

**God Works through
Prophets and Kings**

Old Testament 4

DIRECTOR HANDBOOK



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Welcome to Cross Explorations

Cross Explorations is the Sunday School with the biblical integrity you've come to expect from Concordia Publishing House. The Bible accounts in Cross Explorations follow the same sequence as Concordia's traditional Sunday School curriculum, Growing in Christ.

Cross Explorations combines the best of large-group/small-group instruction and site rotation. Leaders will love the easy-to-use leader guides as well as the options available for each lesson. Above all, Cross Explorations puts Christ at the center of each and every lesson.

Exploring Cross Explorations

Cross Explorations at a Glance

Engage

Cross Explorations starts with Engage. During Engage, all students take part in an opening activity together, singing and preparing for the rest of their exploration.

Explore

The Explore site divides kids by two age levels. Level 1 includes kids in grades 1–3, while Level 2 covers kids in grades 4–6. During Explore, students dig into the day's Bible story, guided by the Explore Teacher Leaflets and their Explore Student Leaflets. We recommend having eight to ten kids in a group with one leader. So, depending on the number of kids you have, you may have multiple Level 1 and Level 2 groups.

Express

During Express, kids apply the Bible learning from the Explore session to their lives as they create, experiment, sing, serve, and more. Options depend on the time you have available and the talents of your volunteers. The Express leader materials provide numerous options for each week:

- **Express Craft Booklet**—thirteen pull-apart cards provide creative projects for each lesson, complete with supply lists, directions, talking points, and pictures of the completed craft.
- **Express Music CD**—includes recorded music, music activities for each lesson, and PowerPoint slides with linked music. Reinforce the lesson with new songs, old favorites, and familiar hymns.
- **Express Skit CD**—brief skits allow students to review each Bible lesson. Ideas for costumes and visual props are included.
- **Express Activities & More CD**—includes creative snack ideas and group activities for each week. Additional activity ideas, including service projects, are suggested for some weeks. Activities include the following:
 - Group activities
 - Science demonstrations
 - Service projects

Leaders have the option to access materials by week, by topic, or by type of activity.

The amount of time available determines if students will rotate through one, two, or more Express options each week. If time is limited, vary Express activities from week to week so students get a chance to experience different types of learning.

The Cross Explorations Schedule

Cross Explorations offers flexibility for a variety of settings. Here is a suggested schedule for a traditional 60-minute Sunday morning setting:

- All students at Engage for 15 minutes.
- Students break into Explore Levels 1 and 2 for 20 minutes.
- Students move through two or more Express rotations for 25 minutes.

If you are using Cross Explorations in a Midweek setting, your schedule probably offers more time. In this setting, the Engage and Explore times remain the same, but extra time may be used to include additional small-group Express options.

Flexibility

The flexible Cross Explorations materials allow you to customize the program to fit your specific needs. Here's how one congregation customized Cross Explorations to meet the specific needs in their Sunday School. They have a lot of students in grades 1–3, with smaller numbers in each of the older grades. Their solution:

- Everyone in grades 1–6 starts together in Engage.
- With a smaller number of students in grades 4–6, they move as one group into Explore. Following Explore, the older students split into two groups and rotate through two Express stations.
- Meanwhile, the younger students in grades 1–3 stay in single-grade groups and rotate through three stations. Explore becomes one of the three rotations, and leaders choose the other two stations from the Express materials.

Cross Explorations in a Self-Contained Classroom

Some congregations, by preference or due to limited space or number of students, use Cross Explorations in self-contained classrooms. The flexible Cross Explorations resources easily allow for use in this setting. If needed, divide students into two groups, lower grades (1–3) and upper grades (4–6), and plan on a leader for each group. If most of your students are younger, you could use just the Level 1 materials; likewise, use the Level 2 materials if most of your students are older.

Introduce the lesson to all students, using the Engage Teacher Leaflets and optional PowerPoint slide shows. (Or provide an *Engage CD* to each teacher to use in the classroom.)

Then, divide students into two or more groups for the Explore Bible study. Have them meet with their leader in their classroom or an assigned area of a larger space to dig into the Bible account and work through the student leaflets.

Following Explore, have students continue with Express activities in their classroom or rotate through Express activities with other classes. They can stay in the Explore groups, combine with other groups, or form new groups. Select the Express options that work best for your setting. These options can vary from week to week to keep students excited and engaged in what might happen next week.

Assembling Small Groups

Small groups form the core of Cross Explorations. Groups may be assigned by traditional grade levels or by combining students from the three grades comprising each of the two levels for Explore. For instance, you could have two or more groups of students from grades 1–3. Likewise, you could have groups with a mix of students from grades 4–6. Ideally, groups will have eight to ten students in them. If you have more than ten students at either level, plan on two Explore sites for that level. Depending on the age range of your students and their level of maturity, you also might include students in third grade in your Level 2 groups.

What about Other Sunday School Levels?

Preschool

We recommend letting preschoolers learn in their own settings and groups. The Growing in Christ *Early Childhood Teacher Guide* has age-appropriate material for preschoolers that follows the same lesson sequence as Cross Explorations.

Keeping preschoolers separate from your elementary program is beneficial for several reasons. Sunday School is often a preschooler's first group experience. A young child needs a safe environment with predictable routines and the same caring teacher each week to feel secure. Parents and children may feel anxious, timid, or afraid in the midst of the larger Sunday School setting. If you can, give preschoolers separate learning spaces so that they can do age-appropriate activities in an environment suitable to their needs. Preschoolers can get lost among older kids, but in their own space, they can relax, play, and feel more secure. This kind of atmosphere maximizes their ability to learn and remember.

Middle School and High School

Since Cross Explorations is a complementary program to Growing in Christ, you can use Growing in Christ for middle-school and high-school levels. The two programs share a common Bible story, so the whole family is studying the same story each week.

Adults

The Cross Explorations *Explore Adult Bible Study Guide* provides weekly lessons for adult learners. Parents and other adults join children for the large-group Engage session, then continue learning in their own Explore group for thirty minutes. Families continue learning at home through the *Explore More Cards*. These talking points help families take the lesson home each week and engage kids and parents in talking about the faith.

Leading Cross Explorations

Staffing for Cross Explorations lets volunteers work from their strengths. Each Cross Explorations leader works in a role designed to let him or her be most effective. It is beneficial when groups of children have two adults present with them at all times.

Large-Group Leader

The large-group leader begins each week's Cross Explorations adventure during the Engage session. This leader needs the energy and confidence to work with a large group of children. The Engage leader should also have the ability to get kids excited about learning. Since this large-group leader sets the tone for the day, choose this leader—or leadership team—carefully. Because of the variety of ages involved, it is important to select a large-group leader who communicates well with students.

Site Leaders

Your Cross Explorations site leaders do what they do best—crafts, music, science, teaching the lesson, and more. Volunteers who feel comfortable teaching students would be ideal leaders for the Explore Level 1 and Level 2 sites. For the most effective learning environment, Explore leaders should be consistent from week to week. If teaching volunteers like to work in teams, enlist three teachers for each Explore team and encourage at least two of them to be present each week. Volunteers with a love for crafts, music, or other ways to apply the lesson truths would be excellent leaders for the Express sites you choose. Since Express sites may vary each week, volunteers may take turns serving.

Rotation Small-Group Leaders

Cross Explorations small-group leaders serve a very important role. You will need one small-group leader for every eight to ten kids. The small-group leaders may not have to teach; rather, they lead their small group of students from one site to another. Groups may be assigned by age or grade level, or they may be multi-graded. Strive for groups no larger than ten students. Encourage students to select a name for their group in order to develop a sense of group identity. Small-group leaders

- are leaders and encouragers, not bosses;
- develop friendships with every child in their group;

- help and encourage kids to participate, cooperate, and try new things;
- ask questions and lead kids to discover Bible answers;
- keep kids focused on tasks and challenges;
- participate in activities;
- get to know their group members well; and
- are patient and do not yell or express anger.

Older adults and older youth often make ideal small-group leaders. In some situations, you may want to have your small-group leaders actually be the teachers for the Explore or Express sites. For the balance of the time at Cross Explorations, these teachers simply lead their small group. The choice is yours!

Cross Explorations Resources

The Cross Explorations leader materials provide all of the resources your volunteers need to effectively share God’s Word with children.

■ Engage

- **Leader Leaflet** includes opening activities and music suggestions.
- **Engage Music CD** provides selected music for use in Cross Explorations.

■ Explore

- **Level 1 Teacher Leaflets** include resources for teaching the Bible story to children in grades 1–3.
- **Level 1 Student Leaflets** include full-color Bible art and activities for children in grades 1–3.
- **Level 2 Teacher Leaflets** include resources for teaching the Bible story to children in grades 4–6.
- **Level 2 Student Leaflets** include full-color Bible art, activities, and discussion questions for children in grades 4–6.
- **Explore More Cards** provide family-centered questions and activities to extend the lesson to the home each week.
- **Explore Adult Bible Study Guide** allows parents and other adults to explore the same lesson that kids do each week.

■ Express

- **Express Craft Booklet** uses visuals to guide students as they express the lesson creatively. (Craft activity patterns, when required, are found on the Express Activities & More CD.)
- **Express Music CD** allows kids to express the lesson through song.
- **Express Skit CD** lets students express the lesson through drama and role play.
- **Express Activities & More CD** has ideas and activities that vary from week to week. These include science demonstrations, games, snacks, service projects, and more. Each one provides students with unique ways to express their learning. (This CD may also contain craft patterns.)

■ Director CD

- **Director Handbook** contains planning materials for the Sunday School Leader.
- **Preparing the Lesson** leaflets are included for each week. Provide all your volunteer leaders with copies of these devotions as they prepare for each week's lesson.
- **Planning Pages** are designed to help teachers and leaders plan the lessons each week. The planning pages outline the activities available for each section of the lesson.
- **Bulletin Notes** are designed to help connect your congregation and Sunday School by providing a brief lesson highlight and suggested questions for parents and others to discuss with students.
- **Pronunciation Guide** helps teachers and students correctly pronounce more difficult names of people and places in the Bible.
- **Arch Book List** helps teachers reinforce the Bible account by providing another method of sharing the story with students.

The Perfect Setting: Environment Matters

Stress, mess, and chaos hinder learning. Open a door to effective learning by providing a relaxed, comfortable environment.

- Make sure your facility is clean and safe. Eliminate unneeded furniture and supplies.
- Use child-size furniture so kids feel comfortable.
- Decorate to capture curiosity. Nearly 75 percent of people are visual learners who learn best with visual prompts. Thematic decorating helps them understand and remember well.
- Use words and pictures on signs for sites, restrooms, and offices.

Where to Meet

Deciding where to meet for Cross Explorations will depend on the space available in your building.

Engage requires a space large enough for all students to be seated and equipped so the leader can be heard clearly. If you plan to use the recording on the Engage CD, you will need a CD player. If you plan to use the PowerPoint presentation on the Engage CD, you will need a computer and a projector. The church sanctuary, a fellowship hall, or even a gymnasium can work for this session.

Explore requires separate spaces for the two levels. Classrooms equipped with chairs or desks or a section of a larger room that can be screened off will both work for this session. Preschool students, youth, and adults should have their own meeting locations apart from the Explore session.

Express sessions offer the greatest flexibility as far as meeting locations. You could offer multiple Express sites in one large space, provided you can screen off areas to prevent distractions. Rolling dividers, movable walls, or even

fabric panels help block the view from one area to another. In other situations, separate classrooms might offer the best setting for the Express sessions.

Decorating Ideas

Help students experience Cross Explorations by setting the scene for learning. Your decorations may be as simple as Concordia's realistic Bible Story Poster Sets. These sets contain pictures of each Bible story. Use posters to decorate Explore learning areas so teachers can refer to the appropriate picture for that week's lesson. You can view the posters in each set by searching "Bible Story Posters" at www.cph.org/sundayschool.

If you have a dedicated area for Sunday School, consider more extensive decorating to help set the stage for learning. Furnish Explore and Express areas with Bible-times decorations. Piles of brightly striped pillows can double as seating for storytelling time. Use baskets and ceramic vessels to hold craft supplies and student materials for each Express location. You might even set up a Bible-times marketplace to keep students engaged in the learning process.

Which Map?

by Brad Alles

To find your way confidently on any journey, it helps to have a reliable map. Whether that map is on a large sheet of paper, a digital device, or in your head, it is the key to finding your way. When we engage someone—a family member, a friend or acquaintance, or a stranger—in a conversation about faith, it is important to know what map, what worldview, they are using. A worldview is a system of truth claims that explain the world and reality. This body of "things we believe to be true" helps us make sense of the world. Like a map, our worldview helps us navigate through life.

About Worldviews

First, all worldviews begin with assumptions. The worldview "map" needs to begin somewhere, so assumptions are made. For example, atheism states that there is no god. In contrast, Christianity states that God exists. Both start with a presupposition—there either is or isn't a God.

Second, all worldviews have beliefs about reality, a philosophy. Naturalism is the belief that reality is only comprised of natural things, with no supernatural realm. This can again be contrasted with Christianity, which affirms that God exists and that He is the source of the natural and supernatural realms. Christians have an explanation for phenomena like miracles, angels, and demons. Some say there's no supernatural realm, but that's not what they experience. Their worldview map and reality won't align, and that's when you can witness powerfully to them.

Third, all worldviews have beliefs about how to live, a system of ethics. In atheism, since there's no God, each person decides what is good and bad. The assumption is often made that man is basically good, or neutral, but not sinful—which has huge implications. Such moral relativism can support all manner of sinful action. There can be no understating the importance of

worldviews and their resulting ethical stands. The worldviews are comprised of ideas, and ideas have consequences. A flawed worldview can lead us in deadly directions. Christianity, on the other hand, leads us to life—eternal life through faith in Jesus’ atoning death and saving resurrection. It also leads us *in* life—living in accordance with God’s will. Christianity’s ethical stance has moral absolutes: God has declared what’s permissible and what’s not. The Christian worldview helps us navigate safely through life.

Fourth, all worldviews have to answer fundamental questions that everyone wants answered: Where did we come from? Why are we here? What can we do about evil and suffering? And what happens when we die? Since everyone wants the answers to these basic issues, a reliable worldview will deliver solutions that make sense. Christianity gives a coherent set of meaningful answers to these questions. A godless worldview sees no life after death, provides no ultimate foundation for ethics, and offers no ultimate meaning in life. This atheist map has gaping holes. On the other hand, Christianity can explain man’s origin (creation), purpose (relationship with God and others), and destiny (heaven or hell) with information that can be intellectually and spiritually satisfying.

Testing Worldviews

To engage someone in meaningful discussion about faith, we must understand their worldview. But it is also imperative that we answer the following questions: Is Christianity the right religion? Is it the most reliable worldview? The key to testing any worldview is answering the query: is this true?

People can believe whatever they want, but that doesn’t make it true. The issue is not whether a belief is religious or scientific—the question is whether or not it is true. Using the correspondence theory of truth (that a statement is true if it corresponds to the facts of reality), we can test worldviews.

The first test of a worldview is this: *Does it fit the facts?* Is there any evidence to support it? When Christianity claims to be true, we must ask: are there any facts to back up the claims of the Christian religion? The answer is yes! The claims of Christianity can be supported archaeologically, geographically, and historically. The truth will fit the facts. The map of Christianity meets this standard; it is a reliable map.

A second test for a worldview follows. *Is it free from contradictions?* Something that is logically inconsistent cannot be true. For example, you can’t be a married bachelor. A foundational claim of the worldview we call moral relativism is that there are no absolutes. Notice the contradiction? To state that there are *no* absolutes is an *absolute* statement! A worldview with contradictions is not a reliable map. It is like a GPS that will not tell you whether to turn left or right to reach your destination. Christianity is a consistent worldview.

Here is a third test for a worldview. *Is it useful?* Is it relevant in life? Recall the gaping holes of the atheistic worldview: no god, no life after death, no ultimate foundation for ethics, no ultimate meaning in life. No relevance! What benefit can be found in such a worldview? Consider the implications of a belief in evolution—the universe came about all by itself, without design or purpose, without the hand of God. Some argue that since there’s no God, we can live

as we please. However, in reality, we can't all just live as we please, can we? How would we decide right and wrong? If each person decides, what happens when one wants to steal and another says that is wrong? Not even the larger units of community or society would be assured of common standards. Such groups also disagree and even seek to impose their will, their standards, on others.

Windows of Opportunity

When someone's worldview fails these tests of truthfulness, when there is a disconnect between what people believe and what is actually true, there will be opportunities for Christian conversation. People who see contradictions in their beliefs or are troubled by the apparent irrelevance of their worldview are open to better options. At such times, we can teach God's Word, understanding the worldviews around us and affirming that the Christian worldview is a reliable map—it fits the facts, doesn't have contradictions, and is relevant for life now and eternally.

Vocabulary of Faith

by KerriAnn Schmid

"What is grace?" I could see the wheels turning as one of my eighth-grade confirmation students repeated the question I had just asked of her. The question was a late addition to the list considered to be the more difficult questions that we asked of all our confirmation students. I was sure this question would be a "gimme" for most of the students. After all, we talked about grace in every class. Yet, there she was: just as smart as the other students, but baffled.

I asked myself where we had gone wrong in our instruction, but I also noted that many words and terms commonly used by church members are foreign to those just learning the faith, including children and youth. I was reminded not to make assumptions about what a student might understand of "church words." And I resolved to be deliberate about teaching them.

Church Words

Consider, then, this list of common faith terms and some suggestions about how to explain the word or concept. Adjust the language and examples for the children you teach, but teach them. Although you have heard most of these terms before, some of them will be new to your students.

Connecting faith concepts to everyday items or compelling stories will help children and youth learn the vocabulary of faith. You can find more examples in the Faith Word Cards and Faith Word Definitions found in the Growing in Christ curriculum from Concordia Publishing House.

***Faith*—believing and trusting in Jesus Christ.**

Use a gift-wrapped box to show that faith is a gift, freely given by God through the proclamation of His Word and the administration of His Sacraments. We do not deserve God's gift and do nothing in order to receive it; otherwise, it would not be a gift at all.

Forgiveness—giving up resentment or payment that is owed.

God forgives our sins because Jesus paid the penalty for them on the cross. Some possible demonstrations of forgiveness include trading a dirty robe for a clean one, pouring clean water into a glass full of dirty water until the water in the glass is clear again, or wiping away a list of sins with an eraser.

Grace—God giving us what we do not deserve.

To illustrate this, give each child a prize or award, one that they did nothing to deserve. Discuss the undeserved gifts God gives us purely out of love each day, such as food, clothing, shelter, and other material things as well as forgiveness, love, and eternal life in heaven.

Heaven—eternity with God.

For younger children, use pictures of various homes such as a doghouse, a bird's nest, and a fishbowl as well as the corresponding animal pictures. Ask the children to help match each animal to its home. Ask them about their home. Read John 14:2–3 and remind them that Jesus says earth is just our temporary home. Our real, eternal home is in heaven with Jesus.

Law and Gospel—God's declarations of our sinfulness and His gift of Jesus as our Savior.

The Law is like an x-ray machine that show us our sin. The Gospel is like medicine, the remedy for our sin. Jesus can be compared to the doctor who provides the medicine. The Church is like the hospital where we are diagnosed (reminded of our sin by the Law) and cured (as we hear the Gospel message of our Savior Jesus).

Means of Grace—God's Word and Sacraments, the ways God delivers His grace to His people.

Ask children about various ways or means they could use to deliver a message to someone. They will come up with a variety of answers: face-to-face, texting, Facebook, phone, and many others. God delivers His Word of forgiveness and life through the Means of Grace.

Prayer—communicating with or talking to God in our thoughts and words.

Have kids compare how they talk to their friends with how they talk to God. We may talk to our friends only once a day or once a week. Sometimes we talk only about ourselves or only call when we need to ask for things. God invites us to pray continuously, every day. Prayer is not just a chance for us to ask for what we want, but also a time to praise God for who He is and thank Him for what He has done for us.

***Redeem*—Jesus saving us from sin, death, and the power of the devil.**

To redeem means to set free and to buy back. There is a story of a boy who made a beautiful boat, but lost it one day. Later, he saw it for sale. Although the boat belonged to him, he had to pay to get it back. In the same way, we are God's because He created us and also because, when we were separated from Him because of sin, God had to buy us back with the life of His Son, Jesus.

***Salvation*—freedom from the power and effects of sin.**

Place a cross or a picture of Jesus inside a wrapped gift. Put a tag on the gift that reads "From: God; To: Everyone." Open the gift. Share John 3:16 with the students and remind them of God's promise that "whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." God gives the gift of salvation—for-giveness, life, and heaven—to all who believe.

***Sanctification*—the work of the Holy Spirit by which, in the broad sense, He brings us to faith and enables us to live a godly life.**

Sanctification can also mean the spiritual growth that follows justification, the process by which the Holy Spirit directs us in that godly life. It comes only through the Means of Grace, God's Word and Sacraments, by which faith is increased, love strengthened, and the image of God renewed in us. It is faith in action. For an analogy for children, compare it to being a sports fan. God has made us His followers, His fans. How could you tell if I am a St. Louis Cardinals fan? I would go to the games or watch them on television. I would know the names of the players, the positions they play, and their statistics. I might collect and display Cardinal items. In the same way, there will be evidence of my Christian faith in how I live. Faith, through the work of the Holy Spirit, results in action.

***Sin*—actions and attitudes contrary to God's Word.**

There are two kinds of sin. Original sin is the sin we have from birth. It is like the roots of a tree: we cannot see it, but it is at the very core of who we are. Actual sin is when we disobey God's Law in thought, word, or deed. Actual sin is like the fruit of a tree, the result of our sinful nature.

Lesson Scope and Sequence: God Works through Prophets and Kings

This quarter we focus on these Old Testament accounts:

Lesson	Title	Text
1	The Wisdom of Solomon	1 Kings 3
2	Solomon Builds the Temple	1 Kings 5–6
3	God Provides for Elijah	1 Kings 17
4	Elijah and the Prophets of Baal	1 Kings 18:20–46
5	Elijah Is Taken to Heaven	2 Kings 2:1–15
6	Naaman and Elisha	2 Kings 5:1–14
7	Jonah	Book of Jonah
8	Hezekiah Prays	2 Kings 18–19
9	Jeremiah and God’s New Covenant	Jeremiah 1:4–10; 29:1–14; 31:31–34; 33:14–16
10	The Three Men in the Fiery Furnace	Daniel 3
11	Daniel in the Lions’ Den	Daniel 6
12	God’s People Go Home	Ezra 1–3; 7:11–28; Nehemiah 2:1–8; 12:27–43
13	Esther	Book of Esther

Weekly Podcasts

For teachers using the Cross Explorations Sunday School material, there is a wonderful weekly podcast resource available at www.cph.org/sundayschool. Click on “Seeds of Faith Podcast” in the Sunday School tools. This weekly interview unpacks the richness of the Bible text. Teachers will gain practical, relevant, biblical information to inform their teaching of the lesson.

Preparing the Lesson

The Wisdom of Solomon

1 Kings 3

Date of Use

Key Point

Solomon, though wise, needed what we and all sinners need: Christ, Wisdom Himself, and the forgiveness He brings.

Law/Gospel

The fear of the Lord—reverence for God and trust in Him—is the beginning of wisdom, yet, in my sin, I am unwise, failing to trust in the Lord above all things. **Jesus, Wisdom personified, gives to me and all who believe in Him a share of His wisdom, that is, Himself.**

Context

Solomon, the second child of David and Bathsheba, was Israel's third king. A "little child" when he assumed the throne (1 Kings 3:7), he reigned forty years (tenth century BC). Right after becoming king, he settled some old political scores from his father's reign (2:13–46); then "the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon" (v. 46).

The nation expanded its borders, there was money galore, the temple was built, and Israel was relatively at peace with its neighbors. But not all was well. Solomon, though "he was wiser than all other men" (4:31), foolishly overtaxed and overworked his citizens and contracted alliances with Gentile nations. Worst of all, his pagan wives "turned away his heart after other gods" so that he "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD" (11:4, 6). As a result, after his death the nation split into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah).

Commentary

Wisdom has little to do with a person's IQ. There are high school dropouts with more true wisdom than the Ivy League intelligentsia. How can this be? Wisdom is not a human achievement but a divine endowment; it is

received, not achieved. Wisdom is keeping one's thoughts, deeds, and words in sync with the divine will in all matters of life. The wise look down from heaven to earth; that is, they see life through God's eyes. And this they do by having a listening heart.

Young Solomon prayed for an "understanding mind" (3:9), which in the Hebrew is literally a "listening heart." And what do the ears of the heart listen for? The voice of wisdom—that is, the voice of Christ Himself—verbalizing His will and ways through the Sacred Scriptures.

Moses preached that when Israel was given a king, the king was to "write for himself in a book a copy of this law" (Deuteronomy 17:18). This Scripture was to "be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God" (v. 19). The divine Word creates the fear of the Lord, which in turn is the beginning of wisdom. And that Word is heard only by those to whom Christ has given a listening heart.

Sadly, even those with such a heart also heed other voices, as did Solomon—voices of lust or greed or malice, voices that lead astray even the wisest of men. This king who so wisely decided the case of the two prostitutes would himself go whoring after other gods in his twilight years (1 Kings 11:4).

Solomon, though a wise man, needed what all sinners need: Christ, Wisdom Himself, and the forgiveness He brings. This One who is greater than Solomon gives us more than a listening heart—He gives us His own heart, pulsating with love and absolution that knows no bounds.

To hear an in-depth discussion of this Bible account, visit cph.org/podcast and listen to our Seeds of Faith podcast each week.

Preparing the Lesson

Solomon Builds the Temple

1 Kings 5–6

Date of Use

Key Point

Though God resided within the Old Testament temple, He was hidden behind the veil in the Most Holy Place. Jesus is the unveiled Most Holy Place, accessible to all, enfolding believers in the arms of His Word and Sacraments.

Law/Gospel

In my sin, I want to keep God at a distance; I don't want Him to see who I really am. **God, in His love, draws me near to Him through His Son, Jesus, the Word made flesh. He tabernacles (dwells) with me and all believers through Word and Sacrament, forgiving my sin.**

Context

David desired to build a "house of cedar" for God, to replace the tent in which his Lord had been residing (2 Samuel 7). But the Lord declared that Solomon would be the one to build such a house. Work on the temple was begun 480 years after Israel left Egypt, around 967 BC (1 Kings 6:1), and was completed seven years later (v. 38). It consisted of two main parts: the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) and the Holy Place. It was a sight so dazzlingly beautiful that it was deemed an "exalted house" for the King of kings (8:13). Yet it was only temporary. The Babylonians destroyed it in 587 BC.

Commentary

In his prayer at the dedication of the temple, Solomon asked, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built!" (8:27). The purpose of the temple was not to put a structural straitjacket on God. He would remain omnipresent, but at the temple, He would be omni-accessible, as it were. One might say there is a continuum of God's presence in the Old Testament.

At one end, He is "most present" in a theophany, or visible manifestation (as at Sinai; see Exodus 20). At the other end, He is "least present" in that He is everywhere. Between these two extremes lies His presence in the temple. He is more readily accessible there, and more constantly present in an explicit manner, than in the rest of creation.

The temple was God's earthly palace. Most important for Israel, it was also a hospital of sorts. Those sick with sin or ill with uncleanness would come there to be healed by their Doctor. His medicine was the sacrificial blood of animals, the benedictions of priests, the oil of anointing, the incense of prayers, the hymns of the Levitical choirs. The divine Word was in, with, and under each of these, working healing for those impaired in body or soul.

But, gift of God though it was, the temple was too little, too early. It was too little because something greater than the temple was still needed. And it was too early, for on the horizon was a new and better temple in which God would be even more present than in the sanctuary of old.

"Will God indeed dwell on the earth?" Solomon asks. "Yes," we respond, as we gaze at the swaddled infant lying in the manger. For Jesus is our sanctuary—not merely the place in which God dwells, but God Himself dwelling as a flesh-and-blood man. Though God resided within the Old Testament temple, He was hidden behind the veil in the Most Holy Place. But not Jesus. He is our unveiled, human Most Holy Place, truly accessible to all, enfolding us in the arms of His Word and Sacraments.

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God Works through Prophets and Kings

Old Testament 4

Arch® Book Connections

Children love the rhyming patterns found in Concordia Publishing House's beloved Arch Book series. Arch Books also offer lots of options for expanding and enriching your Cross Explorations lessons:

Read the Arch Book as a sort of "readers theater." Have students take turns reading stanzas, pages, or even the whole book. This would make a great Opening activity or lesson review.

Make a "book trailer"—sort of like a movie trailer—of the Arch Book with a narration that "plugs" the book. For example: He was small—his adversary, a giant! He had only five smooth stones, while his enemy had a spear as long as a weaver's beam. Thrill to the challenge! "Ha, ha, ha! Come out and fight, pip-squeak!" Tremble with fear! "King Saul, what shall we do?!" Read it for yourself and find out who comes out victorious! Available now at your Sunday School library! The story of David and . . . (bum, bum, baaa!) Goliath!

Do a dramatic presentation of an Arch Book, and share it with another class. If the upper grade students do one story as a drama or trailer, make sure the lower grades see the final results. Let the younger children perform for the upper grades as well.

Have students create their own rhyming book with illustrations. Take digital pictures of the illustrations, and make them into a PowerPoint slide "book." These could be performed in a chapel service or the Opening in Sunday School.

If your church provides "Worship Bags" to help keep young children focused during the worship service, consider inserting the Arch Books for the quarter in those bags. With each new quarter, change out the Arch Books to include the applicable stories.

The Arch Books that correspond to the lessons for this quarter:

Lesson 2:	<i>Solomon Builds the Temple</i>	592242
Lesson 3:	<i>Elijah Helps the Widow</i>	591543
Lesson 4:	<i>God's Fire for Elijah</i>	591523
Lesson 6:	<i>Good News for Naaman</i>	591542
Lesson 7:	<i>Jonah and the Very Big Fish</i>	591514
	<i>Jonah, The Runaway Prophet</i>	592246
Lesson 8:	<i>God Saves Jerusalem</i>	592279
Lesson 10:	<i>The Fiery Furnace</i>	591567
	<i>Three Men in the Fiery Furnace</i>	630252
Lesson 11:	<i>Daniel and the Lions</i>	592229
Lesson 13:	<i>Queen Esther Visits the King</i>	592253

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God Works through Prophets and Kings

Old Testament 4

Weekly Bulletin Notes

Help parents and others stay connected to your Sunday School with these weekly bulletin summaries of the Bible lesson for the week. An electronic version for placement in your church bulletin is also available online: www.cph.org/sundayschool.

Lesson 1

"The Wisdom of Solomon" serves as the focus of the Sunday School lesson for today. Solomon, though wise, needed what we and all sinners need: Christ, Wisdom Himself, and the forgiveness He brings. Consider discussing, *"Tell me an example of Solomon's wisdom. How has God shown you His wisdom?"*

Lesson 2

The Sunday School lesson today focuses on "Solomon Builds the Temple." Though God resided within the Old Testament temple, He was hidden behind the veil in the Most Holy Place. Jesus is the unveiled Most Holy Place, accessible to all, enfolding believers in the arms of His Word and Sacraments. Parents might ask, *"What kinds of things would you have seen in Solomon's temple? Where do we see Jesus today?"*

Lesson 3

This Sunday, the Sunday School lesson studies "God Provides for Elijah." Just as God provided food and life for Elijah, the widow, and her son, so He provides food, forgiveness, and life eternal for us in Christ. Consider asking, *"How did God provide food for Elijah? In what ways does God provide for us today?"*

Lesson 4

"Elijah and the Prophets of Baal" serves as the lesson focus for Sunday School. Just as the true God revealed Himself on the altar of Mount Carmel, so on the cross-shaped altar of Mount Calvary Jesus revealed, once and for all, that He alone is the real God who loves us enough to die for us. Parents could ask, *"How did God demonstrate His power on Mount Carmel? How does God reveal Himself to us?"*

Lesson 5

Today in Sunday School, we study "Elijah Is Taken to Heaven." Elijah, like Enoch before him, was taken into heaven alive. Jesus, who is our great Elijah, ascended alive into heaven for us and our salvation. You might discuss, *"Why was Elisha concerned about Elijah's departure from earth? In what way was Jesus' ascension into heaven different from Elijah's?"*

Lesson 6

In Sunday School today, students learn the story of "Naaman and Elisha." The Word of God spoken by the prophet was in and with the water of the Jordan to restore the flesh of Naaman. The Word of God spoken by the pastor is in and with the water of Baptism to cleanse us of our sin and restore us as children of the heavenly Father. Consider discussing, *"What was Elisha's unusual 'prescription' for Naaman's condition? How have you been healed with water?"*

Lesson 7

The story of "Jonah" serves as the focus of our Sunday School lesson. Just as Jonah was swallowed up in the belly of the fish for three days, so Jesus, in His crucifixion, was baptized into the sea of death, drowned in our sin, devoured by the grave, and spewed forth alive again on the third day so that He might save us all. Questions for discussion include, *"Why did Jonah try to run away from God? What does God do when sinful people repent?"*

Lesson 8

The Sunday School students study the story of “Hezekiah Prays” today. Hezekiah prayed in faith to God and was delivered. Jesus, our mediator and advocate with the Father, intercedes for us, granting us deliverance from sin, death, and the devil. Parents could ask, *“Why did Hezekiah go to God in prayer? In what ways does God answer our prayers today?”*

Lesson 9

The Bible account for Sunday School this week is “Jeremiah and God’s New Covenant.” God promised to restore His wayward people, pointing them to a new covenant and a righteous Branch of David. Jesus, the promised Branch, fulfilled this covenant of righteousness for Jeremiah, Israel, and all believers. Consider discussing, *“What challenges did Jeremiah face in life? What promises did God make to faithful Jeremiah?”*

Lesson 10

The account of “The Three Men in the Fiery Furnace” serves as the focus of Sunday School today. Just as Jesus was with the three men in the fiery furnace and saved them, so our Savior is with us in His Word and Sacraments, sustaining us when we suffer for His name. Questions for discussion include, *“Who appeared in the fiery furnace with the three men? How has God rescued us from the fires of hell?”*

Lesson 11

The Sunday School students study the account “Daniel in the Lions’ Den” today. Jesus, who saved Daniel, would Himself be given over to the satanic lion to save the world. Parents could ask, *“Who did God use to keep Daniel safe? How does God keep us safely with Himself?”*

Lesson 12

“God’s People Go Home” is the focus for this week’s Sunday School lesson. God used unbelieving kings to restore His exiled people to Jerusalem according to His will. God sent Jesus, the King of kings, to Jerusalem to restore His wayward people to Himself forever. As a family, discuss, *“What preparations did the people need to make before they returned to Jerusalem? How can you prepare for worship each week?”*

Lesson 13

This week, Sunday School students study “Esther.” In the actions of Esther, we see the pattern of deliverance that God sketches throughout the story of Israel, a pattern that finds its fulfillment in Jesus, our Savior. Consider discussing, *“How did Esther preserve the Jewish people? Why is the story of Esther important?”*

Preparing the Lesson

Date of Use _____

The Wisdom of Solomon

1 Kings 3

Key Point

Solomon, though wise, needed what we and all sinners need: Christ, Wisdom Himself, and the forgiveness He brings.

Law/Gospel

The fear of the Lord—reverence for God and trust in Him—is the beginning of wisdom, yet, in my sin, I am unwise, failing to trust in the Lord above all things. **Jesus, Wisdom personified, gives to me and all who believe in Him a share of His wisdom, that is, Himself.**

Context

Solomon, the second child of David and Bathsheba, was Israel's third king. A "little child" when he assumed the throne (1 Kings 3:7), he reigned forty years (tenth century BC). Right after becoming king, he settled some old political scores from his father's reign (2:13–46); then "the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon" (v. 46).

The nation expanded its borders, there was money galore, the temple was built, and Israel was relatively at peace with its neighbors. But not all was well. Solomon, though "he was wiser than all other men" (4:31), foolishly overtaxed and overworked his citizens and contracted alliances with Gentile nations. Worst of all, his pagan wives "turned away his heart after other gods" so that he "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD" (11:4, 6). As a result, after his death the nation split into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah).

Commentary

Wisdom has little to do with a person's IQ. There are high school dropouts with more true wisdom than the Ivy League intelligentsia. How can this be? Wisdom is not a human achievement but a divine endowment; it is received, not achieved. Wisdom is keeping one's thoughts, deeds, and words in sync with the divine will in all matters of life. The wise look down from heaven to earth; that is, they see life

through God's eyes. And this they do by having a listening heart.

Young Solomon prayed for an "understanding mind" (3:9), which in the Hebrew is literally a "listening heart." And what do the ears of the heart listen for? The voice of wisdom—that is, the voice of Christ Himself—verbalizing His will and ways through the Sacred Scriptures.

Moses preached that when Israel was given a king, the king was to "write for himself in a book a copy of this law" (Deuteronomy 17:18). This Scripture was to "be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God" (v. 19). The divine Word creates the fear of the Lord, which in turn is the beginning of wisdom. And that Word is heard only by those to whom Christ has given a listening heart.

Sadly, even those with such a heart also heed other voices, as did Solomon—voices of lust or greed or malice, voices that lead astray even the wisest of men. This king who so wisely decided the case of the two prostitutes would himself go whoring after other gods in his twilight years (1 Kings 11:4).

Solomon, though a wise man, needed what all sinners need: Christ, Wisdom Himself, and the forgiveness He brings. This One who is greater than Solomon gives us more than a listening heart—He gives us His own heart, pulsating with love and absolution that knows no bounds.



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Painting by Greg Copeland © CPH

Preparing the Lesson

Date of Use

Solomon Builds the Temple

1 Kings 5–6



Key Point

Though God resided within the Old Testament temple, He was hidden behind the veil in the Most Holy Place. Jesus is the unveiled Most Holy Place, accessible to all, enfolding believers in the arms of His Word and Sacraments.

Law/Gospel

In my sin, I want to keep God at a distance; I don't want Him to see who I really am. **God, in His love, draws me near to Him through His Son, Jesus, the Word made flesh. He tabernacles (dwells) with me and all believers through Word and Sacrament, forgiving my sin.**

Context

David desired to build a "house of cedar" for God, to replace the tent in which his Lord had been residing (2 Samuel 7). But the Lord declared that Solomon would be the one to build such a house. Work on the temple was begun 480 years after Israel left Egypt, around 967 BC (1 Kings 6:1), and was completed seven years later (v. 38). It consisted of two main parts: the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) and the Holy Place. It was a sight so dazzlingly beautiful that it was deemed an "exalted house" for the King of kings (8:13). Yet it was only temporary. The Babylonians destroyed it in 587 BC.

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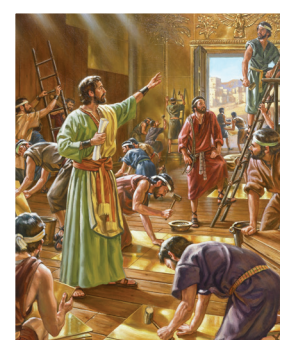
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Painting by Greg Copeland © CPH

Lesson 1: The Wisdom of Solomon

Text: 1 Kings 3

Date Used: _____

Key Point: Solomon, though wise, needed what we and all sinners need: Christ, Wisdom Himself, and the forgiveness He brings.

Law/Gospel: The fear of the Lord—reverence for God and trust in Him—is the beginning of wisdom, yet, in my sin, I am unwise, failing to trust in the Lord above all things. **Jesus, Wisdom personified, gives to me and all who believe in Him a share of His wisdom, that is, Himself.**

To bring:

Engage

Approximate time: _____

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Suggested Songs: (Engage CD) “Without a Doubt,” Track 1; “Take My Life and Let It Be,” Track 2; “Built on Christ,” Track 4

Bible Challenge Question: Name one or more of David’s sons or daughters.

Sons: Amnon, Daniel, Absalom, Shimea, Adonijah, Shephatiah, Ithream, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhar, Elishama, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Eliada, and Eliphelet. **Daughter:** Tamar (1 Chronicles 3:1–9)

Notes: _____

To bring:

Explore

Approximate time: _____

Level 1 (Grades 1–3)

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes: _____

Level 2 (Grades 4–6)

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes: _____

Adult Bible Study

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes: _____

To bring:

Express Options (Choose 2 or more!)

Approximate
times:

Slot 1:

Slot 2:

Slot 3*:

Slot 4*:

Slot 5*:

Slot 6*:

- ☐ **Music:** (Express CD) You Are the Way; through You Alone (Track 20)

Philippians 4:19 (Track 15)

Without a Doubt (Track 19)

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes:

- ☐ **Skit:** The Wisdom of Solomon

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes:

- ☐ **Craft:** Proverbs Pencil

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes:

- ☐ **Food Activity:** Wisdom Scrolls

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes:

- ☐ **Group Activity:** Musical Reflections

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes:

*If applicable

Lesson 2: Solomon Builds the Temple

Text: 1 Kings 5–6

Date Used: _____

Key Point: Though God resided within the Old Testament temple, He was hidden behind the veil in the Most Holy Place. Jesus is the unveiled Most Holy Place, accessible to all, enfolding believers in the arms of His Word and Sacraments.

Law/**Gospel:** In my sin, I want to keep God at a distance; I don't want Him to see who I really am. **God, in His love, draws me near to Him through His Son, Jesus, the Word made flesh. He tabernacles (dwells) with me and all believers through Word and Sacrament, forgiving my sin.**

To bring:

Engage

Approximate time:

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Suggested Songs: (Engage CD) "Built on Christ," Track 4; "Praise Him, Praise Him," Track 5; "Take My Life and Let It Be," Track 2

Bible Challenge Question: How many temples were built to honor God in Jerusalem?

Three: Solomon's temple; the second temple, also called Zerubbabel's temple; and Herod's temple

Notes:

To bring:

Explore

Approximate time:

Level 1 (Grades 1–3)

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes:

Level 2 (Grades 4–6)

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes:

Adult Bible Study

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes:

To bring:

Express Options (Choose 2 or more!)

Approximate
times:

Slot 1:

Slot 2:

Slot 3*:

Slot 4*:

Slot 5*:

Slot 6*:

- ☐ **Music:** (Express CD) Built on Christ (Track 3)

1 Kings 6:13 (Track 1)

God Himself Is Present (Track 9)

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes:

- ☐ **Skit:** Solomon Builds the Temple

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes:

- ☐ **Craft:** Cedar Sachet

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes:

- ☐ **Food Activity:** Temple Snack

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes:

- ☐ **Group Activity:** Gravity for All

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes:

- ☐ **Service Project:** Outreach Invitations

Location: _____

Leader(s): _____

Notes:

*If applicable

Old Testament 4

God Works through Prophets and Kings

Lesson	Title	Date of Use
1	The Wisdom of Solomon	_____
2	Solomon Builds the Temple	_____
3	God Provides for Elijah	_____
4	Elijah and the Prophets of Baal	_____
5	Elijah Is Taken to Heaven	_____
6	Naaman and Elisha	_____
7	Jonah	_____
8	Hezekiah Prays	_____
9	Jeremiah and God's New Covenant	_____
10	The Three Men in the Fiery Furnace	_____
11	Daniel in the Lions' Den	_____
12	God's People Go Home	_____
13	Esther	_____