



# Basics

*"Discovering how to effectively teach children the Word of God."*



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# Chapter 1 – The Importance of Children’s Ministry

Reaching children with the Gospel and discipling them to be life-long followers of Jesus is a key mission and responsibility of the local church.

## God loves and values children

- Jesus sets the example for us in Matthew 19 when He says, “Let the little children come to Me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” This was a rather radical idea in a culture that did not value children.
- 1 Timothy 4:12 highlights how those who are young can set a spiritual example for others.
- Children are souls that need to be reached. If they have not come to faith in Christ, they are lost, walking in darkness, and without purpose and hope. Matthew 18:10-14
- Matthew 18:4 talks about child-like faith that leads to the ability to have confidence that heaven will be their eternal home.
- In Acts 2:38-39, Paul writes about the church, including children, receiving the Holy Spirit.

## The Bible tell us to do it

- For believers in Christ, teaching children God’s Word is a command – it is not optional or “bonus” ministry. A few of these commands are found in Psalm 78:1-8, Deuteronomy 6:6-7, and Psalm 22:30-31.
- God’s Word tells us in Matthew 28:19 to “make disciples of all nations.” There is no minimum age mentioned!

## Childhood is a spiritually critical time of life

- Studies have shown that the majority of those who follow Jesus choose to do so between the ages of 4 and 14, often called the 4/14 window. God clearly works in and through the childhood years.
- In 2 Timothy 3:15, God’s Word teaches us that learning Scripture at an early age has an impact: "And how from infancy you have made known the Holy Scriptures that will make you wise for salvation."
- Satan is always on the prowl, looking to turn kids away from God and turn their hearts cold. When we share truth, we push back the darkness. 1 Peter 5:8
- If we neglect teaching our children, the next generation will have stubborn hearts towards God and truth. Nations fall from within when they don’t know God. Psalm 78:8

## Children’s Ministry has a far reach

- Children’s Ministry for the sake of reaching and discipling children is enough, but its impact reaches far beyond kids. Teens and adults are discipled as they serve, the church family is encouraged and strengthened when a Children’s Ministry is vibrant and thriving, and children bring light into their families, schools, and communities.

Children’s Ministry is Biblical, and it reflects the heart of God!

## What is Discovery Land?

Discovery Land (DL) is a Christian education program designed for use by local churches to help children “Discover Eternal Treasures” in God’s Word. It is a FUN, ENGAGING, and EFFECTIVE way to inspire kids to know and love God. It specializes in using hands-on learning activities that challenge students to talk about and apply what they learn. It is strategic and purposeful and considers the spiritual development of children beginning at six months of age and continuing through their transition to middle school ministry.

The DL curriculum was developed to teach students:

1. The Bible: the big picture of the Old Testament and New Testament as a whole, unified revelation of God’s truth to us.
2. The Gospel of Jesus: salvation by grace through faith as presented throughout the entire Bible.
3. The Basics of Christianity: life transformation through prayer, worship, evangelism, Scripture memory, baptism, communion, tithing, fellowship, serving, missions, etc.

### **Key Chapter: Proverbs 2:1-11**

My son, if you accept my words  
and store up my commands within you,  
<sup>2</sup> turning your ear to wisdom  
and applying your heart to understanding—  
<sup>3</sup> indeed, if you call out for insight  
and cry aloud for understanding,  
<sup>4</sup> and if you look for it as for silver  
and search for it as for hidden treasure,  
<sup>5</sup> then you will understand the fear of the LORD  
and find the knowledge of God.  
<sup>6</sup> For the LORD gives wisdom;  
from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.  
<sup>7</sup> He holds success in store for the upright,  
He is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,  
<sup>8</sup> for He guards the course of the just  
and protects the way of His faithful ones.  
<sup>9</sup> Then you will understand what is right and just  
and fair—every good path.  
<sup>10</sup> For wisdom will enter your heart,  
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.  
<sup>11</sup> Discretion will protect you,  
and understanding will guard you.

## **Lessons are based on a KNOW RIGHT → THINK RIGHT → DO RIGHT → FEEL RIGHT structure**

The percentage of people who have a Biblical worldview and live according to it is steadily declining. We desire to teach kids to KNOW what's right according to God's Word, so they can THINK about what's right, which will then determine what they DO, resulting in FEELING right and living a victorious life in Christ.

<b>Know Right:</b>	<b>A key passage from Scripture</b> 2 Timothy 2:15 – Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.
<b>Think Right:</b>	<b>A key scripture verse to meditate on during the week</b> Psalm 1:2 – ...but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on His law day and night.
<b>Do Right:</b>	<b>The challenge to live God's Word</b> James 1:22 – Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.
<b>Feel Right:</b>	<b>The result of applying the lesson and having a Biblical worldview rather than a secular worldview</b> Psalm 23

## **The Gospel**

The saving Gospel of Jesus Christ is central to all that we do and should be woven into every lesson. There are only two types of students in your classroom: saved and unsaved. We often unintentionally assume that students from “good” homes or “church” homes know Christ as their Savior, but we can never assume.

The urgent need to communicate the Gospel is clear when we realize that students will either spend eternity with Christ in heaven or be separate from Christ forever.

If we neglect the Gospel, there is also a danger of implying that salvation is earned through works.

The Wordless Book is the tool that the Discovery Land program uses to share the Gospel. The use of one consistent method helps to eliminate confusion among children, and it also teaches children how to share the Gospel with others.

It is important to note that the Wordless Book is a tool that provides a framework for sharing the Gospel; it is not a script to be followed. The Gospel should always be shared in a way that reaches a student where they are at, answers their questions, and is led by the Holy Spirit.

We discourage the use of the phrase “ask Jesus into your heart” as children are very literal thinkers, and this phrase can be confusing.

# THE WORDLESS BOOK - PRESENTING THE GOSPEL TO CHILDREN



The Wordless Book is the primary way we share the Gospel with children in Discovery Land. Throughout the curriculum, you will notice that we refer to it on a weekly basis as you present the Gospel message.

Each color has a simple meaning and a key verse that will help children understand the true meaning of God's love and how they can have a personal relationship with Him now and for eternity.

The Wordless Book is a tool that outlines a clear Gospel message. For older children, you may feel that this tool has become repetitive, but after reviewing test results, we learned our older children know the key word, color, and verse, but often they do not know how to use it as a tool to share or defend their faith. Keep this in mind as you role model the Gospel message to your children each week.

Occasionally try using the Gospel outline without referring to the colors. After you are done, ask children what this reminds them of. Or begin sharing the Gospel by expressing the joy you have by being clean (saved) from the sin in your life.

It is important to tie in the joy of becoming part of God's family. When you become a Christian, God is your Heavenly Father and you join all Christians as part of His church family.

## Using the Wordless Book:

**Gold** - The gold page reminds us of God's love for us and how we, as Christians, can have confidence that someday we can go to Heaven. John 14:2 says, "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you." Heaven is real...and is a perfect, literal place. It will be filled with happiness, joy, streets of gold, a perfect family, and the presence of God Himself.

But there is one thing that is not in Heaven...and that is sin.

**Dark** - The dark page represents sin. Sin is anything we think, say, or do that displeases God. Examples of sin are cheating, stealing, and gossiping. These are things that are not going to be in Heaven and things that displease God. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The penalty of sin is eternal death, meaning we can't go to Heaven, but there is hope...

**Red** - The red page reminds us of Jesus. Jesus is God's only perfect Son who came to this earth to live a perfect life. Because of His perfect life, only He could take the punishment for our sin. Hebrews 9:22b says, "...and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Jesus did shed His blood, and because of that, He is the only way to Heaven. It is not by good works (Ephesians 2:8-9), it is only through the gift of Jesus. It's a personal choice if we want to accept this free gift of Jesus. But wait, I need to tell you something...Jesus didn't stay dead, He rose again and had victory over sin!

**Clean** - The clean page reminds us that if we believe in these truths, our sin is forgiven. Acts 16:31 says, ""They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved -

you and your household.'" Believe and you will be saved from the penalty/punishment of your sin. Your sin can be forgiven and you can be washed clean. But that is a choice that each individual needs to make.

**Green** - The green page reminds us that once you ask Jesus to forgive you of your sin, He wants you to grow closer to Him. It's a *relationship*, not a religion. He becomes the leader of your life. Because He is the leader, you will want to grow...like grass in the warm summer months (green). 2 Peter 3:18a says, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." We grow closer to Him by reading our Bible, praying, and obeying His Word.

This sounds pretty cool, doesn't it? No matter how old you are, it's a choice you have to make for yourself! You can choose today to accept this amazing truth. If you want to choose to ask Jesus to be your Savior and Lord, you need to pray, or talk to God, about it. God is real, and He can hear you when you pray.

If you'd like to make this decision, you can pray about it right now:

1. Admit you are a sinner...tell Him about the sin you struggle with and how you know they displease God. (**dark**)
2. Tell Him you believe that Jesus died and took the penalty for your sin. (**red**)
3. Personally ask Jesus to forgive you of your sin and become the leader of your life. (**clean**)
4. Thank Him for forgiving you and being the new leader of your life.

If you have truly asked Jesus to save you and be the leader of your life, you can know that your sin is forgiven and that you are a child of God.



### Additional Tips:

To help coach children toward salvation, the DL program provides the *Coaching Kids for Salvation* card.



**Coaching Kids for Salvation**

**After the Gospel is presented by the teacher...**  
...during the lesson, invite children to a quiet location if they want to make a decision.

**Making sure the child is ready for salvation:**  
**Ask: I think I know why you came to talk to me; but, would you tell me?**  
Answers may vary from "I want to go to Heaven," "I have sinned," "I love Jesus," or "I don't know." If child says, "I don't know," encourage them to go back to class and you can talk more later.

**Checking to see if the child has an understanding of the Gospel:**  
**Ask: Can you tell me anything about the Wordless Book?**  
Allow the child to explain the Gospel to you. Don't expect perfection. Look for an understanding of sin and the need for Jesus to forgive them of their sin.

**Allowing the child to personalize the need for a Savior:**  
**Ask: Have you sinned? How have you sinned?**  
Show child **Romans 3:23** in your Bible.  
If the child denies sin in their life, they are not ready to go further in this discussion. If the child can tell you about sin and personalize that they have sinned, you can continue with the conversation.

**Ask: Who can forgive your sin?**  
Answer should be Jesus.

**Ask: What did Jesus do for your sin?**  
Show child **Hebrews 9:28b** in your Bible.  
Have child put their name in the sentence, "Jesus died for \_\_\_\_\_'s sin."

**Ask: What happened after Jesus died for you?**  
Answer: "He rose again!" (**1 Corinthians 15:3b-4**)

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**Making a personal choice:**  
**Ask: What would you like Jesus to do for you?**  
Answers may vary: "Take away my sin," or "Take the punishment for my sin."

**Say: In Acts 16:31, it says that if we believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ (point to the red page) you can be saved (dark page) from your sin (clean page).**

**Ask: Would you like to pray and ask Jesus to take away your sin?**  
If a child says, "No," tell the child to continue to think about it through the week and and talk to you next week if they would like to.

If a child says, "Yes," say, "Why don't you pray and tell Jesus you have sinned, that you believe in Him, and that you need Him to forgive your sin."

Allow child to pray. If the child needs coaching with words, inform them that you will help them, but they need to remember they are talking to God and they need to really mean what they are saying.

**Assurance of salvation:**  
**Following the prayer, ask: What did Jesus just do for you?**  
Allow child to answer: "He saved me from my sin."

**Ask: How do you know?**  
Allow child to answer: "The Bible tells me so."

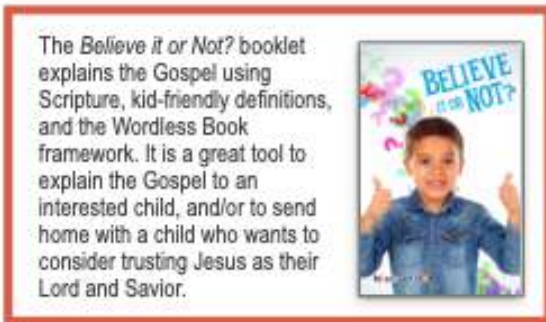
**Hebrews 13:5b** teaches us that when we ask Jesus to be part of our lives, He will never leave us. Use your fingers (starting with your pinky) and say, "Jesus will never leave \_\_\_\_\_."

"I am so excited about the decision you made today. Why don't we go back to class and tell the Teacher/Shepherd about what happened." (Allow the child to explain what happened.)

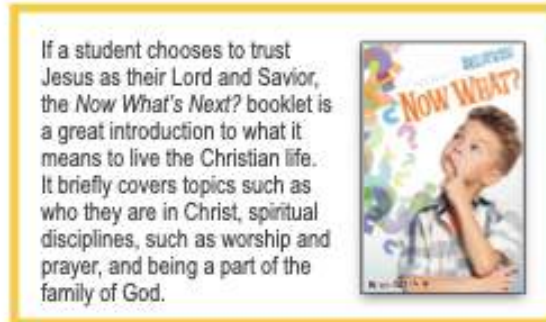

Adapted from CEF salvation training

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To assist you with presenting the Gospel and beginning to disciple a child, the DL program provides the *Believe It or Not?* booklet, the *Now What's Next?* booklet, and the *I Believe* bookmark.



The *Believe it or Not?* booklet explains the Gospel using Scripture, kid-friendly definitions, and the Wordless Book framework. It is a great tool to explain the Gospel to an interested child, and/or to send home with a child who wants to consider trusting Jesus as their Lord and Savior.



If a student chooses to trust Jesus as their Lord and Savior, the *Now What's Next?* booklet is a great introduction to what it means to live the Christian life. It briefly covers topics such as who they are in Christ, spiritual disciplines, such as worship and prayer, and being a part of the family of God.



Following a child's decision to trust Christ as their Savior, the *I Believe* bookmark can be filled out as a reminder of this important decision. The bookmark remains with the student and the tab at the end is filled out and turned in to DL leadership so we can rejoice with the student.

## Scope & Sequence

The DL curriculum is built on a dated scope and sequence that teaches an overview of the Bible every three years. Most lessons focus on a specific Bible narrative, but the scope and sequence also includes occasional topical lessons. Ages 2 through 5th grade are learning the same lesson each week.

The curriculum is divided into the following age groups:

- Crawlers (Six months old) – separate scope and sequence
- Walkers (One-year-olds) – separate scope and sequence
- Runners (Two-year-olds)
- Preschool (Three and Four-year-olds)
- Elementary (Kindergarten – 5th grade)
- 6th Grade
- K-2 Large Group Times

Note: The Discovery Land curriculum currently uses the NIV1984 version of the Bible.

## Chapter 2 – DL Leaders

Well-trained, weekly volunteers are an essential piece of the DL program. Each church has their own DL Director, and each preschool and elementary class typically has three leaders: Lead Teacher, Discover Time (DT) Leader, and Shepherd. For age groups younger than preschool, it is encouraged to have a weekly teacher and rotational helpers.

**DL Director:** Responsible for overseeing the entire Discovery Land program, including providing leadership and training for all volunteers, recruiting, customizing curriculum as needed, and ensuring that supplies and tools are available.

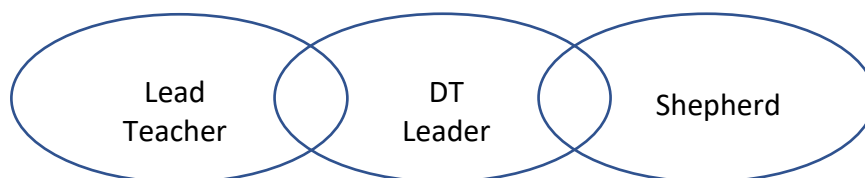
**Team Leader:** Responsible for overseeing a specific service time or group of volunteers, including encouraging volunteers, answering parent and volunteer questions, ensuring that all ministry policies are followed, and finding subs.

**Lead Teacher:** Responsible for teaching a Bible lesson that captures the students' attention and creates spiritual growth by following the Discovery Land program, as well as providing leadership of the students and other volunteers throughout the morning.

**Discover Time Leader:** Responsible for leading a 15-minute educational, energetic, team-focused, and interactive Discover Time activity as stated in the curriculum.

**Shepherd:** Responsible for encouraging and coaching students throughout the morning, including connecting students with a friend and helping first-time visitors feel welcome.

All class leaders remain with their class throughout the entire morning, engaging with students and assisting as needed. Smaller classes may combine the Discover Time Leader and Shepherd roles.



In addition of the positions above, there are many opportunities for people to use their specific interests and gifts in supporting roles:

- **Registration:** Check students in and assist new children/families with registration.
- **Set Up Team:** Set up Discover Time activities prior to Discovery Land.
- **Discover Market Coordinator:** Purchase Discover Market items, schedule volunteer cashiers, and ensure currency is available.
- **Worship/Large Group Opening Leader:** Lead the pre-service review game and worship through music. Build a team to assist with leading worship.
- **Food Station Coordinator:** Purchase and prepare all food station activities. Coordinate food for DL events such as training.

## Qualifications for Volunteers

Discovery Land is a lot of fun, but Kingdom work is also serious business! Volunteers are held to the highest standards, and all volunteers are expected to maintain the following standards of excellence. Of course, no one has a perfect life, but DL Leadership will talk and walk with a volunteer if it becomes obvious that they are struggling in one of the areas listed below.

1. **Faith in Jesus Christ** – Since our ultimate goal in Discovery Land is to lead kids to Christ and then help them grow in their Christian life, volunteers need to have a personal relationship with Christ themselves! If you are unsure of where you stand in your relationship with God, please speak with a pastor or your DL Director. They would love to look in God's Word with you and show you how to know for sure that you are saved and a child of God. *John 3:16*
2. **Spiritual Growth** – A healthy spiritual diet is necessary for all leaders. Check your diet with the following questions: How much time have I spent in personal devotions? How much time do I watch TV? How much time do I spend with my family? How much time do I spend alone with my spouse in meaningful conversation? How much time do I spend in prayer? Am I memorizing God's Word? *1 Peter 2:2, Ephesians 6:13-18*
3. **Love** – Ministry and serving in the church should be motivated by love for children and Jesus Christ, not out of guilt, a feeling of obligation, or a desire to build ourselves up. A commitment to serving in Discovery Land should be made with prayerful consideration. *1 Corinthians 13:1-3*
4. **An Example in Christian Character** – As a volunteer, you are in a “fish bowl.” You are being watched—by children and their families—even outside of church. Discovery Land volunteers should be proper examples and a positive influence on the children they minister to. By refraining from activities that do not glorify or honor God, volunteers express that they are sensitive to the convictions of others in both their actions and conversation. *Titus 2:6-8, 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, Ephesians 5:3-21*
5. **Regular Church Attendance** – This includes attending regular worship services. *Hebrews 10:25*
6. **Encouraging in Speech and Action** – Our words should be encouraging, uplifting, and positive. There should be no insults, cut-downs, gossip, slander, or any talk where someone may be hurt, especially in the presence of children. Humor should reflect a walk with God. *Colossians 4:6, 1 Peter 4:11*
7. **Preparation and Ongoing Training and Development** – Our service to the Lord should be done to the highest standards. Volunteers should come prepared each week with a full understanding of the lesson and truths that are going to be presented. To determine your preparation time, ask yourself this question: “If I knew Jesus was physically going to show up in my class, would I be excited to show Him my class in action?” This also involves faithfully attending meetings and training that is required or offered. *2 Timothy 2:15, 1 Peter 4:10*

8. **Faithful in Commitments Made** – When you give your word, keep it. If you say you will do something, or be somewhere, follow through on it. If something happens where you cannot, then communicate so that those affected can take necessary action. If necessary, find a substitute to take your place. *1 Corinthians 4:2, Proverbs 28:20*
9. **Respectful of Authority** – In word, action, and attitude. If you have a disagreement with another team member or one placed in a position of authority, approach them humbly and in private. Give respect to church procedures by following them. *1 Peter 2:17*
10. **Teachable Spirit** – This is an important trait for any volunteer who is seeking to serve the Lord. We all have weaknesses, but if we remain teachable, there is always hope! We must be willing to listen to constructive criticism and prayerfully consider the input of others. We do not need to always agree, but if we fail to listen, we hurt ourselves and rob ourselves of another chance to grow. *Proverbs 12:15, Proverbs 13:10, Proverbs 19:20*



## Chapter 3 – Components of the Program

### Elementary Program Overview

Discovery Land for Elementary students is made up of five components:

**Pre-Service  
Review Game**

**Worship**

**Discover  
Time**

**Bible  
Lesson**



**End-of-Class  
Review Game**

#### **SUGGESTED SCHEDULE ELEMENTARY**

- :20 Volunteers ready and prepared to welcome students as they arrive
- :15 Pre-Service Review Game
- :00 Worship
- :15 Discover Time
- :30 Bible Lesson
- :60 End-of-Class Review Game
- :65 Parents pick up students

These pieces all tightly connect to produce an environment of Total Time Teaching where every minute matters and students are constantly engaged in learning the main point of the lesson or one of Discovery Land's On Track Map objectives. It is designed for approximately a one-hour session, but it can be modified for as few as 45 minutes or as long as two hours.

## Preschool Program Overview

Discovery Land for Preschool children is made up of six components:

**Pre-Service  
Review Game**

**Large Group  
Opening Time**

**Bible  
Lesson**



**Discover  
Time**

**Know Right Review Activity**

**Think Right Review Activity**

### **SUGGESTED SCHEDULE PRESCHOOL**

- :20 Volunteers ready and prepared to welcome children as they arrive
- :15 Pre-Service Review Game
- :00 Large Group Time
- :15 Bible Lesson
- :35 Discover Time
- :50 Know Right Review Activity
- :60 Think Right Review Activity
- :65 Parents pick up children

These pieces all tightly connect to produce an environment of Total Time Teaching where every minute matters and children are constantly engaged in learning the main point of the lesson or one of Discovery Land's On Track Map objectives. It is designed for approximately a one-hour session, but it can be modified for as few as 45 minutes or as long as two hours.



## Runners Program Overview

Discovery Land for Runners (Two-year-old) children is made up of seven components:

**Coming In Time  
(free play)**

**Clean Up**

**Large Group  
Opening Time**

**Bible Lesson** 

**Craft or Activity**

**Snack & Lesson Review**

**Review Activity**

### **SUGGESTED SCHEDULE RUNNERS**

- :20 Volunteers ready and prepared to welcome children as they arrive
- :15 Coming In Time
- :20 Clean Up
- :25 Large Group Time
- :35 Bible Lesson
- :45 Craft or Activity
- :55 Snack & Lesson Review
- :60 Review Activity
- :65 Parents pick up children

These pieces provide a developmentally appropriate balance of free play and activities that engage children in learning the main point of the lesson or one of Discovery Land's On Track Map objectives. It is designed for approximately a one-hour session, but it can be modified as needed.

## **Walkers Program Overview**

Discovery Land for Walkers (1 year old) children is made up of seven components:

**Coming In Time  
(free play)**

**Clean Up**

**Large Group Opening Time**

**Bible Lesson** 

**Craft or Activity**

**Snack & Lesson Review**

**Free Play**

### **SUGGESTED SCHEDULE WALKERS**

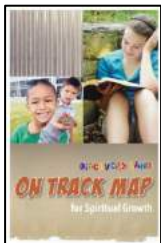
- :20 Volunteers ready and prepared to welcome children as they arrive
- :15 Coming In Time
- :25 Clean Up
- :30 Large Group Time
- :35 Bible Lesson
- :45 Craft or Activity
- :55 Snack & Lesson Review
- :60 Free Play
- :65 Parents pick up children

These pieces provide a developmentally appropriate balance of free play and activities that engage children in learning several “Bible Basics.” It is designed for approximately a one-hour session, but it can be modified as needed.

## **Crawlers Program Overview**

Discovery Land for Crawlers (6-month-old children) is a very simple 6-month curriculum that focuses on learning that God is the Creator.

## On Track Map



The On Track Map is a tool for parents and DL leaders that establishes spiritual goals for each age group. As leaders grow in experience and skill, they can incorporate more On Track Map skills into their teaching and leading.

Because students enter Discovery Land at different ages, teachers are encouraged to review the On Track Map goals for the younger ages as well.

You will notice quite a bit of repetition throughout the Discovery Land Program. This is because:

- God wired elementary-aged children and younger for memorization!
- When children have heard something many times, they not just know and understand it, but can also communicate it to others.
- The concepts and information that are focused on and repeated become a solid foundation that will be built on as children move into middle school ministry and beyond.
- In most weekend ministries, children often attend only 50% of the time.

## DL Top 12

The “DL Top 12” are 12 key verses that are continuously woven throughout the curriculum. The Think Right verse is often one of the DL Top 12.

The goal of choosing just 12 verses is that students would not only memorize these verses, but also understand how to apply them in everyday life situations such as sharing the Gospel, feeling afraid, and their faith being tested.

All leaders are strongly encouraged to memorize the DL Top 12 so you can weave them in throughout the morning.

### Leader Tips:

Think of children learning the DL Top 12 like stacking building blocks. A few verses are taught in Runners, we add several more in Preschool, and by the time students graduate from Discovery Land, they are able to recite all 12 verses, understand what they mean, and apply them to life.

**John 14:2:** In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

**Romans 3:23:** For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

**Hebrews 9:22b:** ...and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

**Acts 16:31:** Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household.

**2 Peter 3:18a:** But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**John 3:16:** For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

**John 14:6:** Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

**Ephesians 2:8-9:** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.

**Proverbs 3:5-6:** Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

**Joshua 1:9:** Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

**1 Corinthians 15:58:** Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

**Mark 12:30-31:** “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” The second is this: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no commandment greater than these.

## Tracker Tickets and Discover Market

Tracker tickets can be earned by elementary students throughout the morning and spent at the Discover Market. This is a reward system for DL students actively studying and applying the Word of God or winning a challenge in a Discover Time activity. It is designed to help build healthy spiritual disciplines and also facilitates excitement within the program. Shepherds are encouraged to take the lead on handing out Tracker Tickets for “fruit of the Spirit” moments or for students engaging in the lesson.

Students earn an average of 8 tickets per week.

### Currency Rate

3	Bringing their Bible (K-2nd) / <u>Using</u> their Bible (3rd-5th)
2	Actively participating in class
1	Demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit
1-5	Discover Time Activity (specified in the curriculum)
5	Completing Tracker’s Treasures and returning coupon
10	Visitor and the friend who brought the visitor



### Leader Tips:

- Follow the specific instructions for using Tracker Tickets during the Discover Time. The reward is part of the lesson/hook of the DT. It will be extremely rare for every student to receive Tracker Tickets during a DT activity.
- Students value Tracker Tickets like real currency, so it is recommended that they be put away when Discovery Land is done.

The Discover Market is a “store” where students can spend their Tracker Tickets. It is often filled with trinkets and candy that appeal to children. Each church needs to set up their Discover Market in a way that appeals to their specific students and fits their budget.



## Pre-Service Review Game



The Pre-Service Review Game is a way to engage Elementary and Preschool students in learning as soon as they walk into Discovery Land, which is a key component of the “Total Time Teaching” philosophy. It is also a catalyst for kids encouraging their parents to arrive early.

It provides an opportunity to review previous lessons, DL Top 12 verses, the Wordless Book, and On Track Map skills, which is critical as individual attendance is rarely 100%.

The fun, engaging game should be played as a group. For Elementary students, competition is encouraged. For Preschool children, a collaborative activity is recommended.

A suggested game is available each quarter in the appendix of the curriculum.

### Instructions for the Pre-Service Review Game Leader

- Think through the logistics of the game in advance. Ensure that the game is visually exciting, all supplies are ready, and you have a plan for dividing children into teams as they enter.
- Plan the questions that will be asked. Review questions for the quarter are in the appendix of the curriculum. Questions can be modified and made into multiple choice or true/false to suit the age of the students and to keep the game moving at a fast pace.
- The Pre-Service Review Game is a great way to get teen assistants involved.

### Instructions for other DL Leaders

- Leaders who are not welcoming students as they enter should assist and encourage all students during the pre-service review game. Cheer them on!
- Ensure visitors feel welcome and try to match them up with a new friend.
- Help all students participate and keep the game moving by occasionally giving students the answer to the questions.

## Worship

The purpose of worship time is to provide an opportunity for students to express feelings of honor, joy, love, adoration, and reverence through song. It also prepares their hearts for the upcoming lesson. Students typically sing two or three songs each week.

### Instructions for Worship Leaders

- Worship is more than just singing and jumping – it's a lifestyle!
- Preparation for leading worship includes reading the lesson for the week and being well-prepared to lead the songs.
- Passion is contagious! If the leader is passionate about worship, it will show and the kids will mirror that. Our great God is a reason to jump, shout, and sing!
- Leading worship is a great way to involve teen leaders. With training and encouragement, they can have a great impact on the kids they lead.



### Instructions for other DL Leaders

- Encourage students to be respectful and participate by doing the hand motions and/or just standing out of respect.
- Leaders should prevent and correct any disruptive behavior.

## Preschool Large Group Opening Time

In addition to a Pre-service Review Game and worship songs, Preschool Large Group Opening Time also includes the following elements:

- Introduction to the concept of tithing and the opportunity for children to give.
- Introduction to the lesson of the day with a puppet script. The script is always a dialogue between the Large Group Opening Time Leader and either Tracker the camel, or his sister Cami the camel. They are the same puppet; a bow can be put on the puppet to indicate that it's Cami. There are times during the Easter season when a donkey may appear in the skit.
- Teaching children the DL Top 12 verses through repetition and hand motions. Preschoolers will learn nine of the Top 12 verses throughout their time in the preschool ministry.

## Discover Time (DT)



Discover Time (DT) activities are designed to engage elementary and preschool students and challenge them through hands-on learning. Through the DT, they will experience an emotion or response that will help them personally connect to the Bible lesson. Occasionally the DT activity will be used to make a “memorable picture” of the Bible lesson for students such as the feel, smell, or taste of something in the Bible narrative.

A DT activity may also be described as an object lesson—an object lesson that the kids participate in! Students love Discover Time and remember it.

Most DTs use methods and supplies that kids have enjoyed in the past and will continue to enjoy in the future such as sand, water, Legos, and obstacle courses.

It is extremely important to understand and remember the goal of the DT and how it connects to the lesson. If the leader does not understand the connection, the DT will turn into a fun, but meaningless, activity.

Elementary DTs often include competition to keep the activity fun and engaging. This means there will be winners and losers. It is important not to let everyone win. While that may seem like you are being kind to all of the students, it communicates that the activity and the outcome don't really matter. They won't trust the instructions in the future, and it also may diminish the connection between the DT and lesson.

### Instructions for DT Leaders

- Read the entire lesson for the week and understand the purpose of the DT and how it connects to the lesson.
- Think through the steps and process of the DT. Mentally walk through the activity and think through how you will run it. Ask yourself these questions:
  - ✓ What will you need to do to make sure it is simple, fun, and engaging?
  - ✓ How will you divide the students quickly into teams?
  - ✓ How will you give directions? Do you need a diagram or picture?
  - ✓ Will you need the support of the Lead Teacher and the Shepherd?
  - ✓ How will you communicate the directions to the students?
  - ✓ How will you be energetic during the activity?
  - ✓ How will you get and keep their attention?
- Ensure that you understand how to weave in the main or “Do Right” point throughout the activity. It is often one word or phrase that gets repeated.
- Expect it to be fun and educational!
- Stick to the curriculum's instructions for winners and losers.

#### **Leader Tip:**

To quickly divide students into teams, put a number on their hand when they arrive or have a color on their name tag.

### **Instructions for the Lead Teacher**

- Carefully watch the students' reactions and emotions during DT. This will be helpful when weaving the DT into the lesson.
- Assist the DT Leader and students as needed.

### **Instructions for the Shepherd**

- Assist the DT Leader and students as needed.
- Provide extra assistance to students who are visiting or struggling with the DT.

### **The difference between Preschool and Elementary DT's:**

The preschool Discover Time is similar to the elementary. However, there are a few differences because Preschool children generally do not enjoy competition, they are very literal, and the activities need to be simpler. For successful preschool DTs:

- DT's are more cooperative than competitive. In preschool, we race without highlighting the winner.
- Try to give only one, maybe two directions at a time.
- Be very positive and encouraging.
- If possible, model exactly what they are to do. This may mean running through the Discover Time with the Lead Teacher and Shepherd so students can watch.
- Review behavior expectations – student should obey because they are having fun.
- DT's are done after the Bible lesson so you can easily reinforce the "Do Right" point.



## Bible Lesson

The purpose of the in-class Bible lesson is to challenge kids to know and study the Word of God. Lessons are designed for a teacher-led classroom. The teacher has the privilege of bringing the Bible to life through hands-on, creative teaching, rather than using worksheets and handouts.

Students are active participants in the lesson. Elementary students bring and use their Bibles each week, looking up the Scripture used in the lessons. The teacher also engages the class by using the Bible timeline to help students understand the big picture of God's redemptive plan. Students also participate through the review that is built into every lesson.

### Lead Teachers need to first know their students

- It is the Lead Teacher's responsibility to take the "spiritual temperature" of their students, including whether or not they have trusted in Christ as their Savior. One simple way to begin to get an understanding of where students are at spiritually is to have them put their heads down and ask them to give a "thumbs up" if they are certain they have asked Jesus to be their Lord and Savior, a "thumbs down" if they have never done that, or a "thumb to the side" if they are uncertain.
- It is also important that a Lead Teacher understands the culture that their students are immersed in every day, so that real-life examples can be woven into the lesson. A few ways to better understand your students include:
  - Watch afternoon TV/kid TV.
  - Ask them what music they listen to.
  - Ask them what kind of screen/device they have and what kinds of apps they use.
  - Talk to parents: what do their children struggle with?
  - What after school activities are they involved in?
  - As kids are checking in, ask them about their week.
  - Talk to a school teacher for school day scenarios.

### Layout of the Bible Lesson

1. Lesson number, date, and scripture reference
2. Four Know Right Points
3. Discover Time Activities
4. Preparation for the Classroom
5. Lesson Introduction for the Classroom
6. Scripture Outline for the Classroom
7. Review Questions

#### Leader Tips:

In a culture where the Bible is often considered a work of fiction, avoid using the word "story" when referring to the portion of Scripture that we are studying. Phrases that can be used instead include "Bible narrative" or "Bible lesson."

### **Preparing the Bible Lesson**

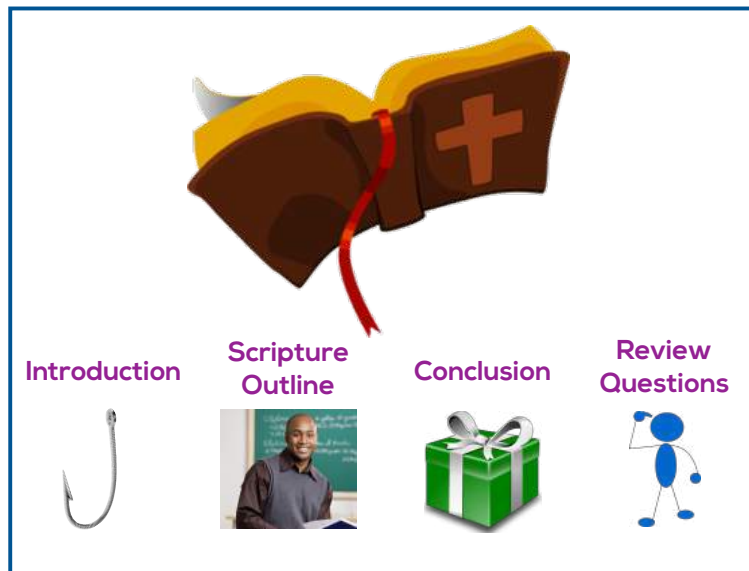
Preparing to effectively and creatively teach a Bible lesson takes approximately 2-3 hours.

1. **Pray:** Pray for God's leading as you read through the Scripture and the lesson outline. Pray that God prepares your heart to be open to the truth of His Word. Pray also for the students in your class. Ask God to bring to mind specific students and how this lesson will impact them.
2. **Read the Bible:** Read the entire scripture covered in the lesson. Only God's word is without error.
3. **Start with the end in mind:** Read the Know Right Points and the review questions.
4. **Read through the entire lesson in the curriculum**
5. **Review the DT Transition:** Ensure that you understand the connection between the DT and the lesson.
6. **Read through the lesson again:** Make notes, highlight key ideas, and decide how you will include creative teaching ideas. Find where the Gospel is shared in the lesson and make sure to review the Wordless Book. Also identify places in the curriculum to be creative:
  - A spot to add a visual
  - A place for students to respond to a question
  - Write questions or highlight the questions that are asked in the curriculum
  - Find a place in the curriculum to highlight the Know Right points or to mention the DT
  - Review the difference between 'paraphrase' and 'recap'
  - Highlight key words
7. **Gather any needed supplies**

**NOTE:** Teachers should always have their Bibles open during the entire lesson so students know the account is coming from the Bible. Due to a limited amount of time and the value we place on students using their Bibles, teachers should not read the lesson from a Bible storybook.

## In Class Teaching

Each Elementary Bible lesson follows the same format. *Note: Preschool follows a slightly different format.*



### **Connection to the DT**

Students can easily become distracted when transitioning from DT to the classroom. Be ready for this transition back to the classroom by immediately connecting the DT to the lesson.

The curriculum explains how to connect the DT to the Bible lesson in the "Connecting the DT to the Lesson" section. Be sure you clearly understand and can communicate the connection, so students understand it was not just a fun activity.

### **In-Class Prayer**

Encourage a student to open the class in prayer. This helps the students focus on God, teaches them how to pray, and encourages spiritual leadership skills. This time can be used to teach students:

- About reverence for God - why we fold our hands and close our eyes
- That God hears each of us and loves it when we talk to Him
- That God answers prayer in 3 ways: Yes, No, and Wait
- How prayer unites the body of Christ
- To pray confidently out loud to God in small and large groups

### **Find It and Timeline**

Students are encouraged to bring their own Bible each week. Our goal is for students to understand the layout of the Bible, how to use their Bible, and how the lesson fits into the timeline of God's plan. We call this the "Find It" time of the lesson because students will find the lesson in their Bible and on the timeline.

#### Find It: Old or New Testament and Scripture Reference

Students should find the scripture verse in their Bible. The goal is for students to be comfortable navigating through their Bible, which helps equip them to read it on their own.

#### Timeline

Using the timeline helps students see that God has had, and still has, a plan for each of us. Find where in history the lesson takes place by using the timeline. This helps students understand how the lesson fits into God's big redemptive plan. It also helps them understand the jump between the Old and New Testaments.

### **Introduction to the Bible Lesson**

The introduction to the lesson is a few simple sentences that help grab the attention of the students. This introduction also connects the current lesson to previous lessons.

#### **Teacher Tips:**

The Connection to the DT, In-Class Prayer, and Find It should only take 2-5 minutes.

Avoid having students read Scripture out loud. It causes anxiety for many, they only focus on the words they will have to read, and other students often can't hear them.

#### **Scripture Outline**

There is a Scripture outline to help guide the lesson:

**Summary of these verses:** This is for the teacher's information only (not dialogue)

**Read:** Scripture to read out loud to the class from your Bible

**Recap:** After reading the portion of Scripture, take time to explain what it means. The "recap" often asks a question, defines key words, or restates the big picture of what you read at a child's level.

**Paraphrase:** This means you do not need to read it straight from the Bible (due to time, length of verses, or it is covering a difficult topic that needs to be made more child friendly). Please do not read the paraphrased text to your class directly from the curriculum.

### **Conclusion**

Conclude the lesson by focusing the students on the key Know, Think, Do, and Feel Right points of the lesson. This is the place to challenge students to Do Right in the real-life situations that they face.

## Classroom Resources

The following teaching tools are provided for the classroom:



- Bible Timeline: The Bible timeline includes many of the narratives in the three-year scope and sequence. It is divided into two sections: Old Testament (maroon) and New Testament (gold). The two are connected by a “400 years of silence” visual. The “Church Age” visual helps students understand where their own lives fall on the timeline.

- Discovery Land Top 12 verses: Printable DL Top 12 posters for the classroom.

- Old and New Testament books of the Bible posters: These are used during the “Find It” portion of the lesson.



- Tracker Tickets

- Feel Right poster: This poster is used to highlight different feelings that people may have had in the Bible narrative, and also to connect the student to the Feel Right point of the day.

- Bible Times Map: The map includes the locations of many Bible narratives.

- Bulletin Boards: Optional bulletin board ideas are included in the curriculum every quarter.



The following resources are also provided for every classroom. A description of these can be found in the “Wordless Book - Sharing the Gospel” section of this manual.

- Wordless Book
- Believe it or Not? booklet
- I Believe bookmarks
- Now What? booklet
- Coaching Kids for Salvation cards

## End-of-Class Review Game (Elementary)

Simple End-of-Class Review Games for Elementary students are provided in the appendix of the curriculum. Discover Time Leaders or Shepherds lead the review game as parents are picking students up, while the Lead Teacher hands out Tracker's Treasures and connects with the parents.

### Leader Tips:

Reword review questions, turn them into true/false questions, or offer multiple choice answers to better suit the age level of the class. The goal is to review and reinforce understanding.

### The review game is important because it:

- reinforces the lesson that was taught in class.
- helps the teacher evaluate if the lesson was taught effectively.
- repeats questions and answers several times; repetition is key for students to remember and it will help students retain what they've learned.
- helps students to confidently apply what they learned during the upcoming week.
- ensures Total Time Teaching. We value every minute we have with our students, which is why we teach from the moment students are dropped off to the moment they are picked up in DL.
- demonstrates to the parents that their child's time in DL is valuable and spent learning God's Word.
- creates a positive final experience for the students.

### Instructions for the Lead Teacher

- Stand at the door to greet and connect with parents.
- Hand out Tracker's Treasures and encourage parents to complete it with child during the week.
- Listen in on the review game to evaluate what the students have learned.

### Instructions for the Discover Time Leader

- Lead the end-of-class review game.

### Instructions for the Shepherd

- Assist the DT Leader in the end-of-class review game as needed.
- Assist students in packing up their things.
- Hand out any remaining Tracker Tickets.

## Know Right and Think Right Activities (Preschool)

Each Preschool lesson concludes with simple Know Right and Think Right activities. The Know Right activity reviews the content that was taught. The Think Right activity, which reviews the Scripture verse, is led by the DT Leader and/or Shepherd as children are dismissed, while the Lead Teacher hands out Tracker Jr. and connects with the parents.

### Leader Tips:

Reword review questions, turn them into true/false questions or offer multiple choice answers to better suit the age level of the class. The goal is to review and reinforce understanding.

## Testing

The Discovery Land program includes a testing day each spring for Elementary students. The testing is done to help ministry leadership, teachers, and parents better understand what their students have learned and how they are growing spiritually. Our goal is to challenge kids to become spiritual champions – kids who know and can effectively apply the Word of God to their lives. Testing gives the ministry important insight on how to better serve parents and children to achieve that goal.

The word "test" may concern people when it comes to church and kids. Clear, open, and positive communication with parents, kids, and (when necessary) church leadership about the purpose of the testing can alleviate most concerns.

## Joyful and Effective Learning Environments

An effective Discovery Land ministry includes creating an environment that is joyful and conducive to learning. All DL leaders play an important part in creating that environment, and the focus should be on preventing discipline issues. Some important principles include:

**Prayer** – Pray for students by name. Pray that they will come with hearts and minds prepared to learn. Pray specifically for those that have behavioral challenges.

**Focus** – Know the target. Know the Know, Think, Do, and Feel Right Points. Think through specific ways each of the students can grow spiritually.

**Preparation** – *If you don't have a plan for the kids, they will have a plan for you!* Be completely prepared before arriving, so full attention can be given to the students. Think through the entire time beginning to end. Have a backup plan in case the lesson ends early, the sermon goes long, etc. Pay special attention to transition times as these are often when behavior struggles surface. Reclaim that time by using it to build relationships, practice the Think Right verse, etc.

**Physical cues** – Where possible, set up the physical space in a way that helps students focus. If something is a distraction, put it away. Rope off spaces that are off-limits to students. Use Velcro lines or another visual cue to indicate to children where they should stand or sit.

**Expectations** – Set and clearly communicate simple behavioral expectations. Consistency is key. These expectations should be consistent across leaders and ministries.

**Relationships** – Building relationships with children helps them feel loved, safe, and accepted. It helps them respect you and respond to your leadership. Our time in Discovery Land is limited, and our time is focused on teaching God's Word. However, there are ways that you can build relationships:

- Use their name
- Use spare moments (transition times) to talk with kids
- Ask open-ended questions
- Know what's important to them
- Get to know them as a leader who cares, not as a friend
- Talk to them outside of class – be where they are
- Brag on them in front of their parents
- Remember that behavior modification is not your goal – we are not producing robots; we desire real heart and life transformation

**Excitement** – The kids will follow your cues. If you are excited about God's Word, they are more likely to be excited. If you appear distracted and bored, they will be more likely to be distracted and bored, which contributes to behavior concerns.

### Refocus

The 5-Count is a tool that can be used to quickly refocus a group of kids. A leader counts loudly and slowly up to five, holding up the corresponding number of fingers. Students are expected to be quiet before the leader reaches "five." Consistency in using the 5-Count across leaders and ministries is extremely important.



## Chapter 4 – Connecting with Families Encouraging and Equipping Parents

Creating a strong connection between the church and the home is essential. The church must continually work to encourage and equip parents to be the spiritual leaders in their home.

- In Deuteronomy 6, God commands His people to teach their children His Word.
- In Isaiah 38:19b, we see that a generation learns about God's faithfulness from the previous generation.
- The New Testament gives instruction for parent and child relationships, indicating that it matters to God.

The Bible provides examples of children who were trained by their parents and grandparents:

- Timothy was trained by his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5)
- Fathers of the Ephesus church were told to train up their children in the Lord (Eph. 6:4)

Leaders in DL have about approximately 52 hours per year with a child IF they attend every week. Parents have much more than that, and they have opportunities to teach their children how to apply God's Word to everyday life.

Parents can be encouraged to:

- Attend church/Discovery Land regularly (Hebrews 10:25)
- Continually teach God's Word to their children and then review and reinforce it in everyday life (Colossians 3:16)
- Involve their children in serving God in their home and community (Ephesians 4:12)

# Tracker's Treasures and Tracker Jr.



Tracker's Treasures (Elementary) and Tracker Jr. (Preschool) are DL's colorful, kid-friendly take-home papers for families. It is an important tool that we use to partner with parents.

**Elementary Leader Tips:**  
Occasionally create a "Tracker's Treasures challenge" for your entire class, such as setting a goal for the number of Tracker's Treasures coupons turned in and provide a special treat when the goal is reached. Visually track your progress by making a paper "chain" from the coupons.

Using Tracker's Treasures/Tracker Jr. will help parents:

- Introduce key spiritual and Biblical concepts such as God's love, sin, punishment (which Jesus took for us), right decisions, and truth.
- Create family spiritual conversations at home. The family challenges give motivation and ideas for parents to engage with their kids around the concepts in the week's DL lesson.
- Challenge their children to think through and live out the Know, Think, Do and Feel Rights in real life situations.

Teachers are encouraged to hand out the Tracker's Treasures and Tracker Jr. to the parent each week and encourage them to complete it with their child. There is a coupon on each Tracker Treasures and Tracker Jr. that students can return for Tracker Tickets (Elementary) or a small prize (Preschool).

Runners children complete a project or activity sheet that goes home each week, so the parent understands what their child learned in Discovery Land.

## Appendix

### Connection with Awana

The Discovery Land program was originally designed to complement the Awana mid-week program. When all of the Children's Ministry programs within a church work together and complement, rather than compete, it is powerful! Those who attend Awana and DL typically do better on the DL tests and have a deeper understanding of God, His Word, and its application.

The Discovery Land and Awana programs complement each other in the following ways:

- The discipline methods of each match each other (5 count).
- The DL Top 12 verses are all found in the Awana books.
- Students in the Awana program memorize many verses; in DL, there is less emphasis on memorization and more on modeling how a select set of verses apply to life.
- What is taught in DL is reinforced in Awana by using the Do Right point to create large group, practical, life-application lessons.
- The Gospel is presented the same way in both Awana and DL.
- They provide balanced approaches to instruction: Awana utilizes large group teaching, and DL utilizes classroom-style teaching.

## The Story of Discovery Land Global

After years of developing a solid, effective ministry philosophy, Kris Smoll, the Director of Children's Ministry at Appleton Alliance Church (AAC), was seeking a curriculum that provided the level of hands-on fun and solid Bible foundation she was looking for. Unable to find it, she, along with a volunteer, developed the Discovery Land program. Another church learned about the program and asked to use it. Kris agreed to share it as a test of how it might work in another church. Success! Word spread and churches in the US and around the world were using the English version. Our sister church in Lima, Peru saw what kids were learning and how God was using the program, and they desired to use it as well. God provided a translator to make it available in Spanish.

Because AAC has a thriving Awana ministry, the Discovery Land program was originally developed to complement the Awana program. In 2016, DLG signed a coalition agreement with Awana – Latin America. We have synergized our teams to provide Children's Ministry resources to all Spanish-speaking countries.

Through years of working alongside other churches, we have learned that Children's Ministries of all sizes desire more than just curriculum: they want training, ideas, strategies, and resources that align with the curriculum they're using. This is why we don't sell curriculum. Instead, we *partner with* Children's Ministries around the world to help them reach and disciple the kids in their communities for Christ!