

THINK BIG, START SMALL!

THE PLACE OF THE NEXT GENERATION IN BIBLICAL HIGHER EDUCATION

WHAT IS GLOBAL CHILDREN'S FORUM?

Born out of the Lausanne Movement in 2008, Global Children's Forum is a partnering network of children's ministry organisations working together globally to see children everywhere walking with Jesus. We are united by a shared calling to serve children, families and the Kingdom of God. GCF serves across various communities, including both the Lausanne Movement and the World Evangelical Alliance.

WHAT IS THE BROKENNESS TO WHOLENESS ACADEMIC CURRICULUM PROJECT?

This project seeks to help academic institutions include children and family as a topic of serious reflection in their ministry training programs. We can help by:

01

Providing fully prepared, degree level curriculum in Children and Family Ministry.

02

Providing an academic service pack with objectives, sample syllabi, assignments, grading rubrics and learning resources.

03

Providing equipping for instructors who will use the curriculum.

04

Coming alongside institutions to help them adapt the curriculum to their unique context.

WHAT DOES THE BROKENNESS TO WHOLENESS CURRICULUM INCLUDE?

The B2W Curriculum has been designed to equip leaders with degree-level thinking about ministry to, for, and with children and families. As a result, it seeks to combine robust theology and ministry philosophy with highly interactive teaching and practical application.

The curriculum includes all teaching materials for 50 sessions, arranged in four modules: Biblical Foundations, Children's Context, Faith Formation, Leadership Practice. In addition, sessions focusing on Personal Spiritual Formation are included in each module. This material is provided by GCF without cost to the institution.

HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE?

- To find out more about Global Children's Forum, visit <https://childreneverywhere.com>.
- To find out more about the B2W Project, contact Dr. Esther Zimmerman at ezimmerman@lbc.edu.

Our prayer is that this curriculum will result in **more Bible colleges and seminaries** including children in their ministry training curriculum, so that **more pastors and leaders** understand and share God's heart for children, so that **more children everywhere** have the opportunity to walk with Jesus from brokenness to wholeness.



**Brokenness^{to}
Wholeness**
CURRICULUM

Introducing the Brokenness to Wholeness Academic Curriculum Project

Global Children's Forum: January 2025



developed by the
Global Children's Forum

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AN INVITATION TO EXPLORE TOGETHER

Dear Friend,

We are so glad that you are open to considering the next generation in the curriculum of your academic institution. The *Brokenness to Wholeness (B2W) Curriculum* has been developed by a team of children's ministry leaders and academics working under the umbrella of the Global Children's Forum. By offering it freely to other academic institutions, we hope to see serious thinking about the next generation included in ministry training programs around the world.

Born out of the Lausanne Movement in 2008, Global Children's Forum is a partnering network of children's ministry organisations working together globally to see children everywhere walking with Jesus. We are united by a shared calling to serve children, families and the Kingdom of God. GCF seeks to help the church think in new ways about ministry with children and to accomplish more together than any one person or organization can do individually. GCF serves across various communities, including both the Lausanne Movement and the World Evangelical Alliance.

Our prayer is that this curriculum will result in...

- **More Bible colleges and seminaries** including robust thinking about ministry with the next generation in their curriculum. So that...
- **More pastors and leaders** understand and share God's heart for children. So that...
- **More children everywhere** have the opportunity to walk with Jesus from brokenness to wholeness.

To that end, we have developed...

- The **B2W Curriculum** which includes degree level, ready-to-use facilitator notes, PPTs and handouts for more than 50 sessions.
- This **B2W Academic Service Pack** which includes an overview, objectives, reading resources, suggested assignments with rubrics and sample syllabi for adapting the curriculum for use in a formal academic setting.
- A **training course, Academic EQUIP**, which familiarizes administrators and instructors with the material and consider how they can adapt and contextualise it to their unique setting.
- A global community of **colleagues** who can support and encourage you on the journey.

The rest of this packet provides more information about the curriculum and ways that the Global Children's Forum may be able to support your institution in this venture.

His for the children of our world,

Global Children's Forum



B2W CURRICULUM ORIGINS

Many people have asked us about the origins of this unique curriculum resource. What is the Global Children's Forum? Where did the B2W Curriculum come from? Who were the writers? What is the theological position of this curriculum? Why is academic curriculum being offered freely to multiple institutions? And so on.

WHAT IS THE GLOBAL CHILDREN'S FORUM (GCF)?

Born out of the Lausanne Movement in 2008, GCF is a partnering network of children's ministry organisations around the world working together to see children everywhere walking with Jesus (<https://childreneverywhere.com>). We are united by a shared calling to serve children, families and the Kingdom of God. GCF seeks to help the church think in new ways about ministry with children and to accomplish more together than any one person or organization can do individually. GCF serves across various communities, including both the Lausanne Movement and the World Evangelical Alliance. For a fun introduction to GCF's vision watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqdCLOGj-bw>

WHERE DID THE B2W CURRICULUM COME FROM?

The B2W Curriculum was originally developed to support the GCF Leadership Experience (LE). LE is a unique one-year experience that provides an opportunity for emerging children's ministry leaders to deepen their thinking about children's ministry alongside others from around the globe. A four-week residential time of learning, formation and community is at the heart of the Leadership Experience. However, participants are engaged throughout the year in regular online sessions as well as work before and after the intensive that connects learning with application in their context. For more information about the GCF Leadership Experience, check out the LE website at: <https://gcfleadership.org/>.

The B2W Curriculum is the result of a truly collaborative effort involving scores of children's ministry leaders from six continents, many different global and regional organisations, and three seminaries.

WHAT IS THE THEOLOGICAL POSITION OF THE B2W CURRICULUM?

Global Children's Forum is an interdenominational movement representing a wide range of evangelical churches and ministries. However, our theological foundation is the Lausanne Covenant and the WEA Statement of Faith. <https://lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant#cov> and <https://worlddea.org/who-we-are/statement-of-faith/>. The goal of the curriculum writing team has been to produce a resource that will be useful in a range of evangelical contexts.

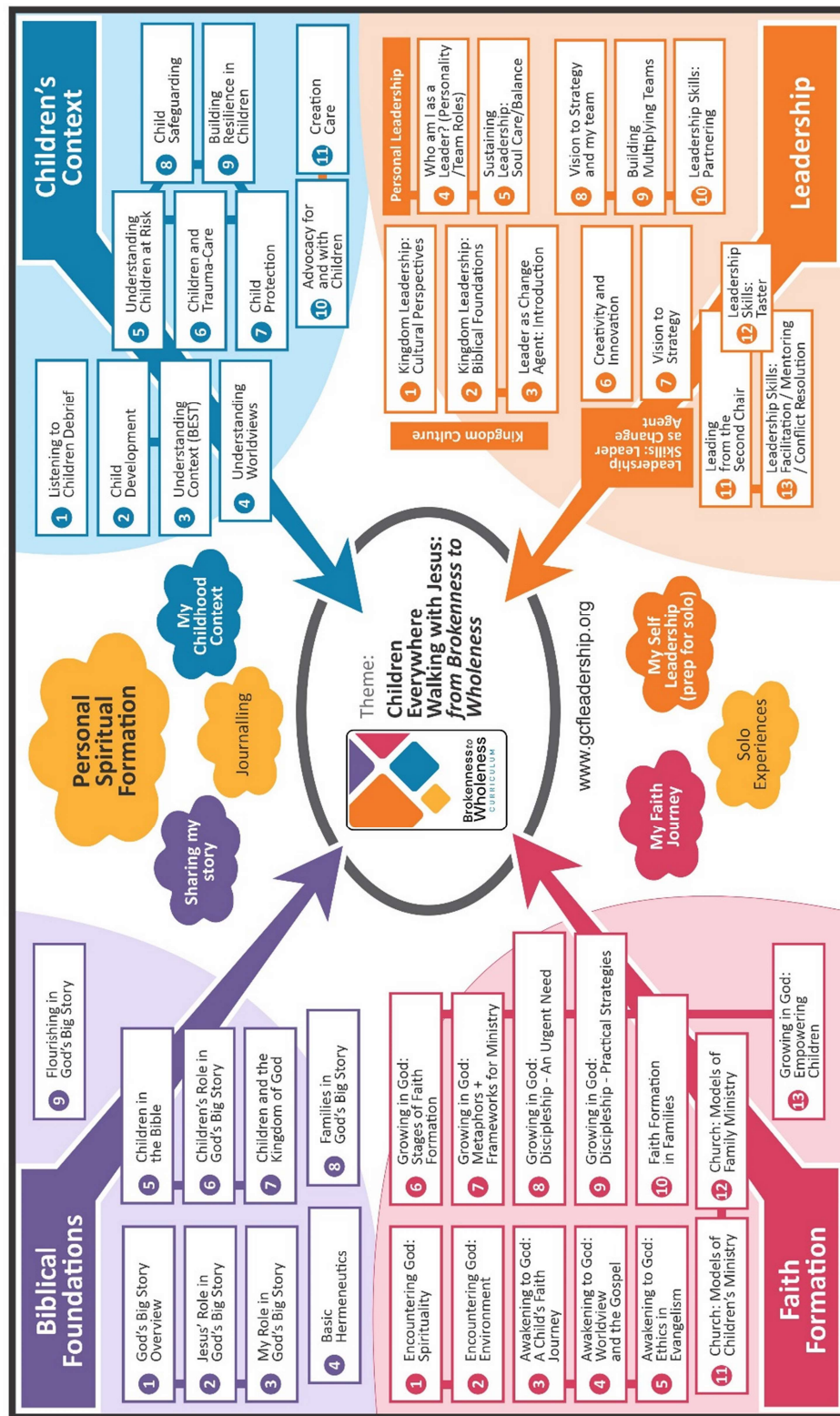
WHY IS GCF OFFERING THE B2W CURRICULUM FREELY TO ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS?

We recognise that many institutions do not currently offer coursework on children and family ministry within their pastoral and ministry leader training. We hope that this resource will help facilitate the inclusion of serious thinking around the next generation in ministry training programs around the world.



B2W CURRICULUM MAP

GCF Brokenness to Wholeness curriculum



GCF Brokenness to Wholeness curriculum (Version 1) June 2024



B2W CURRICULUM PHILOSOPHY

The B2W Curriculum has been designed for leadership development, including in academic contexts. It is not designed for training children and youth workers in the local church. We recommend better sources for this type of 'how to' children's ministry training, such as *1for50's TWELVE curriculum* (<https://1for50.net/resource/twelve-core-curriculum/>) or *BCM's In Step with the Master Teacher curriculum* (<https://www.instepmasterteacher.com>).

The B2W Curriculum has been designed to equip leaders with degree-level thinking about ministry to, for, and with children and families. As a result, it seeks to combine robust theology and ministry philosophy with highly interactive teaching and practical application.

The B2W curriculum is built on these five theological and philosophical distinctives

- **God's Big Story of Brokenness to Wholeness**—God's big story begins with a world that was characterized by wholeness but people's rebellion against God brought brokenness to every area of our world. God has been at work since the beginning of time to redeem and restore all that was broken by sin. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus is at the center of His for redemption. He invites us and our children, by faith, to experience His redemption and to play a part in His ongoing story.
- **Holistic Ministry**—Children are created with physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. Each dimension has been impacted by the brokenness of sin and God desires to see restoration in each aspect of their lives.
- **Discipleship as a Process**—God created children for a personal relationship with Him and is at work in the hearts of children. He also works through the church and families who are called to model, build relationships, share truth clearly and provide opportunities for children to respond. While children may begin their journey of discipleship with a moment of decision, their discipleship is intended to be a lifetime journey of following Jesus in love, obedience, and service.
- **Servant Leaders as Change Agents**—God's call to leadership in His upside-down kingdom will inevitably challenge our own cultural understandings of power and leadership. Therefore, a Christian leader must begin with an understanding of their own identity as a follower of Christ before seeking to lead others. From that foundational understanding, a leader may be used by God to effect meaningful change for the sake of children and families.
- **Importance of Personal Spiritual Formation**—We cannot lead others into a relationship with God that we do not have ourselves. God is at work through every aspect of our lives to conform us to the image of Christ so It is vital that we continue to tend to our own relationship with God in the busyness of ministry leadership.

The B2W curriculum sessions are arranged in five modules which reflect these theological and philosophical distinctives: Biblical Foundations, Children's Context, Faith Formation, Leadership Practice and Personal Spiritual Formation.



B2W CURRICULUM: ACADEMIC SERVICE PACK

An institution deciding to use the B2W Curriculum will need both the B2W Curriculum Materials and the B2W Academic Service Pack Materials. The B2W Curriculum provides the materials needed to teach each session. The Academic Service Pack provides additional materials to help you contextualise it for academic use in your institution.

B2W CURRICULUM MATERIALS OVERVIEW

A full overview of the sessions available as part of the B2W Curriculum can be viewed in the B2W Curriculum Map at the beginning of this document. The material is organized into four modules:

- Biblical Foundations
- Children's Contexts
- Faith Formation
- Leadership

Note that the relevant sessions from the Spiritual Formation Module are included within each of the other four module packs rather than as a separate module pack.

The following curricular materials are available for each module:

FACILITATOR GUIDE

This is the primary curricular resource and includes key learning outcomes, scripted facilitator notes, discussion questions, learning activities and a bibliography for each session in the module.

PARTICIPANT HANDOUTS

These printable handouts are designed to supplement each session but are not required.

PPT PRESENTATIONS

A ready-to-use PPT presentation is provided for each session. These may be adapted by the instructor to fit their context.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This folder houses any additional resources used throughout this module. These resources include links to videos, case studies, further reading, etc.

SESSION VIDEO LINKS

In many cases, a 15-20-minute summary video by one of the session writers is available to view. These videos are not intended to replace a live instructor. However, they may be helpful to the instructor as they prepare to teach the material.



B2W ACADEMIC SERVICE PACK MATERIALS OVERVIEW

The Academic Service Pack document for each module includes the following:

MODULE OBJECTIVES

Formal learning objectives for this module are suggested.

MODULE SESSIONS

All the sessions available for use in this module are listed with foundational sessions highlighted. Additional session topics that the instructor might add to extend learning are also included.

SUGGESTED MODULE READINGS

In any formal academic course, we expect that instructors and students will read to further their learning beyond the classroom. This suggested reading list includes seminal books/articles that an instructor may require students if they are available. However, it also includes an annotated reading list of resources that are freely available to supplement academic programs anywhere. Many of these resources are available in the Additional Academic Resources Folder.

SUGGESTED MODULE ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING RUBRICS

In an academic course, students are required to demonstrate their learning through formal assignments. These assignments take different forms depending on the level of education and the amount of academic credit being earned. We recognise that formal requirements will vary across institutions, academic levels and regions. As a result, we are providing a list of potential assignments that can be chosen and adapted to fit the unique needs of your context. Detailed assignment instructions for a wide variety of assignment types are included together with some sample grading rubrics.

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

We recognise that formal requirements will vary across institutions, academic levels and regions. Therefore, it is not possible to provide a single syllabus that will meet the needs of every institution. As a result, we have provided a set of guidelines to help you customise the B2W Curriculum to your unique teaching context. We have also included a sample syllabus for a three-credit (120 hours) degree level course. We hope this sample syllabus illustrates one way the curriculum may be adapted successfully to a particular level and set of institutional requirements.

ADDITIONAL ACADEMIC RESOURCES FOLDER

We recognise that access to low cost or free academic resources is a major barrier to new academic initiatives. As a result, we are seeking to gather quality resources in children and family ministry that can be used freely in academic programs. These will include academic articles and potential textbooks as well as links to videos and websites where appropriate. We will continue to add to the resources in this online folder as we discover them. Please do share helpful resources you have found in your context with us so we can include them.



SUPPORT FOR ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Our desire is to support institutions and instructors deciding to adopt the B2W curriculum for use in their institution. To that end, Global Children's Forum offers an orientation for institutions and instructors as well as ongoing consulting support as needed.

ACADEMIC EQUIP ORIENTATION FOR INSTRUCTORS

We offer EQUIP in two formats:

- A 3-day in-person orientation. This option allows instructors to absorb the values and ethos behind the B2W Curriculum and to experience key sessions firsthand. It also helps to build a community of colleagues for the instructor as they interact with like-minded peers.
- An abbreviated online orientation is also offered if an in-person orientation is not available or possible for your institution.

Participants will leave Academic EQUIP with:

- a fresh vision for multiplication of ministry to, for, and with children through Bible colleges and seminaries.
- degree level curriculum materials that can be used to grow robust thinking and equipping in ministry with children and families.
- the confidence that comes from experiencing sample curriculum sessions, exploring the curriculum resources and considering how the curriculum could best be adapted to a specific teaching context.
- new colleagues to support and encourage them on the journey.

OTHER SUPPORT FOR ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Global Children's Forum can provide your institution with a global community of colleagues to support and encourage you on the journey. If requested, a consultant, who has been trained in the curriculum, is available to guide you as you implement the curriculum in your context.



B2W CURRICULUM USE

The following agreement must be discussed and signed by all parties prior to release and use of the B2W Curriculum.

B2W CURRICULUM USE AGREEMENT

Global Children's Forum Brokenness to Wholeness Curriculum Use Agreement (February 2024)

This B2W Curriculum Use Agreement is made between Global Children's Forum and _____
(Academic Institution).

For the sake of the next generation, we desire to see ministry training institutions including ministry with children and families as a serious topic of study in their coursework. Therefore, in a spirit of collaboration, Global Children's Forum is releasing the B2W Curriculum for use in the above-named academic institution.

In receiving the B2W Curriculum, the institution understands and agrees to the following:

- The B2W Curriculum is only for use by faculty leading modules/courses at this institution. It is not to be distributed to others—including students, alumni, denominational leaders, local churches, etc.
- The B2W Curriculum has been designed for leadership development, including in academic contexts. It is not designed for training children and youth workers in the local church.
- The B2W Curriculum is offered freely for use in the institution. Under NO circumstances should it be repackaged for distribution or sold.
- The institution will designate a faculty member(s) to steward the use of the B2W Curriculum in the institution. This individual(s) will participate in GCF Academic EQUIP orientation.
- The institution is free to build their own module/course using the B2W Curriculum and then title and advertise it as part of the institution. However, the B2W Curriculum should be acknowledged and cited where it is used.

In addition, the institution confirms that they and their instructors are in agreement with the WEA Statement of Faith: <https://worlddea.org/who-we-are/statement-of-faith/>

Signed: _____
on behalf of _____ (Institution)

Signed: _____
on behalf of Global Children's Forum.

Date: _____



B2W CURRICULUM USE—FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ACCESS TO THE B2W CURRICULUM

1. How much does the B2W curriculum cost?

There is no cost to academic institutions. By providing this curriculum freely, the Global Children's Forum hopes to see serious thinking about the next generation included in ministry training programs around the world.

2. How do we access the B2W curriculum?

The B2W Curriculum and the Academic Service Pack are available online. Access codes will be given upon completion of the B2W Curriculum Use Agreement and Academic EQUIP Orientation.

3. When do we get access to the curriculum?

Access codes will be given to the institution upon completion of the B2W Curriculum Use Agreement and Academic EQUIP Orientation by the professors/instructors who will adapt and teach the curriculum.

4. Can we give this curriculum to others?

No. The curriculum is only for use by instructors leading courses at this institution. It is not to be distributed directly to others, including students, alumni, denominational leaders, local churches, etc. If another institution is interested in the curriculum, please have them contact Global Children's Forum and we will be happy to work with them directly.

APPROPRIATE USE OF THE B2W CURRICULUM

5. In what contexts may the curriculum be used?

The curriculum is intended to help your institution develop and offer classes in Ministry with Children and Families at your institution. You may choose to:

- Develop a required module for all ministry leaders
- Utilize some sessions as part of an existing module or course
- Develop an elective module in Children and Family
- Offer this material as a Continuing Education Seminar for Alumni
- Develop an entire program in Children and Family Ministry

You may have additional or different ideas. Our goal is to help your institution include serious thinking about ministry with the next generation in your educational programs.

6. Can I use the curriculum to train my church Sunday School teachers or youth workers?

No. This material was not developed with that audience in mind. This material addresses the theology and philosophy behind effective, holistic ministry with children and families. For training in ministry with children that include sessions like "Teaching a Bible lesson" or "Sharing the Gospel with Children" we recommend more appropriate children's ministry training curriculum such as 1for50's *TWELVE* curriculum (<https://1for50.net/resource/twelve-core-curriculum/>) or BCM's *In Step with the Master Teacher* curriculum (<https://www.instepmasterteacher.com>).



7. Can we use the name, Global Children’s Forum Brokenness to Wholeness Curriculum, in our promotion?

Yes—but only if you are teaching a substantial amount of the curriculum as it is written. If you are significantly adapting the curriculum for use in your context, we prefer that you title the course under your own institution and simply cite the B2W Curriculum where you have used it. See also #12.

8. What qualifications are required for those who teach the curriculum?

GCF requires that instructors complete an orientation to the curriculum before using it. Additional academic requirements will be determined by the institution based on their own policies and accreditation requirements.

ADAPTATION OF THE B2W CURRICULUM

9. Can I make changes to the curriculum?

Yes. The B2W Curriculum is offered as a resource to help your institution develop a course in Children and Family that is contextualized to your culture and accreditation requirements.

10. Can we use portions of the curriculum, or do we have to teach the entire curriculum?

Yes. You may use portions of sessions, individual sessions, multiple sessions from the same module or different modules, a complete module or the whole curriculum in your institution. We simply ask that you cite the curriculum when you are using it. Citation guidelines are suggested above.

11. Are we required to label our course as a “GCF Course”?

No. If you are using this curriculum in any form, you may label it with your institutional identity. You do not need to label it as GCF’s Brokenness to Wholeness Curriculum. See also #7.

12. Can we translate the curriculum into another language?

Yes. Please contact Global Children’s Forum for more details so we can help by providing editable versions of the curriculum and coordinate with others in your region if appropriate.

ASSISTANCE WITH B2W CURRICULUM

13. How can we be equipped to use the curriculum?

Contact Global Children’s Forum for information about the Academic EQUIP orientation. We offer EQUIP in two formats:

- A 3-day in-person orientation. This option allows instructors to absorb the values and ethos behind the B2W Curriculum and to experience key sessions firsthand. It also helps to build a community of colleagues for the instructor as they interact with like-minded peers.
- An abbreviated online orientation is also offered if an in-person orientation is not available or possible for your institution.

14. What kind of support can we expect from Global Children’s Forum?

Global Children’s Forum can provide the following:

- The B2W Curriculum which includes degree level, ready-to-use facilitator notes, PPTs and handouts for more than 50 sessions.



- This B2W Academic Service Pack which includes an overview, objectives, reading resources, suggested assignments with rubrics and sample syllabi for adapting the curriculum for use in a formal academic setting.
- Orientation to the curriculum through Academic EQUIP, which familiarizes instructors with the material and considers how they can adapt and contextualise it to their unique setting.
- A global community of colleagues who can support and encourage you on the journey.
- If requested, a consultant, who has been trained in the curriculum, is available to guide you as you implement the curriculum in your context.

15. Will Global Children’s Forum fund the development or teaching of the curriculum?

No. Global Children’s Forum is not in a position to provide funding. This is the responsibility of the institution.

16. Are we required to provide reports to Global Children’s Forum?

No official “reports” are required. However, we would love to hear about your plans and progress so we can learn from you, celebrate with you and connect you to others in your region.

17. Will our program be listed in a database for children, youth and family academic courses and programs?

Yes. Our goal is to foster collaboration and support with others.

18. Is there a network of other institutions that we can join for collaboration and support?

A network will develop as more institutions join the journey. Stay tuned for further information.

19. How do we contact Global Children’s Forum?

Go to www.childreneverywhere.com and click the “Contact Us” button.

SAMPLE B2W CURRICULUM SESSION

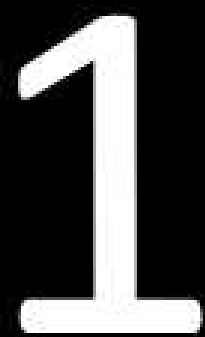
On the following pages, you will find the facilitator notes for a sample session from Module 1: Biblical Foundations, *Children in God’s Big Story*. This sample session is one of fifty sessions that are part of the full B2W curriculum. PPTs, handouts and potential readings are also included in the full curriculum.





BROKENNESS TO
WHOLENESS
CURRICULUM:
FACILITATOR NOTES
SAMPLE SESSION

Global Children's Forum



Biblical Foundations

BF5. Biblical Perspectives: Children in the Bible

Summary of the Session:

In this session we recognize and seek to hold in balance the diversity of the Bible's teachings about children.

Length of the Session:

80-85 minutes

Overview of the Teaching Points/Learning Outcomes:

1. Participants will be able to identify basic Old Testament and New Testament teachings about children.
2. Participants will use hermeneutical principles to study Scriptures about children along six general themes.
3. Participants will reflect on their own cultural and church traditions and how they have influenced their understanding of what the Bible teaches about children.

Notes to the Facilitator:

With the basics of hermeneutical principles explained, and a basic understanding of the cultural context of the Scriptures, participants are now equipped with basic tools to look at specific teachings about children. This session is the first of three sessions looking at biblical perspectives. It focuses on Scripture teachings about children as they relate to six themes suggested by theologian Dr. Marcia Bunge.

Video introduction from the course creators - https://youtu.be/mxMTApI_MJs

A listing of resources referenced in this session and/or recommended for background reading can be found in the bibliography at the end of the session.

Materials Needed

Board and markers/chalk

6 sheets of blank paper

Markers

Optional: Personal Journals



BF5 Facilitator Session Overview

Steps	Key content and activities	Resources
Introduction The Prevalence of Children in the Bible 5 min	Guess the Answer How many times are children mentioned in the Bible?	
Step 1 What Does the Bible Say About Children? 15 min	Scriptures about Children Discuss in small groups and share	
Step 2 Biblical Understanding of Children 40 min	6 themes to understand children Gifts of God, source of joy. Sinful creatures and moral agents Developing beings who need instruction Fully human, made in God's image Models of faith and sources of/vehicles of revelation Orphans, neighbors and strangers in need of justice and compassion. Activity: Scripture search Small groups take a theme and explore it from the Bible – then create a poster. Groups display poster and describe ministry implications.	6 sheets of blank paper Markers
Step 3 Application Discussion 15-20 min	Small group discussion – large group report back Which of these themes has been most prevalent in your church tradition? In your culture? In your personal experience? What is the impact of that perspective on you, on children, on ministry? How could a fuller understanding of the scriptural view of the child enrich your context?	
Step 4	Journal: my personal perspectives	



Personal Reflection 5 min	What personal perspectives of children have been reinforced through Bunge’s themes? What might you be missing? What is God revealing to you?	
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BF5 Session Steps and Detailed Notes

Introduction | The Prevalence of Children in the Bible | 5 minutes

- **How many times are children mentioned in the Bible?** Call out your answer.

Children are not an afterthought in the Bible: *child*—121 times; *children*—448 times; *son or sons*—2,700 times; (not counting the references to Jesus as the Son of God); *firstborn*—100+ times; *boys and girls*—196 times. There are also dozens of stories about or including children. All together child and family-related words occur more than 8,000 times.¹

- **How do you feel when you hear those numbers?**

In our previous session we began understanding the context of children in the Bible. In this session we will look more closely at what the Bible says about children and use our hermeneutical principles to understand those Scriptures more accurately.

Step 1 | What Does the Bible Say About Children? | 15 minutes

In groups of 3-5, take a few minutes to identify 3-4 Bible verses that answer the question “What does the Bible say about children?” Think of both Old Testament and New Testament passages. The next session will focus on specific children in the Bible, so do not list them for this exercise.

Share verses, with each group taking turns giving an answer. If other groups have the same Scripture, they should not repeat it. Write Scriptures and summary on a board or flip chart, dividing into two columns: Old Testament and New Testament.

Step 2 | Biblical Understandings of Children: Six Themes | 45 minutes

Six themes to understand children²

Dr. Marcia Bunge, theologian and professor, has researched and written papers on the biblical understandings of children and childhood. Her reflections go beyond what we might think the Scriptures say about children, posing a challenge and framework for the church today. She identified six main views of children in Scripture. Realize that none of the six perspectives are a complete view of children, and some may seem to contradict one another, but all are supported throughout Scripture. We need to hold them in tension.

¹ Roy Zuck, *Precious in His Sight: Childhood and Children in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 13.

² Marcia Bunge, “Biblical Understandings of Children and Childhood: Resources for the Church and Mission Today,” in *Now & Next: A Compendium of Papers Presented at the Now and Next Theological Conference on Children*, ed. Siga Arles, Dan Brewster, Chik-Bu Kok, Rosalind Tan, and Keith White (Singapore: Compassion, 2011), 15-34.



Present Marcia Bunge's Summary of Scripture's View of Children. After each view is explained, note which of the Scripture teachings identified in the first activity support that particular theme.

1. Gifts of God and Sources of Joy³

Children come from God, belong to God, and are signs of His blessing or being "remembered" by God (Rachel - Genesis 30:22; Hannah - 1 Samuel 1:11,19). To be fruitful was to receive God's blessing. Even Jeremiah, in the midst of anguish, remembered the story that the news of his birth made his father very glad (Jeremiah 20:15). An angel promised Zechariah and Elizabeth that their child would bring them "joy and gladness" (Luke 1:14). And Jesus spoke of the joy of a newborn child after the hardship of the birthing process (John 16:21).

2. Sinful Creatures and Moral Agents⁴

Many forms of Christianity express the notion that children are sinful creatures and moral agents. Genesis 8:21 states "every inclination of the human heart is "evil from youth" and Proverbs 22:15 says that folly is "bound up in the heart" of children. Psalm 51:5 and 58:3 talk of being sinful from birth. Paul writes that all have sinned; there is no one righteous (Romans 3:9-10; 23). This view of children can seem very negative and destructive, but it counteracts the opposite view that children are primarily pure and innocent beings who automatically love God. As children grow and develop, they carry out "actual sins," and therefore are moral agents who bear a degree of responsibility for their actions as they grow in development and level of accountability.

3. Developing Beings who Need Guidance and Instruction⁵

Adults are to nurture, teach, and guide children, passing on faith to them and helping them to love God and their neighbors as themselves. Deuteronomy 6:5-7 talks of having the commands of God on our hearts and then impressing them on our children, teaching them at every opportunity. Proverbs 22:6 – train up a child in the right way. Adults are to teach children the words of the law and what is right and just (Deuteronomy 11:18-19; 31:12-13; Proverbs 2:9). Psalm 78:4 reminds us that we are commanded to teach the next generation. There are many examples through church history of emphases on the spiritual formation and education of children.

4. Fully Human and Made in the Image of God⁶

Even though children are developing, some Christians emphasize that children are complete humans, made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Therefore, they are worthy of human dignity and respect. All children have intrinsic value from infancy (Psalm 139:13). This may counter some cultural perceptions of children.

³ Bunge, 21.

⁴ Bunge, 22.

⁵ Ibid., 24.

⁶ Ibid., 25.



5. Models of Faith and Sources/Vehicles of Revelation⁷

Several biblical passages depict children in striking and radical ways as prophets, models of faith for adults, vehicles of revelation and even representatives of Jesus. Children like Samuel were called to be prophets or messengers of God. Jesus used children to teach and challenge adults about humility and as models for entering the kingdom of heaven, and even equates welcoming a child with welcoming Him (Matthew 18:2-5; Mark 10:13-16). Many Christian traditions neglect the idea that children can be teachers, bearers of revelation or models of faith.

6. Orphans, Neighbors and Strangers in Need of Justice and Compassion⁸

Many biblical passages emphasize that children are also orphans and strangers in need of justice and compassion. The Bible tells many ways that children suffer and are victims of war, disease and injustice. Many verses command us to help widows, orphans, and strangers – among the most vulnerable people in society. Jesus demonstrated this by healing, embracing and blessing children. James 1:27 shows us that caring for children is part of seeking justice.

ACTIVITY: Scripture Search (15 minutes)

Divide participants into six groups. Assign each group one of the six ways that Scripture views children. Have them utilize good hermeneutical principles to examine the following Scriptures to discover what God says about children. They can add relevant other Scriptures. (Give reminder about magnifying glass!) Groups will then create a poster that reflects what they have discovered and also discuss the implications for ministry to children from the verses they were given. They will have 15 minutes to study and prepare.

1. Gifts of God and Sources of Joy – Psalm 127:3; Genesis 21:6-7; John 16:21
Sinful Creatures and Moral Agents – Genesis 8:21; Romans 3:9-10; Psalm 51:5; 58:3
Developing Beings who Need Guidance and Instruction – Deuteronomy 6:5-7; 31:12-13; Psalm 78:4; Ephesians 6:4.
Fully Human and Made in the Image of God – Genesis 1:27; Psalm 139:13; Matthew 10:30
Models of Faith and Sources/Vehicles of Revelation – Matthew 18:1-5; Mark 10:13-16
Orphans, Neighbors and Strangers in Need of Justice and Compassion – Deuteronomy 10:17-19; James 1:27

Groups will then report their implications for ministry to everyone and share their posters.

The Bible shows us a very rich and complex view of children. When we focus only on one or two of these biblical themes, we risk falling into an incorrect understanding and we risk treating children in inadequate and harmful ways. For example:

The church may view children primarily as gifts of God and models of faith. Adults enjoy the children and are open to learn from them. However, the adults may neglect the role they should play in the child's spiritual development, or they may ignore the child's moral capacities.

⁷ Ibid., 26.

⁸ Ibid., 28.



What if Christians look at children primarily through the lens of being sinful and in need of instruction? (Emphasize that the role of adults in instructing/guiding children might focus only on discipline and punishment, “beating the devil out of them”, and neglect to learn from the children or delight in them.)

We have to hold the paradoxes in tension: Children are made in God’s image yet are still developing and needing instruction. They are gifts of God, yet capable of sin. They are vulnerable, yet strong and insightful.

Step 3 | Application and Review | 15-20 minutes

Small group discussions and large group report back

Discuss the following questions in groups of 2-3 people for 7-8 minutes and then have a large group discussion focusing on the last two questions.

Which of these approaches has been most prevalent in your church tradition?

In your culture?

In your personal experience?

What has been the impact of that perspective – on you, on children, on ministry?

How could a fuller understanding of the Scriptural view of the child enrich your context?

Step 4 | Reflection | 5 minutes

Journal: my personal perspectives

Invite participants to reflect and journal on the following questions:

What personal perspectives of children have been reinforced through Bunge’s perspectives?

What might you be missing?

What is God revealing to you?

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