

The Compass Curriculum

The adult Sunday School publications from DiscipleGuide Church Resources follow a seven-year plan of studies known as *the Compass Curriculum*. The cycle as a whole aims to ***teach the truth of Scripture for Christian living today while demonstrating the historical sequence and the gradual unfolding of revelation through the Bible.***

Users and potential users of the curriculum should be aware of these key features of the cycle.

The first year consists of four quarters of Bible survey.

This general survey of the Bible lays a foundation on which all other studies build. It helps students know the essential context to all Bible passages, and it enables them to understand elements of truth in relation to the overall message.

Although much stress is put on backgrounds such as history, geography, and the succession of identifiable eras, every lesson during the survey year continues to pinpoint truth for life today, drawn from the flow of God's dealings with people throughout the Bible.

The survey year in the current seven-year period began in September 2003. The four quarters were planned to cover from Creation through the wilderness wanderings (fall), from the conquest of Canaan through the end of the Old Testament (winter), the life of Christ (spring), and from Acts through Revelation (summer).

During the next six years after the Bible survey, the quarters reflect truth for life today from eighteen appropriately balanced portions of the Bible.

These Bible portions, called *curriculum areas*, have been selected because they line up to reflect the significant ages of time in Bible history and the progress of God's revelation of truth. With nine curriculum areas in the Old Testament and nine in the New, these segments of the Bible contain varying amounts of scripture by volume, but they are balanced in their significance to New Testament believers.

In chronological order the curriculum areas are as follows. Each of them includes not only historical accounts of the period, but also other writings (poetry, prophecy, letters, etc.) associated with it.

Old Testament

1. The patriarchal age
2. The Exodus and wilderness wanderings
3. The Conquest through Saul
4. David
5. Solomon
6. The divided kingdom (to the fall of Samaria)
7. Judah's decline (Hezekiah through Zedekiah)
8. The Babylonian captivity
9. The Return

New Testament

10. The Gospels
11. The infant church
12. Paul's first and second journeys
13. Paul's third journey
14. Paul's fourth journey

15. Paul's prison letters
16. The General Letters
17. The Pastoral Letters
18. John's writings

Except during the survey year, quarters alternate between the Old Testament and New.

This pattern meets two goals. First, it prevents studies from remaining in one testament for so long that the balancing perspective of the other testament is lost. Second, it lends variety to the curriculum; every quarter introduces a change of pace.

Except for the pattern of alternation, the quarters in these six years do move chronologically in an effort to keep students oriented to historical contexts established during the survey year. The studies flow like this:

Old Testament 1 (patriarchal age)
New Testament 1 (Gospels)
Old Testament 2 (Exodus and wanderings)
New Testament 2 (Infant church)
Etc.

The pattern described above is broken periodically with “open” quarters.

These departures from the standardized curriculum occur about once per year — seldom enough to keep from obscuring the normal pattern, but often enough to prevent monotony. Besides giving a sense of freshness to the curriculum, these open quarters make it possible to treat relevant topics that might otherwise be neglected. They also expose people to truths that arise from multiple curriculum areas.

In the quarters based on the eighteen curriculum areas, the actual quarterly themes are focused topical or textual studies within the designated coverage span or arising naturally from it.

Each quarter *reflects* its curriculum area, but does not necessarily survey it in its entirety. For example, during one seven-year cycle the quarter from the Gospels focused on Jesus' Upper-Room Discourse from John 13-17. In another run of the cycle the Gospels quarter overviewed the miracles of Jesus. Both quarters give insight to the teachings of the Gospels as a whole, but they do so from different viewpoints.

Again, this feature of the curriculum plan affords the stability of an organized plan of studies and yet opens the door to freshness and variety over time.

The focused themes for the various quarters include a healthy variety of approaches.

Since the Bible consists of sixty-six books, many quarters are book studies. But the Bible also gives biographical accounts of many great role models, so other quarters will feature character studies. Others will deal with significant doctrinal or topical themes (the Godhead, miracles, the Second Coming, salvation, the church, etc.) or common life interests (the family, service to God, personal devotions, worship, etc.). Curriculum planners review the cycle annually to verify that quarters fit together for an effective mix.

To emphasize the progression of God's revelation through history, quarters feature introductory and/or concluding lessons to give perspective on the quarter within the whole of Bible truth.

The seven-year cycle, with its survey year and its alternation from Old Testament to New in chronological order, is designed to demonstrate the historical sequence and the gradual unfolding of revelation through the Bible. No matter how well a curriculum is organized, however, Sunday School students cannot always relate what they study in a given quarter to what they studied last quarter, much less some years earlier. Therefore, every quarter begins and/or ends with a perspective-building emphasis on how the truth of the individual quarter relates to God's overall revelation in Scripture. For example, if the focused study surveys a letter or a book of prophecy, the quarter may open with passages from historical books of the corresponding period to set the context.

In summary, two needs come together in the Compass Curriculum: the *then* and the *now*.

In terms of *then*, adult students must learn the people and events of Bible times and relate the teachings of the Bible to its own times. The seven-year cycle meets this need with the first-year Bible survey, with quarters reflecting the eighteen curriculum areas, and introductory and/or concluding lessons to the quarters.

In terms of *now*, adults must absorb the Bible's message for Christian living today. The seven-year cycle ministers to this need with focused quarterly themes, alternation between the two testaments, and occasional "open" quarters.

All of these features combine to provide adult Sunday School students with a well-designed curriculum revealing the truth of God's Word for life in our day.

[Click here to read the philosophy underlying the adult Sunday School curriculum.](#)

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