

Mustard Seed Series

CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION



Director's Manual





MUSTARD SEED SERIES

Christian Education Curriculum

by

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The Mustard Seed Series by
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ISBN: 9780998910635
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2017 Edition

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DIRECTOR'S MANUAL

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IV. OVERSEEING AND IMPLEMENTING THE *MUSTARD SEED SERIES*

It is important that you know your students' school calendar: when the secular school year begins and ends, and when they will have vacations and long holiday weekends. You can get this calendar by calling the school superintendent's office. With this calendar in hand, make up your own Church School calendar.

The *MUSTARD SEED SERIES* can be used for single grades or in a group grading system. If you have a small Church School and need to **group grade**, try not to group more than two grade levels. Furthermore, in order for students to learn the *MUSTARD SEED SERIES* material in the proper sequence, we highly recommend that children stay in the same group as they move through the Church School rather than have them split and rejoin as they move through a rigid grade organization. Such a pattern for a group starting Grades 1 and 2 together would progress as follows.

Year 1	Grades 1 & 2	Primary 1 (Grade 1)
Year 2	Grades 2 & 3	Primary 2 (Grade 2)
Year 3	Grades 3 & 4	Intermediate 1 (Grade 3)
Year 4	Grades 4 & 5	Intermediate 2 (Grade 4)
Year 5	Grades 5 & 6	Junior 1 (Grade 5)
Year 6	Grades 6 & 7	Junior 2 (Grade 6)
Year 7	Grades 7 & 8	Pre-Confirmation 1 (Senior 1, Grade 7)
Year 8	Grades 8 & 9	Pre-Confirmation 2 (Senior 2, Grade 8)
Year 9	Grades 9 & 10	Confirmation (Grade 9)

Note that the above grouping creates a problem for those children entering grade 1 the second and third years. If you have insufficient students for a separate grade 1 and anticipate a need to group grade them with another grade level, group grade 1 with kindergarten. For their first year together, use another curriculum. Then introduce the *MUSTARD SEED SERIES* Kindergarten program for their second year together. For their third year together, they will progress according to the above schema beginning with Primary 1.

If you regroup your grade combinations, be sure that the younger grade levels do not miss an important level. Beginning with Grade 3, have your students go through each cycle sequentially.

As stated earlier, it is important that you observe your classes. You should also find out whether you may observe similar grade levels in the public schools. Search out and find help and expertise from whatever reliable sources are available to you. Most people are not natural-born teachers. They learn how to teach by teaching: through experimentation, by being observed, and by observing. They also learn from helpful, critical discussion and suggestions.

Spend time individually with each of your teachers before they go into the classrooms. Get to know your teachers during this time, and let them know of any special needs their students may have. It is not good practice to label children as being mischievous, or bright, or slow; such labeling gives teachers preconceived ideas about students which may influence their actions toward them in the classroom. After your teachers have spent several Sundays with their classes, you may wish to talk with them again and discuss their perceptions of their students. Try to be non-judgmental and as objective as possible.

Respect your teachers' confidences and their private conversations with you. Also, show to your teachers that you are willing to talk to parents of a troublesome child. No teacher wants to do this, and you are paid to handle these matters discretely.

During your initial individual conferences with your teachers, you will need to outline your expectations of them. Give your teachers a list setting forth the lessons that need to be taught on each Sunday throughout the term. Emphasize that the Church School should be one place in students' lives where they are accepted for being who they are: there should be no discrimination. The Christian church welcomes people of all races and from different ethnic origins, from non-traditional as well as traditional families; it welcomes the handicapped as well as the non-impaired. To achieve this welcoming atmosphere, it is absolutely necessary that students not feel threatened by tests and competitions. All students are winners. All should be encouraged to develop their potential as children of God.

Bulletin boards provide important visual representations of what is happening in the classrooms. For this reason, change your bulletin boards when you change units. At the very minimum, you should have an artistic person create attractive bulletin boards for the term opening in the fall.

The *MUSTARD SEED SERIES* avoids emphasizing denominational differences. Occasionally, your teachers or you yourself may need to speak to your minister regarding your denomination's beliefs on the Lord's Supper and on baptism. Denominational differences should be covered in those portions of the confirmation class which are taught by your minister.

Sometimes you may have a teacher who has no intention to teach the material you give him or her; your leadership may be severely tested under such circumstances. It is your responsibility to question why the teacher is not following the curriculum and to ask that person please to progress at the pace you have set for his or her class. You must also ask that s/he teach the required material. If that person refuses and you must dismiss him or her, speak to your Christian Education Committee. You will need their support and backing. If you do not believe you have the authority to dismiss this teacher, your Christian Education Chairperson or your minister will have to do it gently for you. Remember that you cannot let one person disrupt your entire program. In the past, Christian education has all too often been limited to what a teacher chose to teach, rather than rising to the challenge of meeting the Christian educational needs of all the students in the program. Seldom do individual teachers have the big picture for a Church School program.

Some teachers may be tentative when introduced to this curriculum because they have never used anything like it before. This curriculum may seem like a new baby: they may be afraid to hold it because it might break. Assure your teachers that it can take all sorts of rough treatment. Encourage them to relax and to be relaxed with the curriculum.

Flexibility should be your teachers' motto. Not every question in the lesson plan needs to be asked; more material is given in the curriculum than can be covered in an hour. Teachers need to be selective. They also need to know the material well, and to stick to the lesson's Focus. If they do, everything else will fall into place. Reassure them that they need not cover all the material given in a lesson—much of the material given to them is background information.