



The Many Gifts of GraceLink

GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS INTERNATIONAL SABBATH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

1 Biblically Based

GraceLink is a 12-year curriculum comprising 624 lessons, all of which are firmly grounded in Scripture. Most lessons are story-based, some on scriptural references that teach a specific doctrine. Each story has been selected to develop one of the four dynamics of the GraceLink series: grace, worship, community, and service.

Because each lesson centers on a single message, each telling of a Bible story is focused—not simply “watered-down.” Often a story is revisited elsewhere in the curriculum with another point of focus. This is a thematic curriculum; only one teaching point is made at a time from a specific Bible story.

2 Spirit of Prophecy Supported

Every lesson is supported by the writings of Ellen G. White. The Conflict of the Ages series is referred to most often. Other references include *Steps to Christ*, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, and *Christ’s Object Lessons*. In some instances quotations are included within the story; however, in most cases references are included in the Teacher Enrichment section of the teaching guide.

3 SDA Bible Commentary Use

Writers regularly referred to *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* series to grasp understanding of the message being taught. Editors always referred to those references during the editing process. Quotations from the *Commentaries* are often used in the Teacher Enrichment section of the teaching guide.

4 Biblical Research Institute Involvement

During the editorial process, all GraceLink manuscripts were reviewed for theological soundness by the director or associates of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference. Dr. Angel Rodriguez and his associates gave close attention to all lessons and teaching guides.

5 Doctrines and Principles Taught

Virtually every Adventist doctrine is taught at some point during the 12-year curriculum. Even very young children learn of baptism by immersion, the state of the dead, the Sabbath, and other essential doctrines. These and others are taught through stories in coherent thematic clusters and reinforced through activities during the Sabbath School hour. The bedrock Adventist message is taught at every level with the most effective methods of instruction.

6 Educationally Sound

For the first time in the history of Adventism, Sabbath School lessons for children have been formulated with the use of current educational theory and methods. Curriculum consultants directed the production of the original curriculum plan and outlined the teaching methods to be used. Writers from every world division followed these plans as they participated in the development of lessons. Same message—new methods.

7 International Participation

During the early planning stage, Sabbath School and Children's Ministries directors from every world division met together with General Conference personnel and the curriculum consultants in England for a week to discuss and provide direction as the work moved forward. This group provided the focus for those who later developed and wrote the lessons. A few months later, more than sixty people—representing every world division—met at Andrews University to begin the writing stage. As the work progressed, over a two-year span, small groups of writers met at the General Conference to produce additional lessons for each level of the curriculum. Again, these writers came from around the world.

8 Active Programs

Today we know that we must approach learning activities through a variety of methods. We know that children remember about 30 to 35 percent of what they hear, about 40 to 50 percent of what they see, and about 90 percent of what they do. The emphasis in GraceLink is placed on all three. Children are often guided through activities that incorporate hearing, seeing, and doing—and require activity. Thus today's Sabbath School classes often nurture an exuberant atmosphere in which children actively pursue learning under the direction of a leader or teacher.

These activities are reinforced through the debriefing process in which children are led to consider "What did you learn?" "How do you feel about it?" "What are you going to do about it?" This process deals with knowledge, emotion, and application. Educational research tells us that people remember more when they are emotionally involved and that



pleasant emotions enhance positive learning. Debriefing is essential to active learning. It is the means by which children (and adults) understand and apply what they have learned.

9 Four Dynamics

The four dynamics incorporated in the GraceLink curriculum provide a balanced program and form the core of the curriculum. These are:

- Grace (Jesus loves me.)
- Community (We love each other.)
- Worship (I love Jesus.)
- Service (We love you too.)

Grace is the demonstration of God's love for us. He sent His Son to die in our place, to redeem us, and to accept us unto Himself that we might live with Him forevermore.

Worship is our response to God's love. Because He first loved us, we love Him. Because He gave His Son to die in our place, we worship Him. We worship Him through praise, through our lifestyle, and through our stewardship of all that He has provided for us.

Community involves our relationship with those around us, with our immediate family, our church family, our friends, and with other Christians who know God's love.

Service is our outreach to others, to those who may not know and love the Jesus we serve. It is to them that we give the invitation to become a part of the family of God. It is to them that we take a message of hope for the future.

10 Total-Hour Teaching

Past programming for children's Sabbath School was rarely designed to complement the topic of the lesson for the day. About 40 minutes was spent on material unrelated to the lesson topic. At the most, younger children spent 15 to 20 minutes sitting in their chairs, listening to a teacher tell the lesson story as she or he placed felts on a felt board. The GraceLink curriculum provides total-hour teaching, in which every activity focuses on the central message of the Sabbath School lesson for that day. Objectives are clearly stated in the teaching guides. Activities are carefully outlined to teach to the stated point of the lesson. The entire lesson focuses on one carefully determined objective for the day.

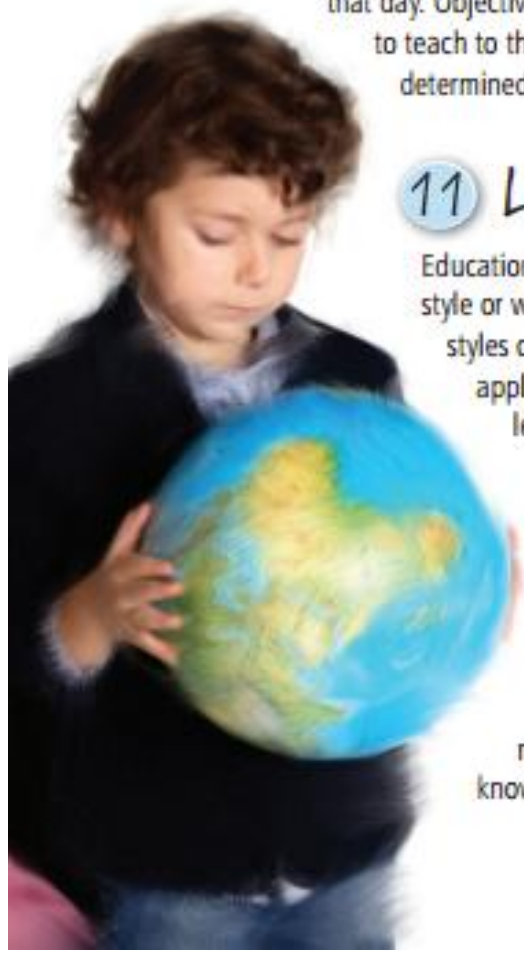
11 Learning Styles

Educational research has determined that individuals learn best through a particular style or way of learning. Although each person may use all four of the identified styles or ways of learning at one time or another, most of us depend on one major application. These four learning styles are incorporated into every GraceLink lesson. This makes it possible for every child to grasp the point of the lesson and to understand it in her or his own way.

The four learning styles are:

Imaginative. The imaginative learner asks, "Why should I learn this?" The "Readiness Activity" in each lesson appeals to this type of learner.

Analytical. The analytical learner asks, "What do I need to learn?" The "Bible Lesson" section deals with the content of the lesson, the memory verse, and small group Bible study—it offers the facts, the knowledge, that the analytical learner seeks.



Commonsense. The commonsense learner wants to know, “How does this work in my life?” The “Applying the Lesson” section offers the opportunity to explore how the lesson can be applied in practical ways.

Dynamic. The dynamic learner wants to know “What can I do with this? How can I share this idea with others?” Opportunity to explore this option is given in the “Sharing the Lesson” section of each lesson.

12 Outreach—a Lifestyle

Every lesson plan includes a section that calls for sharing what the child has learned with someone else—a friend, teacher, parent, relative, neighbor, or other person with whom the child frequently comes in contact. The child is often asked to make something in Sabbath School to give that person, and while giving it tell the person something about the story or lesson they have studied that day. The goal is to help children become so comfortable with sharing what they have learned that they will continue doing so throughout their lifetime.

13 Bible Study Emphasis

Every lesson in every level of this 12-year program includes Bible study appropriate to the age of the child. Even children in Beginner Sabbath School learn that the Bible is God’s Word. Teachers at that level are asked to open their Bibles when teaching the memory verse and show that verse to the children, to identify the Bible as God’s Word as they use the Bible to teach the memory verse. In addition the teacher is directed to show the children the verses on which that day’s Bible story is based and to read those verses aloud, pointing to each word or phrase as she or he reads. Kindergarten children also learn that their stories come from the Bible. Primary children learn how to find and read texts that provide a background for the lesson of the day and/or lead to more discussion of the lesson objective. Juniors are directed to individual daily Bible study to learn more of the story or to apply concepts taught.

14 Inclusive Art

The goal of the art in GraceLink, provided expressly for children by illustrators who specialize in art for children, is to provide a bias-free visual commentary integral to the text. People are depicted in a way that captures attitudes, personality, and ideas—to be symbolic of the points the lesson is trying to make. More “realistic” representations of people, which usually depict one culture or ethnic group to the exclusion of others, are avoided. Realistic, full-color detail is used, however, in depicting cultural details of life in the Middle East during Bible times, such as the kinds of ovens used in the baking of bread.

15 Calls for Decisions

Throughout each lesson children are invited to make decisions—how would they apply concepts studied in their own life? How could they use what they have learned to help themselves, their families, their friends? Questions such as “What could you do to . . .” or “How important is this to you and/or your family?” are frequently asked throughout the entire teaching/learning experience each week.

