as Christmas and Easter, and the scope of your Bible teaching is down to around **40 different Bible stories over 5 years.**

Of course, in Rotation, "less is more" because you spend a lot more time on these 40 stories, building student comprehension and memory, and lessening teacher prep time, -but 40 instead of 250 makes the choice of those stories more critical. That's where this article is here to help.

It isn't the purpose of this article to debate the wisdom of teaching 40 stories in Rotation versus the 250 stories in the traditional model. Rotation people obviously think it's a good idea! **But this one thing is true: any pace which doesn't produce an acceptable level of Bible literacy is the wrong pace.** Presbyterian educator and minister (and much honored) Don Griggs expressed the rationale for this depth-for-breadth trade-off when he wrote, "*While it is true that in Rotation we don't cover as many Bible stories, we do **uncover** more about them.*"

This article is meant to be a think-piece that leads to discussion in your church, -and eventually to your own scope and sequence. One of the original impulses of The Workshop Rotation Model movement was to recover the local congregation's ownership of its teaching ministry and the "permission" to reinvent its program as the times and circumstances required. I have likened denominational curriculum to being hooked up to a respirator. Fifty years of '*order it and hand it to the teachers*' has not so coincidentally put Sunday Schools on life-support. So don't skip the process of discovery. Don't just grab someone's scope and sequence and stick it on the church copier.

The process of determining your own Scope and Sequence is part of the process of getting healthy again. It is a *values clarification and ownership building exercise.* It also offers your church the opportunity to integrate what goes on in Sunday School with all the other teaching-rich events in your church's life. Some churches say they are *too small, or don't have paid staff, or have never done this before.* But in my humble opinion, those are lame excuses used by people who probably won't be too successful with this Model. Scope and Sequence isn't rocket science, it's about making your own choices, choices that build ownership opening your people up to new visions.

My Guiding Assumptions for Selecting Stories:

You are welcome to agree with them, and then add your own. Resist the temptation to skip over this first step of examining your assumptions. Your eventual list should reflect intentionality, and not merely be a grab bag of Bible stories. I sometimes call them "laws" or "rules" in this article because they are more than just a "good idea" !

1. The Primary Goal of Sunday School is... to teach Bible stories to children in a way that grows their knowledge of God's Word, faith in his Son, and attendance in his Church.

What's your definition or goal for Sunday School? And how is it different from fellowship groups, worship and other children's programming? Your Scope and Sequence shouldn't just be a catalog of Bible stories. It should help you achieve your goals, not just fill in blocks on a calendar. (Having said this, let's also remember that Sunday School alone can't do all we want to do for our kids. After coming up with your scope and sequence, you should also have a discussion about how to transform your children's ministry to accomplish ALL your goals.)

2. Faith needs scripture to help it grow

There is no comprehension and meaning without content. Scripture must be understood and remembered, not merely 'covered' by the teacher or heard. You cannot appreciate the story of the cross if you do not remember it. This is one of the reasons for four or five week lesson sets. It's also one of the reasons I will repeat certain "more essential" stories in my S & S.

3. Bible Literacy is a Good Thing

To some of you this might seem obvious. But we live in a post-modern world where many, including some leaders in the church, believe the Bible to be less important to faith than ever before. They want Sunday School to be 'fun,' even if it means the kids can't remember much of what they're taught. These people are not serious educators. They do not understand the next assumption:

Corollary: Literacy takes time. It's true for math, reading, and language literacy. Even software literacy! Repetition is crucial to most forms of learning, including learning a story, and spiritual formation.

Corollary: Repetition doesn't mean repetitive drilling. Learning is tremendously enhanced when done through various media and experiences. Content should be repeated, but methods should be varied. Sunday Schools that emphasize *what you know* over *what you believe* will produce full heads and empty hearts.

4. We teach to instill Long Term Memory

IE...*not* short term. If they do not know the essentials of a story after it is taught, then it was not properly taught. If after attempting to revive their memories we find that they have no long term memory of the content, then it was not properly taught or needs to be taught again. **This document doesn't address this, but your youth programming should "go back over" essential Bible stories with their own S & S.

5. The Rule of *Less is More* and *More is Less*. **

The more stories we try to teach without adequately teaching any of them, the less we actually teach. Rotation Model is very realistic. It says there is a limit on how much we can do WELL. It says that REMEMBERING takes time and repetition. Rush and you fail.

Example of its application: Resist the temptation to create thematic Rotations that sweep lightly across many stories which each seem to speak to the theme. A story taught lightly, is most likely a story not taught at all.

**This is a primary Rotation Model value. If you don't get this, you don't understand the Model.

6. The Laws of "The Canon within the Canon"

The Canon is the group of "accepted" books of the Bible, not often debated in this age. "Canon within the Canon" refers to those books or scriptures which are preferred more than others. In Rotation circles it can also refer to the priority which we choose to assign certain Bible stories over others. We all have our canons -our favorites.

Canon Law #1: You can't teach the whole Bible WELL to kids *in Sunday School*. It's impossible for several reasons: 1) There isn't enough time to teach each story in a memorable way (and if they don't remember it, it isn't teaching), 2) Most of our kids don't attend regularly.

Canon Law #2: Not everything in the Bible is suitable for children. You probably have your own list (and if you don't you should). On my list of PG-13 scriptures are any in which the prophets or Kings slaughter with glee, images of terrible judgement, and any story that depicts God in an un-Christlike manner. (I'm not saying throw them out, just wait til they are older and can grapple a little more with such passages.)

Canon Law #3: Some stories or ideas are more important for children to learn than others. Example Application: Paul's life story is more important for KIDS to know than Amos' and Hosea's. Example Application: Knowing about the life and teachings of Jesus is more important for KIDS to know than the entire book of Genesis. (which isn't to say we're not going to teach Genesis).

Canon Law #4: It follows then that some stories -being more 'important' than others, belong in more 'important' timeslots. The highest attendance months are my most important timeslots. Example: We should teach Jesus when we have more kids around, and Noah in August (*no cards or letter please*).

Canon Law #5: Jesus' life story and his teachings are more important to teach children and youth than any other part of the Bible. This is not to say other parts aren't important. This 'law' merely establishes priority. We want our kids to understand who he was, what he did for us, what we expect from us and what we can expect from him.

7. The Law of Stories

There has never been a better medium invented than STORY to indelibly convey the rich textures of truth. *Corollary:* The best and most memorable truths in the Bible are found in its stories and images. Even the Apostle Paul in Romans had to rely on the story memories of his followers to parse his rhetorical explanations of faith and Law (See Romans 3 and his many references to the stories of Adam and Abraham).

Rotation Application: If you have a Bible truth to teach, teach it using a Bible story. In most cases, it is better to teach a story than just a scripture verse. The story stands a MUCH better chance of be remembered, and conveying additional meaning.

8. Real Learning Can Be (and should be) Fun & Attractive

Again, this might seem obvious to you, but many of our dear brethren and sister-en secretly (and some -openly) doubt it. They "just want the kids to have a good time and want to come back." What these teachers lack is the gift of creative, kid-friendly teaching, or the proper model to be able to pull it off week after week. Unfortunately, some of our teachers were bored as kids in Sunday School and now think all they have to do is make it fun. The problem is that "fun" isn't enough to keep them coming. Don't underestimate kids --help them find where the BREAD is and they'll come back for more.

9. The Law of K.I.S.S. (also known as *Keep It Simple Stupid*)

This is similar to "More is Less." The Law of K.I.S.S. says 'thou shalt not create overly complex lessons and curriculum.' You can't reinforce the basics enough and you can't bring it down to their world too much. I've found that most teachers and printed curricula work over the kids' -and sometimes the teacher's heads. I often have to catch myself on this. Recently, I was teaching about Paul and we got on the subject of Paul and Jesus were willing to take risks for the Gospel. I'm thinking "stick up and speak up for the Gospel kids!" But for the 3rd grader sitting right in front of me, her struggle was to apply this lesson to her brother who liked to repeatedly hit her on the arm. I'm a father of three and have been teaching, and working in churches for over twenty years. I'm also a coach in two sports. If I've learned anything about training, writing & teaching a lesson plan, or raising kids in the way they should go it's K.I.S.S.

10. The Law of Assumptions (a.k.a. The Law of "Who Says So?")

Question everything. Every planning and teaching assumption deserves our scrutiny. For example, *Should we be teaching Old Testament during our peak attendance times and put off Paul to our lowest attendance times?* AND...*Just because we've always taught Noah, does the story rate a high ranking in our scope given its questionable depiction of God's mass-murdering character?* (Yes, I know, I'm a heretic.) Especially question those who say, "This is the way we're supposed to do it." If they were so right, Sunday School wouldn't be in the mess it's in.

What are YOUR beliefs, assumptions and laws governing curriculum ?

How does your Scope & Sequence inadvertently reflect emphasis or ideas you may not agree with?

SCOPE: How to Go About Creating a List of What to Teach

The first question a Rotation church has to ask is this:

WHO is the Scope for? --The Regular attenders? --or the irregular attenders?

While it is true that irregular attenders will hopefully attend at least one lesson in each Rotation, **the LIST or 'Scope' of our teaching should be for all practical purposes designed for our regular attenders.** They stand the best chance of benefiting from our intentional planning.

Thus, we create a Scope with regular attenders in mind and one question: **What stories do we want our regular attenders to encounter over the next four to six years.**

How many years in a Scope?

This is debatable. Some say a Scope should be the number of years a child will be in Rotation. Thus if your Sunday School workshops are for grades 1 through 6, you might create a six year Scope. Some churches have tried creating a three year Scope for six grades, --repeating the same stories three years later believing that now that they're older, they'll learn them differently. But to many in the Rotation community the experience indicates that 3 years doesn't seem long enough. **A consensus has emerged that a 5 or 6 year Scope and Sequence is best with a certain set of key stories repeated after 3 years in the Sequence.** See my example on this page for one way to accomplish this. And certainly, SOME stories, such as Advent and Holy Week, get extra emphasis.

Is the idea of 'Scope' just for Sunday School or is it for the Entire Children's Ministry Program?

The answer seems obvious: our Scope must consider other learning outside Sunday School. Sunday Schools have historically taught without regard to what else is being taught to the children through worship, or fellowship. They teach like nobody else in the church is teaching. A well-designed Scope and Sequence takes into account what's being taught in other venues, and makes choices based on which venue might be more appropriate for some stories and topics. For example, Baptism is a great subject for a series of children's sermons.

Here are three examples of why Scope must necessarily be a subject for the entire children's ministry:

Example #1: In my church, we have both a Sunday morning and Wednesday Night program. The majority of Wednesday night kids attend on Sunday School morning. Why should both programs teach some of the same stories? They shouldn't, --most of the time.

Example #2: Why teach about Baptism and Lord's Supper in Sunday School when on a regular basis the minister has the opportunity to teach it in worship either during the Children's Sermon and/or during the act of Baptism or Communion? I have always felt there is no better time to teach about Baptism than when a baby was being brought forward. Why then spend a precious five weeks in workshops when the best workshop will regularly be in the Sanctuary?

Example #3 Why should we spend every Advent covering the Christmas story proper when the Christmas pageant, children's sermons, and special services will cover the same territory? Wouldn't our Advent rotations be better spent covering aspects of Advent that aren't covered in these other venues? Or....and I dare say it..... it is possible that we overdose our kids on Christmas in most churches? (Yes, I think so.)

Another great reason to extend your Scope and Sequence beyond Sunday School is this: you can't teach everything you want to teach in a five year, 50 story rotation schedule.

Do NON-Bible stories belong in our Scope? I think we should *all* have a Rotation on "What it means to be a Presbyterian" ...even you Lutherans ;-) But rather than putting it in Sunday School, our annual St. Andrew's Day celebration might be a better way to teach it, in addition to doing it during Confirmation. **Don't try to throw the kitchen sink into your Scope and Sequence. It may fit better elsewhere.**

Should we have special Rotations on "How the Bible Came to Be?" Yes....but on the other hand, this is a perfect subject for the fourth graders to study prior to the annual fourth grade Bible presentation. And... shouldn't such Bible Skills be taught with each Rotation? I digress here a moment: In our original plan for Rotation, Melissa and I created the Bible Skills and Games Workshop to carry some of this 'how-to,' geography and culture load. When it was renamed "The Temple Workshop," others who copied the workshop decor may have lost some of our original intent once the original name was lost. Bible Skills and Knowledge should be a specific emphasis which one or more workshop teachers might be very well suited to emphasize over a period of years.

Should we have a Rotation on "The Forgiveness of God?" No, not at all. This is a common mistake in coming up with a Scope. Instead of picking a subject, pick a Bible story that teaches

this important concept. And remember this as well, MANY of the stories you will select for your Scope will have forgiveness content in them. I can almost guarantee you that IF you pick 10 good Bible stories a year, you will touch on EVERY major theological concept about God and all about God's character every year. No need to 'isolate it' in a special Rotation. That's missing the point.

In general

- Teach theological topics, such as "God's Love," or a skill, such as "How to Pray," or a subject, such as, "Mission Projects," through Bible stories. Stories are powerful memory producers. And recognize that most stories have several subjects in them. When you pick the story, identify the focal subject.
- Teach "reoccurring subjects" such as Mission, through *non-rotation* times (assembly times, children's sermons, and real service projects). Of course, the parable of the Good Samaritan is a good rotation story to teach service.
- Teach "Skills," such as, Bible skills, Prayer skills, and Worship Skills *while* you're engaging in those activities.
- Last but not least, seriously question whether or not some subjects *belong* in Sunday School, or are age appropriate. Sorry fellow Presbyterians, but I seriously doubt the need or efficacy of teaching Presbyterian History to 2nd graders.

In a moment, I'll propose a method for arriving at Scope. But first, let's look at the stickier subject of "Sequence."

Do we really need a different Scope for Younger and Older Children?

So people think we do. I tend to think not. One reason is most churches can't afford the luxury of running two separate curriculums. Remember the law of K.I.S.S. My other reason is this: the top 30 or so Bible stories are important for every age of student. I know that 'older children' and 'youth' curriculums trend toward 'values' and life topics. But as I read the top 30 or so Bible stories, I find they contain all the 'values' and 'life topics' we could every want to teach! What IS true is that we should emphasize certain aspects of certain stories for certain age groups. Do I need to spell out what those should be? No. You have plenty of capable adults who can help you do this.

Sequence: Putting the Stories in the "Right" Order

"Sequence" refers to the order in which content is taught. Most are familiar with the traditional Old Testament in the Fall, New Testament in the Winter-Spring lesson 'sequence.' Remember, however, my "Law of Assumptions." I'd like to question WHY we ever thought Old in Fall, New in Winter was such a great idea. I suppose it's because we read from left to right or think in terms of 'beginning to end.' I'm sure it's because it was a good planning help. We always knew we'd be somewhere in the Old Testament in the Fall. We tend to follow this Sequence because many curricula and denominations follow the church year and the life of Christ. Thus we find ourselves 'unable' to talk about Jesus until he is born in December.

Well...without getting bogged down in other reasons and interminable debate, let's just ask this question: **Does it matter if we have a sequence?** Yes....it may help our planning and organization, but honestly, I don't think it matters a whole lot to the kids if we teach a Rotation set on Jesus healing the Woman, and then bop into Moses and the Ten Commandments. We're not teaching Algebra here. And like most of us, young kids can think non-sequentially without being confused. Somewhere in the third or fourth grade they begin to understand the concept of 'history' and development a nascent sense of timeline. But for now it's enough to know that Daniel happened "hundreds of years before Jesus" and it doesn't mean we have to teach Daniel before Jesus to understand the story. In fact, we have never been strictly sequentially in the past. Traditional curriculum has for decades been 'looping' back from Old to New in the Winter, - and New Testament back to Old just in time for the Fall. (In a moment I'm going to ask 'why' we do that, btw)

Exceptions to the Observation:

The place where Sequence MIGHT matter most is in the life of Jesus. The individual events and teachings of his life are part of a whole picture. For practical and educational reasons, we want to move from birth to resurrection each year. It makes sense to teach The Lord's Supper before teaching The Cross.

The other Bible story where Sequence counts the most is the Exodus. Being able to eventually piece that story together with all its ups and downs and fickle humanity is essential to understanding the patience and forbearance of God! What most Rotation churches do is teach the Exodus story in its various parts, and then teach one final Rotation that helps students piece together the whole picture. Indeed, this is the rotation lesson set which Melissa Hansche and I included in our book, *Workshop Rotation ~A New Model for Sunday School*. It makes sense to teach the story parts relatively CLOSE TOGETHER on the calendar and in the correct order. Red Sea before Sinai, etc.

Here's a very creative twist --taking two or three months and moving through the ENTIRE Exodus story in rotation fashion. We did this in my church several years ago and it was wonderful. We created a series of 3 week rotations and marched right through the Exodus story all the way to Sinai, including manna and the Ten Commandments. When we got to the Ten Commandments we did a five week rotation. By teaching the story AS one story broken into parts, the kids were able to follow along wonderfully. It also allowed us to work our way through some fun movies, including *Prince of Egypt* and DeMille's *Ten Commandments*.

Who are the Sequences Really For?

Does it make sense to organize each year along one or two theological ideas, such as "Covenant." Yes....it can be a rather nice idea to string together 'Stories about the Covenant' beginning with Abraham, then moving into Joseph, and going into Moses. However, each of these Bible stories are huge and contain a lot of other expoundable content. It would be a shame to teach a rotation on Joseph focusing on Covenant and forgetting the wonderful story of forgiveness late in the story. Over arching themes are fine, but realize that half your kids developmentally -or because of their attendance- won't benefit from your theme. Themes are rallying and promotional points. Some of the kids will pick up on them if you stress the connections between Rotations. (There's a difference between a "theme" and a "story thread." For example, it makes sense to teach the stories of Exodus back to back because they have the

same characters and are part of a larger story. Organizing by "theme" however, is probably not as important as traditional curriculum would have us believe. Story is King!

For example: This past summer, I strung together three Rotation stories: Daniel, Good Samaritan, and Paul. Three brave people who went against convention to do what was right in God's eyes. It was a nice tie-in and allowed me to compare and contrast the stories with my students in discussion.

Last year I strung together several stories about Jesus that walked through four questions: "Who is this man?" (Names people gave Jesus), "Why did people want to be near him?" (Man let down through roof to be healed), "How does it feel to be with him?" (Calming the Storm), "What can he do for you?" (Walk on Water with him). We used this bit of Scope and Sequence mainly to help our teachers see where the lessons were going. As one of the lead teachers, I know for a fact that the children didn't catch all the connections between the stories. But they DID learn all the stories.

The older your students, the more important themes and Sequence are. But I think the educational benefits of 'Sequence' are often overrated. If it is THAT important, why do we stop teaching about Jesus come Easter and shift to Paul. Are we really done with Jesus? No....other considerations override the idea of Sequence. And that is as it should be.

Somewhere out there (beneath the pale moonlight), someone still thinks there is something magical about Scope and Sequence. Someone still believes that somehow curriculum publishers have secret knowledge and plans we don't know about. Several years ago I was at a conference where a new curriculum was being introduced by a major denomination. The curriculum staff person was asked how they came up with their Scope and Sequence. She said, "We all split up into small work groups, came up with lists of stories we thought we important, got back together as a large group, and after much discussion we started voting." So much for the special knowledge theory. Their process wasn't that dissimilar from the one here, but... I can't say if they shared my assumptions and odd points of view. Probably not.

What time of the year should we teach certain stories?

Here IS some *special knowledge*: Attendance fluctuates throughout the year. And...if you're like most churches, you get your best attendance mid-October through Easter. Why is this *special*? Because it means *as we prioritize which stories to teach* there are also the decisions of **WHEN TO TEACH each story during the year**. Decide which stories are "most important" to you, and make sure they fall during your peak attendance.

For example, why do we always teach Paul in the Spring? It's because of the lectionary and the fact that Paul comes after Jesus who we usually teach during Lent. Of course Jesus stories are THE most important, but is Paul less important than the Old Testament? I personally think the story of his conversion on the Road to Damascus is one of THE KEY STORIES of the Bible, ...way ahead of Noah, but most churches teach Noah during peak attendance, -go figure.

[Please note that I'm not suggesting that the Old Testament is inferior. It is scripture. But when forced by the calendar and attendance to make choices, and taking into consideration WHO we want our kids to have faith in, Jesus wins hands down.]

Another example of how I'm going to teach the majors of majors at high attendance times is right after Advent in Year Four (see below). I'm teaching the Road to Emmaus and Doubting Thomas stories in January and February rather than the low attendance springtime. Yes...I know it seems strange. We've been brought up to teach these stories after the Resurrection. Problem is --the classrooms are often as empty as the tombs.

Let me add another Law for Rotation Educators: **The *This ain't rocket science* Law**. Good people can figure this out. It doesn't take a special degree to teach kids the Parable Prodigal Son or string together lessons. What it takes is an understanding of your key objectives. If your key commitment is to teach certain key stories to the widest possible audience, you're going to have to break with some traditions.

How to Go About Creating a Scope and Sequence

1) Form a "Scope & Sequence Team." Include the pastor, sharp teachers, some elders, and some older kids.

2) Have your Team read this article and discuss it.

3) Send your Team home with "homework" a list of 50 to 75 Bible stories. Include scopes from other churches so they can see variety.

You can also use the Table of Contents from a Children's Bible, or a chart of the teachings of Jesus from a study Bible to help you make this resource. *365 Bible Stories for Children* from Lion Publishing is an excellent resource to remember all those great stories. I used it to develop my Scope. Ask your pastor for a copy of the lectionary too, if you're a lectionary-led church.

4) Reconvene for the purpose of coming up with a **SCOPE** of stories.

a. Begin by listing all the places your church teaches its children. Make columns for each place/program on a wall or chalkboard. Then give each person a pad of *large* post-it notes.

b. Then...."Split into small groups (of two or three), talk, and have each person in your group highlight their Top 20 stories, and Bottom 20. Have them prepared to explain why, and to debate. Avoid doing this as one group, it will squash creativity. Arrive at a small group consensus then get back together with the other group(s) and compare lists.

By first splitting into small groups you increase the likelihood of variety and creativity. You'll also be less likely to develop the same blind spots as you would if you did this exercise as one group.

c. Now Tackle **SEQUENCE**: Back in the large group, decide which topics, stories, ideas most logically belong in 'other' areas of your Children's Ministry. For example, you may put 'Prayer'

and 'Baptism' in the Children's Sermon column. These subjects can be covered every year in the children's sermon and it frees up a lot of extra time in your Sunday School to teach something else.

d. Circulate your list among church leaders. This may keep you from missing something important, values what others know, and builds ownership. After a period of comment, go with that list.

Whatever you come up with, you *will* refine it. Write it in pencil, not in stone.

3) Finally, after it is approved, POST your Scope and Sequence in a prominent place in the Sunday School. Don't bury it in a filing cabinet. This will help teachers, students and parents. It may also bring you teachers who want to teach their "favorite story." At the beginning of each or semester, remind your pastor of the Scope. Encourage the occasional sermon or adult education class in-step with your Scope. Create a library shelf of resources to take home on the Rotation.

Planning and Gleaning Note for Design Team and Staff Person:

If you're the staff person in charge of the Scope and Sequence, keep a large copy of the Scope and Sequence posted in your office and/or develop a filing system with a place for each story and subject. We all come up with ideas out of sequence as we read, teach and wake up in the middle of the night. Accumulate these resources long before you need them instead of hoping you remember them when the time comes!

One Possible Five Year Scope and Sequence for a Workshop Rotation Model church for FIVE Grade Groups

This plan demonstrates a logical scope and sequence based upon the concepts in this article. In practice, you might adopt a different one based upon your own concepts, needs, and creative juices.

This plan is for grades 1-5 (five grade groups). It covers **certain KEY Bible stories TWICE in five years**. If I had sixth graders in my Rotation, I'd add a sixth year. **To get my sixth year**, I'd pull key stories from the SUMMERS slots in my FIVE year plan. Why? Because I've identified my five year plan summer stories as 'important.' I would then add 8 or 10 NEW stories back into the summer timeslots through the plan. Remember Canon Law #4: Those stories which you identify as 'more important' belong in better timeslots.

Why three years? Four? Five? Six or more? How many years should be in a Scope and Sequence? Most educators and researchers identify grades 1 through 5 as being in a particular developmental stage. The thinking goes that you can teach a story quite differently to a four year old, than a thirteen year old. Of course, some churches break their age groups down in different ways, but most of us would agree that when they hit thirteen, their needs change, both intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. They can also wrestle with theological concepts and themes, such as, *Covenant* and *The Nature of Evil*, in a much more intricate and mature way .

Older kids CAN learn with the Rotation Model, but most educators would agree that they require a different sort of Scope and Sequence. More on this below...

Remember, this Scope and Sequence is *my* idea based on my assumptions, goals and situation. You can take it and make it into six-year plan, four year plan, whatever. It's YOUR DECISION as it should be. In fact, if your plan looks exactly like mine, I'd probably question how much effort you put into it!

Remember also that any new Scope and Sequence must take into account what preceded it. If you just did a VBS about the Ten Commandments, then you may not need to do them in your first year of your new Scope.

Adding More Years? ...and Older Students?

Depending on the particulars of your situation, you might add a sixth year of stories. I supposed you could even add a seventh year if you were teaching grades 1 through 7. But I would caution against it. A serious developmental change happens in your students' brains around age 13. They will need to wrestle with new issues and will now be able to re-learn earlier taught stories with deeper understanding. If you are including Jr. or Sr. Highs in your Rotation, all the "Laws" I've shared still apply, and you may want to have Year 6 or 8 REPEAT a set of core stories you identify as incredibly important. For example.... If I had Jr. Highs in my Rotation, I would repeat my Year One stories in Year Seven, and perhaps pick a few other stories from other years for repetition in Year Eight.

Here's how I'm scheduling my annual "Holy Week" Rotations:

Year One: Last Supper and Gethsemane

Year Two: Trial and Crucifixion

Year Three: The Empty Tomb

Year Four: The Walk to Emmaus, Doubting Thomas (two separate Rotations)

Year Five: The sequence of Holy Week (focus on each child being able to tell the whole story in sequence)

In addition..... Outside of Sunday School I'm going to hold at least one Seder, Communion classes for children. It's important to note that each year my kids will hear the entire set of Passion stories in special Worship services and children's sermons. In Sunday School we're breaking Holy Week into smaller parts so we can dig into them.

**Those who do not see the entire scope of the church's offerings and opportunities for teaching will feel extremely confined by Rotation Model scopes.

Here's how I'm scheduling my annual "Advent" Rotations:

Each **Advent** Rotation last about THREE weeks. This is ok since it comes every year! The Advent Rotation is not only short because of the time of year and special events, but I also want to get in three full rotations in the Fall before turning to Advent. I think it is fair to say that of all the stories in the Bible, the kids will have the most proficiency in the Christmas stories AND the Christmas story will be part of their Worship experience. Thus, I don't feel obligate to cover every part of Christmas EACH year in Sunday School. Instead....we'll break it down like this:

Year One Advent: Matthew -Wise people still seek Him.
 Year Two Advent: Luke - Unexpected News -God comes to the lowly (Shepherds/Mary)
 Year Three Advent: Refocusing Christmas on Jesus (examining the popular culture around Christmas)
 Year Four Advent: John 1:1 - Jesus the Word of God
 Year Five Advent: Isaiah - A different kind of Messiah

*Notice that certain Key Bible Stories, such as, Holy Week, reappear EACH year. I've put my reasons and/or comments for some selections in the right hand column.

<u>The Stories</u>	<u>Neil Comments</u>
<p><u>Year One & Year Three</u></p> <p>The Great Commandment</p> <p>The Ten Commandments</p> <p>Daniel and the Lion's Den (obeying God)</p> <p>Advent Year 1: Matt: Wise Men/People Advent Year 3: Examining Christmas culture</p> <p>Good Samaritan</p> <p>Prodigal Son</p> <p>Year One: Last Supper and Gethsemane Year Five: The sequence of Holy Week</p> <p>Psalm 23</p> <p>Year One: Esther Year Three: Zaccheus</p> <p>Year One Summer: Paul the letter writing Prisoner, Paul the risk-taking Preacher,</p> <p>Year Three Summer: (1) Anointing of David (2) David and Saul (3) David</p>	<p><u>Year One and Three repeat the stories of the Great Commandment, Ten Commandments, Daniel, Prodigal Son, and Good Samaritan.</u></p> <p>Jesus said the Great Commandment (love God, love neighbor as self), sums up all the Law and the Prophets. So I guess you could say he thought it is pretty important!*</p> <p>*In another version of this Scope and Sequence I would take the entire Fall to teach the Exodus story and conclude with the Ten Commandments. Two years later I would teach The Great Commandments, Good Sam, and Prodigal Son as a way of "revisiting" these important concepts of "what does God want us to do."</p> <p>Notice how Ten Commandments follows on that, then two more of Jesus' teachings in the same vein: Good Sam teaches about loving neighbor, Prodigal Son illustrates God's response to those who turn their lives around and love God. This is a great example of sequencing to enhance your teaching.</p> <p>Daniel's story is important for several reasons. Daniel is a role model for resisting peer pressure and false worship. He is unafraid to show his faith in front of others. And it shows the importance of prayer.</p> <p>My advent rotations will not be the same in years one and three.</p> <p>Psalm 23.... The entire Gospel and every important theological idea condensed into one poem. If there is one Bible passage that says more and means more,</p>

and Jonathan.

Year Two:

Jesus heals the Man Let Down Through the Roof

Jesus heals: Jairus' daughter, the blind man, and the woman who touches his cloak.

The Widows Mite (and the story of what makes a disciple 'great' in God's eyes)

Advent 2: Luke

The Call of Moses (burning bush)

Moses, Pharaoh and the Exodus*

Trial and Crucifixion

The Story of Pentecost (defining 'Good News' and learning how to share it)

Year Two Summer: (1) Genesis 1 and Psalm 8: Stewards of the Earth, (2) Genesis 2: Adam and Eve -the sin of hiding their sin, (3) Other Stories from Genesis

I haven't seen it.

My first two rotations deal with the subject of healing and miracles. The first Rotation focuses on the man's friends and their enormous effort to bring healing to a friend by bringing him to Jesus. The second Rotation will teach three stories together and focus on Jesus' compassion and power.

Widows Mite is the first of two focused 'Stewardship Rotations' ...the second being Parable of the Good Steward/Talents in year four. * Elsewhere in this article I discuss an alternative way of grouping the Exodus stories into a string of rotations during a season.

Call of Moses will include a tidbit about his birth.

We'll stop the story after they cross the Red Sea. They've already done the giving of the Ten Commandments in Year One.

Year Four:

Paul on the Road to Damascus

The Walk to Emmaus

Doubting Thomas

Advent 4: John 1

Asleep in the Boat

A Walk on the Water

This Year Four sequence may seem strange to a lectionary bred educator (such as myself!). But my sequence 'thread' is "Encountering, walking with Jesus." I've moved the traditional 'Easter-ish' stories of Emmaus and Thomas into the Fall (perhaps a little 'Easter in Autumn' P.R. would be fun too).

Asleep in the Boat and Walk on the Water are encounters with Jesus that get into the question of 'what is faith' and 'how do you act when you have it?'

In both the Parable of the Sower and Stewards, part of the focus will be on "How do we share the Good News of Easter?" "Why is it that not everyone believes in the Resurrection? (different soils), and

<p>Parable of the Sower</p> <p>Parable of the Good Stewards (Pounds/Talents)</p> <p>Year Four Summer: (1) Elijah - Chariot of fire story with Elisha picking up Elijah's mantle to carry on, (2) Mary and Martha working together to serve, (3) Paul and Timothy working together and Paul's words to the young person, (4) Jacob & Esau</p> <p><u>Year Five</u></p> <p>Stories of Abraham & Sarah*</p> <p>Parables of the 'Lost:' --Sheep, Coin</p> <p>The Story of Jonah</p> <p>Advent 5: The Prophet Isaiah -The Promise and definition of 'Messiah'</p> <p>Baptism & Temptation of Jesus</p> <p>The Be-attitudes</p> <p>The Empty Tomb</p> <p>The Story of Joseph</p> <p>Year Five Summer: (1) Introducing Elijah the Prophet, (2) The story of Jonah (3) Images of the Kingdom of God (mustard seed and pearl).</p>	<p>what must we do with the News God has given us? (stewardship of the News, not just our money!) The Parable of the Good Stewards also picks up from the Asleep in the boat and Walk on the water story ideas of 'how do you act when you have faith.'</p> <p>Notice my thread of "two people" in Year Four Summer. Theme threads during the summer can be particularly helpful due to more erratic attendance. I've also chosen to squeeze in a fourth rotation during the summer -shortening my Rotations to three weeks.</p> <p>Year Five Thread: The concept of Covenant is introduced in Abraham and Sarah's stories. Then in the Parables of the Lost Sheep and Coin, The story of Jonah and the promise of a Messiah we see to what extent God will go to keep his end of the Covenant. *I like the idea of extending the Abraham & Sarah rotation to 6 or 7 weeks and working through related stories: Call, Covenant, Visit to Sarah.</p> <p>Later in year three the Joseph story illustrates the concept of forgiveness and redemption in microcosm.</p> <p>Beginning with Advent 5 and going into Baptism, Temptation and Beatitudes the lessons deal with the ideas of the <i>unexpected</i> messiah and different kind of message, -'the 'upside-down' thinking of Jesus. The surprise of the Empty Tomb picks up on this too.</p> <p>Later in year four we'll teach the story of Elijah and the Chariot of fire and Elisha picking up Elijah's mantle to carry on. Great metaphor and question: will you become like Elijah? Will you come into the church and pick up the mantle.</p>
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Subjects & Stories I'll mainly reserve for Children's Sermons*:

Baptism, Communion, Prayer, Names for Jesus that reveal something important about him (Counselor, Prince of Peace, etc.), Heaven, being a Church, The Body of Christ, Mission stories.

I will also introduce the kids to "People in the Bible I want you to meet." Job, Shadrach/Meshach/Abednego, Miriam, Samuel, Jeremiah, King Saul, Peter. I'll take two or three Sundays (or Wednesday evening devotion times) to tell a little story about each person.

My point is not to say YOU have to do it this way too, but to show you how I find other places to cover important subjects.

Exceptions & Additions

I had fun doing a summer rotation on in my church about 3 People from the Book of Acts: Cornelius w/Peter, Lydia with Paul, Paul & Silas in prison. All three stories had a baptism and raised the issue of what it takes to become a believer/follower. Great stories to teach in sequence!

***Please remember that I'm not 'relegating' these subjects or considering them less important.** I have always believed that certain subjects are actually BEST taught *outside* Sunday School. Some of these subject might be dealt with several times over the course of five years. EVERY Scope and Sequence forces you to make choices, whether traditional or Rotation format.

And.... as you can tell by my Five Year Scope and Sequence, we'll be dealing with the subject matter of many of these stories (in addition to the topics found in some of the stories below that I don't want to teach, yet). Example: Prayer will be dealt with in the Lord's Prayer Rotation and Daniel, in addition to praying with the kids each week. Example: Mission will be dealt with in Pentecost (sharing Good News) and Man Let Down Through the Roof (bringing others to Jesus), among others.

Subjects and Stories I'll especially want to do in my VBS program:

Marketplace 29 A.D –style, “Life in Bible Times”
The Tabernacle/Temple/Worship
Sermon on the Mount

Stories I believe aren't suitable or necessary for kids...

Last but not least.... We all have certain stories we'd rather not teach *IN SUNDAY SCHOOL*. Here are mine. Please *don't* email me about this list. We all have our odd ideas & heresies. I'm willing to share mine with you so at least you know I didn't 'overlook' them when making up my Scope.

Cain and Abel: Does a third grader need to know about "the first murder?" No.

Tower of Babel: What's the point here that can't be better dealt with by another story?

Noah: It's just a cute animal story once you sidestep God wiping out everybody. That's not the God I know in Jesus. As far as teaching the concept of 'Covenant' there are many other stories to do it with.

Samson: Do we really need to teach this story about a warrior who likes to sleep around?

Woman caught in Adultery, Woman at the Well, Job... The subject matter or story elements are not for young children.

Obadiah, Amos, Joel and Friends: Most of the minor prophets' stories are too heady for my kids.

End Times: Wait until they're older. You'll just scare them now. (of course, "Heaven" is a great topic).

Church History and Heroes of the Church: teach them in Worship, Confirmation and/or

Children's Sermons. Five weeks on George Whitehead or John Knox is too bizarre, and one week is useless.

Some Jesus stories, including: Cana, Rejection, Demonic, Fig Trees, Woman at the Well, etc. etc. We just *don't have time* for everything. And... some just don't translate well for kids!

Please remember that some concepts are BEYOND our children's ability to grasp. The kids will hear a message, but often not the message we intended. For more on this, look for the article at rotation.org on child developmental issues.

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