

# Getting started

Designing a thematic curriculum based on the character and nature of God

## ***How can I link the topic with an attribute of God's character?***

It is important to put God first and not the topic first.

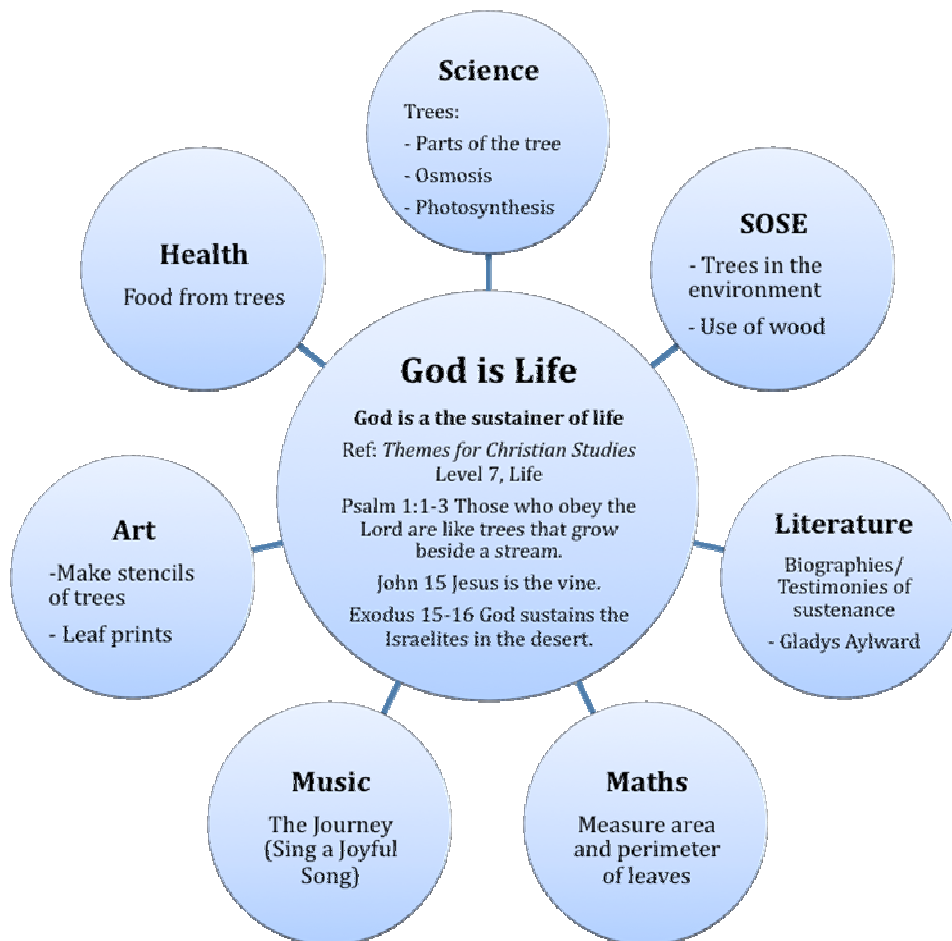
Example:

Theme: God is Life

Specific spiritual focus: God is the sustainer of life

Topic: trees

God should be central to the unit and not an afterthought.



**The learning centre should visually reflect the theme.** Make a large, colourful sign for the wall, saying 'God is Life'. Students can decorate each letter separately with colourful patterns. The sign serves as a daily visual reminder of the theme. As more and more work is completed, displays start to decorate the wall, including Scripture verses appropriate to the theme.

These Scripture verses can become memory verses.

***Choose an attribute of God and a related topic, then integrate:***

**1. Devotional periods**

- What does the attribute of God mean to us personally?
- What bible passages speak about this attribute?
- How does the creation this aspect of God?
- Are there any personal Christian testimonies that prove God to be true in this way?
- How does the attribute relate to Christian living?
- Which Christian biographies reflect this aspect of God?

**2. Science/ sociology/history/geography**

- Example: Take the science/geography topic, '*rain forests*'.
- Remind the students of the Creator who made the rainforests, and His purposes for making them... He is our provider.
- During the lesson, make the link between the Creation and the Creator.
- Ask: "Which Bible story did we read this week that reminded us of God's provision?" e.g. God provided for Ruth and Naomi

**3. Music**

- Choose Christian songs that teach about the spiritual theme.

**4. Art**

- Teach art skills *within* the context of the theme.
- Example: 'God is Creator' - illustrate the days of creation. Teach drawing and painting skills through the God is Creator theme.

**5. Prayer**

Children can:

- Thank God for who He is.
- Thank Him for His creation, love, His protection, His provision.
- Ask Him for protection, healing and wisdom.

**6. Character development**

- Constantly reinforce the teaching of God's character, weaving it into the daily educational process.
- Remind the students that God wants us to be more like Him.
- Examples: As we learn that God is loving, we are challenged to love others. As we learn that He is patient, we are challenged to be more patient.
- A full list of character qualities, and ideas for teaching these can be found in the *Jesus First* resource. (See **values education**)

### ***How do themes work?***

#### **In a secular setting:**

##### **Sample topic: *the weather***

You could...

- Find stories based on the topic of weather.
- Study the weather in science.
- Measure wind speeds and rainfall in mathematics.
- Sing songs about weather.
- Stimulate art work around the weather theme.

You could...

- Make paper clouds stuffed with cotton wool, attack paper raindrops and hang them from the ceiling.
- Make snowflake designs on the windows.
- Do some creative writing about weather
- Read books about weather.
- Make observation chart and weather maps in science, geography and maths.
- Make lists of 'weather' words in spelling.

**In a Christian setting** we can do all this and more. We would begin by placing God at the centre.

We can...

- Teach about an attribute of His character, such as 'God is Powerful'.
- Ask the students how the weather topic reminds us of God's power.
- Read the Bible story of Jesus calming the storm, showing His power over all of creation. Discuss God's power working in the lives of Christians, and the power He can give to help us through the storms of life.
- Ask ourselves how an understanding of God's power can change our lives.

- Discuss the meaning of Jesus as a powerful Lord...one who is in control of one's life.
- Discuss the topic of faith in a powerful God.

### ***Combining different aspects of God's character***

It is possible to study two aspects at the same time by linking attributes. An example would be, 'God is a loving provider'.

Taking the topic, '*Rainforests*', for example, we may want to study this topic for an extended period of time...perhaps 6 to 8 weeks. Placing 'rainforests' under the banner of *God is a loving provider* means that both *love* and *provision* can be studied throughout the theme.

#### **Problem...**

It is possible to choose a topic, choose an attribute of God, to make an attractive display on the back wall...

#### **God is a loving provider**

...and then carry on teaching the topic with no further reference to God in the study.

It is important to remind the student of God *throughout* the study and not just at the introduction point. Each time we begin a study session, ask the students, "What does the study of rainforests show us about God?" We need to ask God *daily* to reveal His mind and to get His perspective on everything we teach.

#### ***Evaluation***

To ensure that the students are making the link between their academic studies and the spiritual theme, three key questions need to be asked regularly:

1. Which *theme* are we studying at present? (e.g. God is provider)
2. Which *topic* are we studying to remind us of the theme? (e.g. *rainforests*)
3. Which Bible passages and verses are we studying to show us that *God is ....*?

#### ***Maintaining a balanced program***

Just as we would plan our academic curriculum carefully, ensuring that we are covering a balance of skills and a wide range of topics, so too should we plan the spiritual dimension. Are we covering all the attributes of God's character over a

one or two year period? Are we covering a wide selection of Bible passages? If not, we are presenting the students with an unbalanced view of God. If we only study God's love and patience for example, and never study His purity and holiness, then we are not presenting a true picture of who God is.

Refer to **Tables** for full list of attributes of God.