

## Biblical Background

Because this curriculum is being written in a specific context, we are having to do it out of order. So it will be helpful for you to have a bit of the background that our kids brought to their 7th-8th grade year, where the focus is on the liturgy.

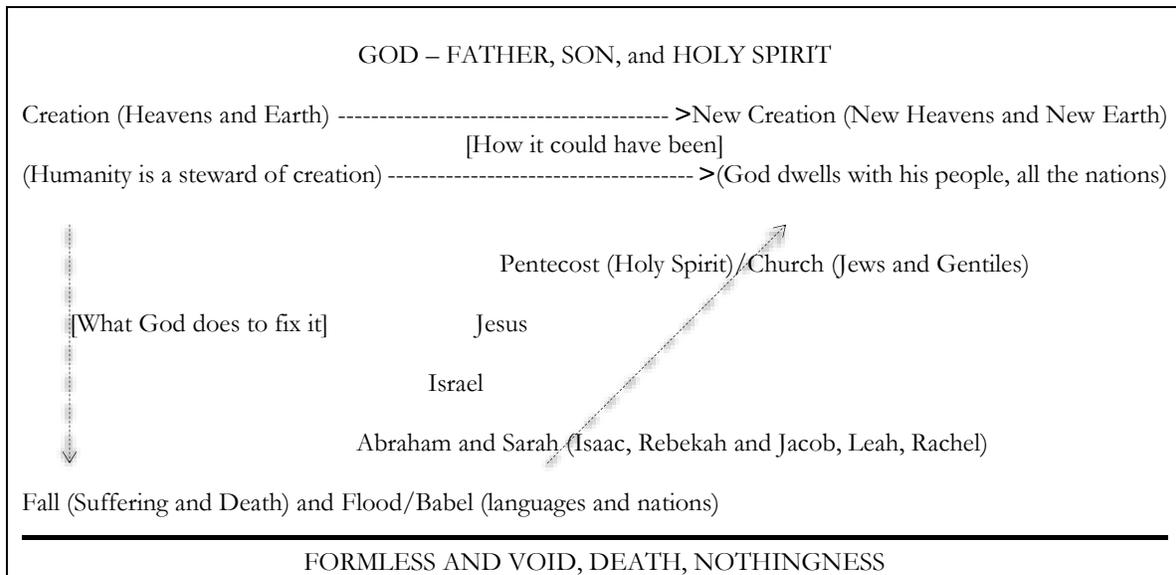
Our classes have students from two school years, so our schedule broke down this way:

- 5th–6th-grade students: Old Testament
- 6th–7th-grade students: New Testament
- 7th–8th-grade students: Baptism, Eucharist, Easter Vigil (this year)
- 8th–9th-grade students: Daily Office and Bible reading

(Ultimately, we would like to add two more years on the Bible, starting in 3rd grade, with less emphasis on the overarching narrative and more on getting to know the major figures.)

In our case, the 7th and 8th graders were joined by older students because the upper-school class was small.

As far as what we wanted the students to know coming into the third year, you'll find a few pointers below. We used the *Connect* curriculum by Sparkhouse, though we adjusted it to suit our needs. Most of our adjustments were in the New Testament years, though we did want our students to have a cohesive outline in their minds throughout the whole time, so we created a picture to help them hold it all together:



In essence, the image emphasizes that the biblical narrative is about God's relationship with creation, the creation he freely made and wants only the best for.

The Bible says that creation was "very good" in Genesis 1; that was God's will for this world, while the entry of sin and death go contrary to the way God wants things to be. We're living with the effects of the fall even now, but God set out on what we might call a "rescue plan" to save creation from death. Of course, the idea of a "rescue plan" suggests that God was taken by surprise, which is not what we intend by the idea. It's a way of saying that sin and death are not God's fault, and that God is always acting to make creation better by bringing it closer to him. He went so far as to send his only Son, fully God and fully human, who participated fully in the creation he made, although it meant dying on the cross.

During these two years, we also emphasized two narrative threads:

- 1) *Blessing*: For example, we looked at how, in each generation, the patriarchs refuse to pass blessings on to all of their children, while God continues to bless all of them, such as in the stories of Isaac vs. Ishmael and Jacob vs. Esau.
- 2) *The double-love of God and neighbor*. For example, we looked at how Israel was called to task by the prophets for worshiping idols and for not taking care of the poor (breaking the commandments to love God and to love their neighbor).

So, to summarize the image above and the two narrative threads:

God creates a good creation that falls into sin through the acts of human agents. But God is always there, ahead of humans, blessing Abraham so that Abraham can be a blessing for all the nations. And when Abraham's descendants do not take this blessing to all the nations, they are sent into exile. But God is always working to bless his creation, so he brings Israel back from exile and comes himself to be with his people Israel, to show them once again how to bless others. Jesus renews Israel by inviting Gentiles into God's people, and now we, the church, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, have a role to play in taking God's message of reconciliation into the world, which will at the last day be united again with God.

