

Tell It Back!

Sunday School
Year One Volume One

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Preface

HI THERE, I'M TRACY! When my kids were growing up, we would begin our homeschooling days on the couch with a basket of books to read aloud. We'd start with the greatest book of all, the Bible. It's incredible to think that the God of the universe authored and breathed life into this book, and that He Himself speaks to us through it.

I grew up in a home where the Bible was revered, and my parents read aloud from it around our farmhouse table. The earliest conversation that I remember with my dad was about Jesus. Although I've believed in God for as long as I can remember, my knowledge of Him deepened in the years when I was a young mom. It was during this busy season with small children at home that I discovered the joy of studying the Bible for myself. I remember those early mornings sitting at the kitchen table with my Bible, notebook and pens. The baby of the family with her wispy blonde hair was often on my lap, sometimes grabbing hold of my pen and scribbling over my notes.

Those busy years passed by. When the "baby" turned nine, we heard the words that no parent wants to hear, "your child has cancer." I was so thankful for my relationship with God, for I knew His character, and I clung to His goodness throughout that difficult season. More than ever, I recognized the treasure of knowing who God is through His Word, for as my knowledge of Him grew, my relationship with Him grew deeper as well. (I'm thankful to say that my daughter is in good health now, and that she loves studying her Bible too. I tell her that she got started early, as a baby on my lap!)

For almost three decades, I've been either teaching Sunday school or leading children's ministries in the various churches that I've attended. It's a joy to watch children grow in God. My desire is to help children see that no matter what life brings, God is always good and faithful.

Tell it back! Sunday School came to life after I was asked to purchase a Sunday school curriculum for our church. Because we always have new faces in our classes, I looked for a curriculum that covered the big picture of the Bible, preferably in a year. I also hoped to find something that would be simple to use, without requiring too much technology. But mostly, I looked for two things in a curriculum: 1) Bible stories that were told well and not "watered down" or moralized, and 2) lessons that had a Theocentric approach to Scripture- meaning that God would be at the center, where He ought to be. This search proved harder than I

expected. Before I knew it, I started putting together a new curriculum that met those standards that I was looking for, a program that I could use in my own Sunday school class for years to come. I'm thankful that my oldest daughter came alongside me in this project, creating all the art for *Tell it Back!* Sunday School.

Introduction

FOR THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY LEADER AND TEACHER

Stories

Through the story of the Bible, we learn the truth about God and how He reveals Himself to, and interacts with, the people He created. Through the stories of the Old Testament, we learn God's names, His character, and His plan for our redemption. Through the stories of the New Testament, we see God's grace and His very nature in the person of Jesus Christ.

As teachers, too often we're handed lessons that read the Bible "at children" rather than "to them." The Bible is presented as a series of moralizing tales, "Be brave, like Joshua", or "Be a good friend, like Jonathan." Unintentionally, we've made the gospel about ourselves. Our focus must shift away from teaching children how to behave for God, and instead focus on God and what He has done for us.

Like most Sunday school programs, every lesson in *Tell it Back! Sunday School* features a Bible story. What makes this program unique is that it employs the age-old method of narration: after hearing each Bible story, the students will tell the same story back to the teacher. The act of narrating the story back will help the children to remember, it will solidify the story in their hearts. Narration is a simple and age-old technique, and so foundational to how we learn.

Tell it Back! Sunday School is a theocentric (God-centered) program. Every week, the students are asked what they learned about God from the Bible story with questions like, "What did God do? What did God say? What is important to God?" When we know who God is, we learn to love Him. It's only after we know the truth about who God is that we can learn how to properly respond to Him and live our lives in a way that is pleasing to Him.

In each one-year volume of *Tell it Back! Sunday School*, students will follow a timeline to see how the stories fit together from the beginning of the Bible to the end. Throughout the Old Testament, they'll learn how all the Scriptures point to the coming Messiah. As they progress through the Bible, they'll see how the stories weave together to tell one big story—the story of a merciful God and His plan for humanity's redemption and a restored relationship with Him.

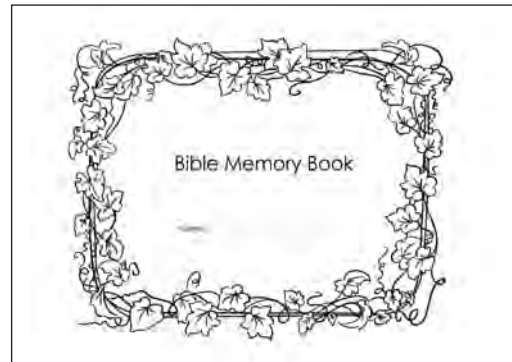
How It Works

Prayer

Pray with the children at the start of each lesson, asking the Holy Spirit to lead each individual into truth and relationship with God. Name God's attributes in your prayer time and praise Him for who He is. As students become more comfortable in class, they can also participate in praying aloud.

Memory Work

Children have an amazing ability to memorize, we ought to use this gift and fill them up with scriptures. They'll be so thankful for it someday! The verses chosen for this curriculum have been carefully selected and will be recited through the whole year, giving the students lots of time to fully memorize them. Avoid testing or pressuring the students, allow it to be a positive experience for them. Just read the verse (or a portion of the verse) aloud together once or twice each week. It's really that simple. Be sure to review the verses that were previously memorized. Younger students don't have to be able to read in order to memorize, they'll memorize large portions of scripture just by hearing it. All it takes is consistency. When introducing new verses, remember to define bigger words and give necessary context (tell who is speaking and why it was said), especially as the students get older.



Bible Story Time

The teacher's task will be to tell the story with enthusiasm. Prepare by prayerfully reading the story ahead of time. Children have amazing imaginations and they'll picture the stories in their minds as you tell them. Involve younger students in the storytelling when appropriate. You may choose to look up the story and read it directly from the Bible. It may be tempting to pause and give personal insights- but we need to allow the children to make their own connections. Also, avoid wrapping up the Bible story with a neat and tidy message of what it

Included in the *Tell It Back Resource Book*

Bible Memory Printable Book (two size options)

Bible Timeline

Hymn Sheets

Craft Printables

Bible Map printables

means and how we should respond. Simply allow children to be enchanted by the story, the story itself will speak to them.

Narration

We tell back the things we want to remember, it's the way that God designed us. Narration is a wonderful teaching tool, in fact, it's so valuable that we chose to name the curriculum, *Tell it Back! Sunday School* for it. The practice of narration causes children to listen with their closest attention. When they tell the Bible story back, they visualize the story and enter into it, solidifying it into their minds and hearts.

Here are some things to remember: Narration generally is suggested for children ages six and older. Let the narration follow immediately after the story. The goal is to tell the story back from beginning to end in detail, giving each child in the class an opportunity to share part of it. The only prompt after "Let's tell back the story from the beginning" should be, "Where did we leave off?" or "What happened next?" Don't press the students for details that they may have missed.

Narration is a skill that is developed over time so keep encouraging the students to participate. Be patient, consistency will pay off and the fruits will come! You'll be amazed at how their understanding of the Bible will grow. If the story is a longer one, pause after each paragraph and allow short narrations throughout, this will be especially useful for younger kids. To change things up now and then, consider having the students tell the story back by using some other creative means such as dramatizing or drawing it instead.

What Did You Learn About God?

After telling back the story, discuss what you learned about God. Ask the children, "What did God do? What did God say? "What does this show you about God?" Name the things you learned about Him together. Through this framework, the children will learn to look for God when they approach the Bible. They will get to know His character and the big picture of the Bible. Keep the focus of the discussion on who He is and what He's done, not on us and how we ought to behave.

This doesn't mean that we need to avoid talking about how we should live for God altogether, it just means to keep things in their proper order. All ages are invited to participate in this part of the discussion. The teacher may need to start the discussion off with examples such as, "I learned that God is powerful in this story because He..." or "I learned that God takes sin seriously in this story because He..." or "When Jesus calmed the storm, I learned that He has power over nature..." etc.

Deeper Discussion

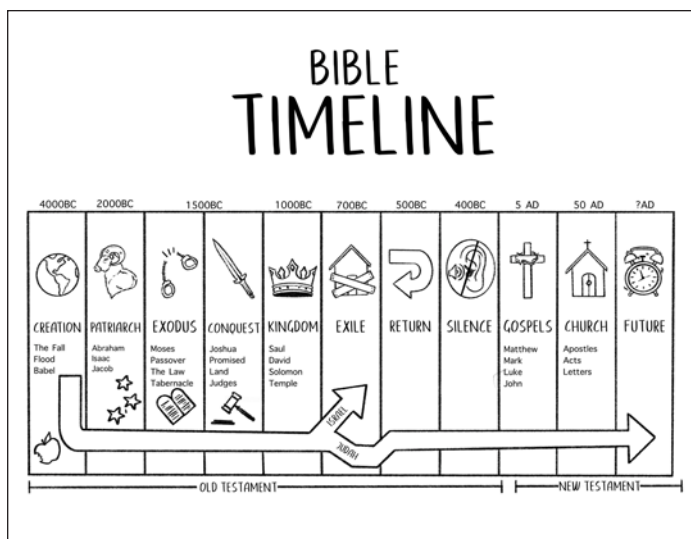
Classes of older children can use the "Deeper Discussion" questions if time allows. It may be helpful to have a set of the same Bibles in the class for looking up verses. Keep the deeper discussion short as children learn better with shorter lessons.

Bible Timeline

Have a copy of the "Bible Timeline" page printed for each student. The Bible timeline is easy to use, and accessible for all ages with its illustrations. After every Bible story is told, find where the story fits on the timeline, remembering to point out where the cross is as children need to know the grand narrative of the Bible. When children begin to understand the whole story, their hearts are moved to praise and worship our King.

Find a way to create a class timeline together. Consider stretching a string across the

classroom wall or using a long sheet of butcher paper to unfold or display. Use the Bible timeline headings: Creation, Patriarch, Exodus, Conquest, Kingdom, Exile, Return, Gospel, Church, and Future. Each week, students can draw a picture from the story on a small piece of paper (3"x4") and pin or attach it under the correct heading. By year's end, the timeline will be filled with their own creations. Children learn best when they have first-hand experience in the lesson.



Hymn Sing

Children love to sing and there's so much value in singing together. D.L. Moody said, "Singing does at least as much as preaching to impress the Word of God upon people's minds." Hymns help us pray- their words have a way of coming to us when our own words fail us. And hymns are where doctrine meets music; they are a beautiful gift to pass on from one generation to the next. You can find illustrated song sheets included in the program, even preschool classes can sing along.

Craft and/or Snack

Tell it Back! Sunday school is intentionally designed for simple lesson preparation. A colouring sheet is available in the resource book for each lesson, with some cutting and gluing involved for the students. These activities were designed with younger students in mind. Older children are encouraged to draw their own pictures from the story to add to the class's Bible timeline. Teachers are welcome to add their own themed crafts and snacks as desired.

Picture Study (art printables available separately)

An optional addition to the program would be to show an art masterpiece that goes with the story. Have the students observe the picture and describe the things they notice about it. They might mention how they see the Bible story displayed or stylistic techniques that the artist chose (such as lighting, colors, and placement of the figures). The key words to remember with picture study are, "observe" and "describe."



"All our teaching of children should be given reverently, with the humble sense that we are invited in this matter to cooperate with the Holy Spirit..." Charlotte Mason (*Parents and Children*).

Statement of Faith

WE BELIEVE THAT GOD is the creator of everyone and everything. God has revealed to us that He exists as three distinct persons; the Father, the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. We believe in the sovereignty of God over all things.

WE BELIEVE THAT CHRIST'S ATONING SACRIFICE on the cross was sufficient to satisfy the wrath of God against sin. We believe that Jesus Christ was physically resurrected and that He is the only mediator between God and man. We believe in the personal and visible return of Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead.

WE HOLD TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH which is the family of God. We affirm the importance of preaching and teaching the Word of God, as well as the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper.

WE HOLD TO THE SCRIPTURES AS THE FINAL AUTHORITY in all matters of faith. The Bible is divinely inspired and is God's message to man in written form. Through the guiding power of the Holy Spirit, the Bible is useful to teach us, point out our mistakes, direct us in correction, and train us to live in the way God intends for us. In all things, we seek to honor and glorify God.

WEEK 1

God Creates the World

GENESIS 1-2:3

FOR the beauty of the earth,
For the beauty of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies,
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our sacrifice of praise.

*For the beauty of the earth,
Folliott Sandford Pierpoint, 1835-1917*

Things to Consider

Take time to prayerfully study the Scriptures for yourself. Your love and enthusiasm for God's Word will help create a positive atmosphere so kids too will want to learn more about God.

Resources

Provide for each student:

- **Memory Verse:** Gen. 3:15
- **Bible Timeline:** Creation
- **Hymn Sheet:** Be Thou My Vision
- **Craft:** Coloring sheet
- **Picture Study:** Art Masterpiece
- **Bible Map:** No map

Class Time

Welcome: Prayer and Memory Work

- **Welcome** the kids.
- Open in **prayer** by asking God to teach every heart.
- Recite and practice the **memory verse**.

Younger kids will not be able to read along, but by hearing it repeated each week, they will commit it to memory. Encourage practice at home.

Review: Take some time to learn additional memory work from the Bible Memory Book (such as the books of the Bible, the Lord's prayer, Apostles' Creed, catechism questions, etc.).

Memory Verse

Genesis 3:15

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

Bible Time

1. **Remind the kids to listen carefully** to the story each week as they will **tell it back** (narrate it) each time. *What's the point of retelling what they just heard?* It helps the kids to process the story and make it their own. Not only that, but it solidifies the story into their minds.
2. **For longer or more detailed stories**, consider pausing at various points in the story for narrations instead of asking for a single narration at the end. This is especially helpful with younger kids who may have a difficult time remembering a longer portion.
3. **Read** the Bible story with fitting expression, allowing the meaning and beauty to come through— **starting with a short recap** of the previous week's story to bring context.

God Creates the World

IN THE BEGINNING, In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was empty, and it had no shape. There was darkness all around, and God's Spirit was hovering over the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and He divided the light from the darkness. He called the light "day," and the darkness "night." This was the first day.

Then God said, "Let there be a space in the middle of the waters." He called the space "sky." The sky divided the waters that were below it from the waters that were above it. And there was evening, and there was morning. This was the second day.

Then God said, "Let the waters be gathered into one place, and let dry ground appear." God created the dry ground and gathered the waters. He called the ground "land," and He called the gathered waters "seas." Then God said, "Let vegetation sprout up from the land." And He made the plants and the trees. The plants had seed in them so that they could produce more of their kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning. This was the third day.

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the sky to give light to the earth and divide the day and the night." God created the sun, moon, and the stars, which would also serve as signs to mark seasons, days, and years. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning. This was the fourth day.

Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with living creatures. And let birds fly above the earth." God created sea animals and flying animals, and He made them so that they could each produce more of their own kind. He blessed the sea animals and the sky animals and told them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning. This was the fifth day.

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures." And God created all the kinds of animals: the tame animals, the creeping animals, and the wild animals. And God saw that it was good. And on that same day, God created man in His own image. In the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And He commanded them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, and to rule over all the living

things that moved on the earth. He gave them plants and trees for food, and He gave the same for the animals. And God saw all that He had made, and it was very good. This was the sixth day.

Now the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. When God finished all of His work, He rested on the seventh day. And God made the seventh day a holy day because in it, He had rested from all His work.

Tell It Back!

Ask the kids to retell the story of creation. Start them off with a cue if needed, “In the beginning, God created...” Rather than asking for volunteers, encourage every child to take a turn recounting something he/she remembers from the story. It may be necessary to pause some kids to give others a chance to share.

Tip for narration: Allow the children an opportunity to share what they remember from the story, but don't quiz them on the parts they don't remember. Read the “Bible Story Time” section in the Introduction for more narration tips.

What did you learn about God?

How did God speak? What did God do? What did God make? How did He make it? From what did He make it?

How should we respond to God?

Say: *In the creation story, we learn that God is the creator of everyone and everything. Every week we will learn more about who God is by reading the stories in the Bible. God wants us to know who He is and what He is like. That's why He gave us His story, the Bible.*

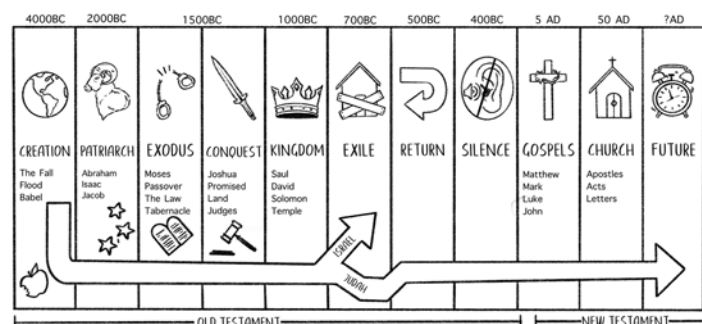
Digging in Deeper

Open Your Bible

Ask the older kids to read aloud from Genesis 1:26-31 where God creates man in His image.

Bible Timeline

Find where the story of creation fits into the timeline. (Creation section)



Deeper Discussion

Who created God?

Read Psalm 102:25-27 about how God made the heavens and earth. The heavens and earth will end, but God's years have no end. Tell the students that God is eternal. This means that God has always lived, and He will always continue to live.

Why did God say, "Let 'Us' make man"? Isn't He one God?

Genesis 1:26 says, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...'" God consists of three persons. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each person is fully God, not one-third of God. This doctrine is called the Trinity.

Hymn Sing

In *Tell It Back!* Volume 1, we'll be singing the hymn, "Be Thou My Vision." Provide each student with a copy of the illustrated hymn. Younger children that aren't reading can follow along by pointing to the symbols above the lyrics. Find an instrumental version of the tune to sing along with, or sing without musical accompaniment.



Craft

- Provide younger students with the activity page included in this lesson.
- Older children may draw their own picture from the story on a small piece of paper (approximately 3"x 4") and tape or pin them near the proper heading of their class's Bible timeline.

If the class is larger in size, consider selecting only a few of the drawings each week for the timeline. By the end of the year, the timeline will be filled with the kids' own creations. Children learn best when they have first hand experience in the lesson and involving them in creating the timeline is an effective way to achieve this.



Picture Study Discussion

Display the art masterpiece which is paired with this week's lesson. Exposure to beautiful pieces of art refines the aesthetic senses and helps children to appreciate the beauty that fills our world. When we cherish beauty, we honor its source, our Creator.

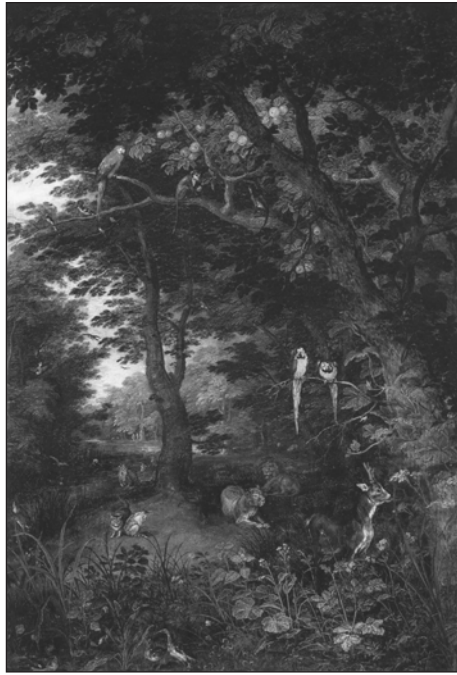
What colors do you see? Are they bright, dull, warm, or cold?

Are there people or animals in the artwork? What are they doing? How are they feeling?

How does the artist use light and shadow?

What other things or details do you see?

Rather than asking the students for personal opinions of whether or not they like the art piece, give them the opportunity to simply engage with it. The key words to remember with picture study are, "observe" and "describe."



**“The Earthly Paradise”
c. 1620, by Jan Bruegel the Elder**

Mapwork

Maps from the Old Testament, New Testament, and Paul’s Missionary Journeys are all included in the Bible Map Booklet. Help the students find the locations on the map when a city or town is mentioned in the story.

