



5th - 6th grade

FOUNDATIONS

Did you know that with the exception of the early years before preschool, the preteen years are the most transitional developmentally?

During early childhood, children begin to examine the world, and by the time they are ten, they have reached conclusions about what they believe for most things. But as they enter adolescence, preteens begin a new stage of examination and begin experiencing the intake of information, relationships and spirituality as if for the first time.

Because of this, it's a valuable time to reexamine the overall scope of the Bible. Your preteen may have heard the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 as a child, but we talk about it again so that they can reenter that story with their newly developing mental framework.

Sometimes the Bible feels like a bunch of stories that are thrown together. We want our preteens to see that the Bible is a beautiful story that began with creation, yet continues with our own lives today. As we look forward to Confirmation in 7th grade, 5th and 6th graders can begin forming a solid framework of what the Bible is so that they have this fresh in their minds before being confirmed into the life of the church.

The first year we will focus on the Old Testament, which sets the narrative for the grand story that we are involved in. We spend the first weeks talking about how God has created us in his grand image, and

then spend the rest of the year wrestling with the idea that we don't always look like that image. We use stories of real people and connect those to our own personal stories to show that the things people struggled with in the Old Testament are still relevant today!

The second year we will focus on the New Testament, focusing on Jesus' life on earth and what the early church did after his resurrection. We connect the old to the new and talk about how both testaments are a part of a continuous story that expands into our stories today.

At the end of his Sermon on the Mount (Matt 7:24-27), Jesus tells a story about two builders - one who chooses to build his house upon a rock while another builds upon the sand. When the storms hit each house, only the one upon the rock stands.

Jesus' point is that we all choose a foundation to build our life upon, but not all foundations are equal - not all are strong enough to stand up to life's trials. The Message Bible translates Jesus' conclusion this way: "These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life or homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on the rock."

Thank you for helping your teen find the right foundation upon which to build!

out with the old, in with the new

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

– 2 Corinthians 5:17

As your preteen begins the school year, chances are some things are changing. Perhaps your student is beginning a new school or has some new classes that he or she is nervous about. Maybe there are some additions to their schedule. There could even be some changes in your family. The bottom line is: things are constantly changing for a preteen.

This year as we focus on the New Testament, we'll begin this first unit by summarizing the Old Testament and talking about how it connects to the New Testament. It's no secret that the Old Testament sounds completely different from the New - some even question why we keep the Old Testament with its strange stories about God.

To help explore this question, try this activity with your teen:

Take your entire family to a thrift store (or a flea market or antique store), and give each person a budget. Split up for a designated amount of time and allow each person to select one or two items using the budget that you've set. When you're done, go grab some food and talk over these questions:

- Why did you choose the things that you chose?
- What if the person who gave this to the store had thrown it away? What if they had thought it had no value?
- What are you going to do with your items? Are you going to make them into something new? Are you going to keep them as-is?
- As you think about the New Testament, does the fact that we can be forgiven by Jesus mean we should throw all the old rules and laws out the window? Why or why not? Why do you think the Old Testament is here for us to read and study?