

Curriculum: **The Mustard Seed Series**

Publisher: LeaderResources www.leaderresources.org/mustardseed
(800-941-2218)

Denomination: Individual (Rev. Anita Keire, United Church of Christ)

Foundational doctrine: *The Mustard Seed Series opens the minds and spirits of students and teachers to the richness, variety and purpose of God's word and action among us.* Emphasis is placed on presenting a coherent and chronological study of our Judeo/Christian faith story beginning with Genesis and concluding scriptural studies with Acts and Paul's Epistles. Church history and modern-day interpretation of God's actions among us and our reaction to God's will as made known to us through scripture, the Holy Spirit, the faith community, and every day life are meant to challenge students to think, wrestle with, and become disciples of Jesus Christ. Themes spring from the interpretation of the biblical texts. Understanding the Hebrew scripture and the New Testament and their interrelationship and fulfillment is critical to a growing person's understanding that Jesus is God incarnate. He comes to us in human form with God's self-imposed human limitations in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus experienced our humanness. He was vulnerable to rejection, temptation, love, suffering, hope, despair and death. I concur with Augustine on the oneness of God and the stringent unity of the Trinity.

Scriptural/Theological Content: Presents our faith story chronologically. Centers on the Bible, its people and their story based on 34 lessons a year, containing 340 biblical texts for ten years covering the principal, important texts of the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) and New Testament. Links biblical truths to life's dilemmas while emphasizing spiritual formation, worship, Christian discipleship and service. Biblical stories are paraphrased in the Student Books. Lends itself to the incorporation of denominational material by interspersing lessons following the church calendar.

Articulation: A chronological Scriptural curriculum, starting with Genesis in Primary levels with reviews at the beginning of each following year. Also included are children's literature (such as *The Selfish Giant*) classical art and drama/movies as lesson topics.

Interest / Abilities of Teachers: Promotes itself as teacher friendly due to complete lesson plans, discussion starters, and interactive activities in which no training is required. Supplemental resources by the author include "A Parent's Guide to Prayer" and "Teacher's Training Manual" that offers practical ideas for class management and enrichment arts & crafts activities. There is a Director's Manual for Sunday School program management.

Learning Activities, Format & Media: Student Books for Kindergarten through Confirmation include a wide variety of illustrations, plays, stories, puzzles, word searches. Student Books for Grade 4 and above include classical religious art. Older classes often use video. Each lesson plan includes:

1. Focus
2. Review of previous week's lesson & student preparation for the day's lesson
3. The day's lesson with discussion possibilities
4. Overview of Student Book enhancements
5. Activities (limited to one or two per lesson)
6. Sample closing prayers

Setting: Self-contained classroom, although it is recommended for home-schooling, after-school programs and church computer labs.

Inviolate Principle of Choice: Teacher directed, with specific questions and answers for classroom instruction. The teacher does not need to make any decisions, nor does the student. Lesson Plan is structured from beginning to end, with all materials and instructions listed that a teacher would need to teach the lesson.

Age group differentiation: Closely graded for ten grade levels, K-Grade 9. Grade 7 & 8 - Pre-Confirmation. Grade 9 - Confirmation, "Living the Faith."

Home Involvement: Through Grade 6, "A Note Home" tells parents what students learned in class, encouraging them to discuss the biblical texts with their children and to help them in the development of their faith.

Language: Informal convictional language is contained in most lessons, with answers to questions being interpreted from the theology of the editor. (For example: "If people cannot be faithful in their commitments, then society will disintegrate" from a Grade 5 lesson on the Ten Commandments & Covetousness.) Discussion possibilities are given, with 'correct' answers. Espouses no denominational point of view; individual denominations are invited to incorporate their material when appropriate.

Sociological: Student material is presented in pen & ink sketches. Promotes itself as being adaptable to accommodate for age differences and cognitive skills, although this is not fully evident in the materials. Critical and interpretive thinking skills are promoted through a Christian perspective (via the view of the editor).

Attendance Pattern: Each lesson continues from the previous, with a review section to "catch up" those who might have been absent and to serve as an entry point to the next story chronologically in Scripture.

Cost: Average Sunday Attendance downloadable: \$75 (1-25 worship attendees) to \$350 (801 worship attendees).