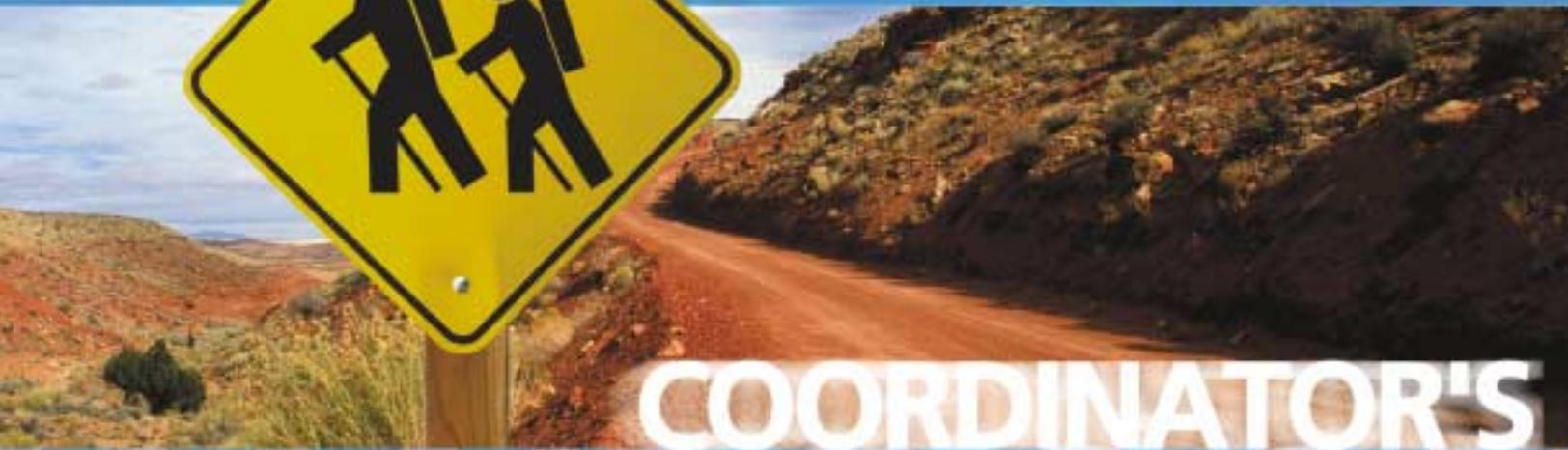


...walk with me...



COORDINATOR'S HANDBOOK



...walk with me...



COORDINATOR'S HANDBOOK



Grand Rapids, Michigan

Any questions or comments about this
book? We'd love to hear from you:

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Walk With Me curriculum has been developed by Faith Alive Resources in cooperation with the Children's Ministry Office of the Reformed Church in America and with Presbyterians for Renewal.

Walk With Me Coordinator's Handbook

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CONGRATULATIONS!

You've said yes to one of the toughest—and most rewarding—jobs in the church: leading a children's education program. Your job description may include some or all of these tasks:

- ordering curriculum
- finding teachers and substitutes
- getting families enthused about the program
- enrolling children
- finding adult and teen volunteers who can help your teachers and leaders
- setting up a supply closet (or finding a volunteer to do so)
- making room assignments
- making sure each room is well equipped
- planning special events and programs (the annual Christmas program, for example!)
- dealing with discipline problems
- setting up a music/singing time or finding volunteer musicians who can visit individual classes
- setting up and enforcing an abuse prevention policy to protect your children
- finding ways to increase the outreach of your program into the community
- providing training for teachers/leaders who need it
- finding someone to make and serve snacks
- providing Band-Aids for skinned knees

Whew! And I'm sure you can, or will soon be able to, add to that list.

If you're reading this book, you've likely already decided to use *Walk With Me* curriculum.

We're glad that you're going to be joining us on this walk with God's children and our Lord. Since *Walk With Me* is easy to use and teacher-friendly, we decided it should also be superintendent/coordinator-friendly. You'll find much of the information you need to set up and support a Sunday school program in this book.

Of course, we realize that some of you will still have questions. So we've also made it easy for you to get help. You can contact an editor/teacher in one of these easy ways:

Call us at 1-800-333-8300 or e-mail us at editors@faithaliveresources.org.

Walk With Me is a wonderful tool for touching children's lives, getting them excited about what happens in church, and helping them grow into kids who can tell others about Jesus. The following pages are designed to help you know how best to use this curriculum in your church setting.



What is *Walk With Me*?

Walk With Me is a church school curriculum for preschoolers through eighth graders. It provides everything you need—leader's guides, children's resources, music CDs, visual aids—and lots and lots of creative ideas to make learning fun and to make the Bible come alive in kids' lives.

Walk With Me Goals

- To nurture and encourage each child to know, love, and serve God.
- To nurture the faith of children and leaders within a caring community.
- To teach children the story of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.
- To help children understand biblical truths from a Reformed perspective.
- To challenge children and leaders to live their faith.
- To equip children to share their faith and serve others in the community.
- To partner with families in the faith nurture of their children.
- To encourage children to make the church's teachings their own.
- To help children value the rich diversity of people in God's kingdom.

WALK WITH ME. IT'S FAITHFUL



The Curriculum That Teachers and Leaders Asked For!

Walk With Me wasn't dreamed up in an office somewhere. To make sure this curriculum would work with *real* leaders and *real* children we

- asked superintendents and teachers what works in the classroom and what they would like to see in a new, up-to-date Sunday school curriculum.
- asked educators what today's kids are like and how they would design a Sunday school curriculum to reach those kids.
- field-tested *Walk With Me* in twenty-five churches to make sure it works—and works well!

UL. IT'S FRIENDLY. IT'S FUN!

What makes *Walk With Me* unique?

While every Sunday school curriculum includes some of the same basic ingredients, the goals, values, and philosophy a curriculum is built on really do make a BIG difference. The creators of *Walk With Me* decided that the following values were the most important for our curriculum. Our authors and editors have kept these values glued to their computer screens while writing and editing each session.

Biblical and Reformed

What does it mean to create a Reformed curriculum? We're convinced that the Reformed lens of viewing the Bible and life needs to touch every part of our teaching—not just be tacked on as an insert to the leader's guide. So all of the *Walk With Me* sessions have been crafted, both theologically and pedagogically, from the Reformed perspective.

Does that really make much difference? We think so! We take the Bible's teachings seriously. Our deeply biblical spin on the lordship of Christ

and our role as God's covenant people are very evident in this curriculum. We believe that every story in the Bible tells us about God and that every story must be understood as part of the one story of God's redemption and restoration of this fallen world through Jesus Christ.

We aim to be faithful to Scripture and to make the Reformed faith come alive in our everyday experiences as children of God.

Kid-Friendly

Remember the old-style Sunday school classroom where everyone kept quiet and sat in rows, listening to the teacher? Some of you may have fond memories of those classes. Others remember fidgeting and missing most of the lesson.

Why? Because kids learn in a variety of ways—through words, music, art, drama, and nature, and though personal reflection and interaction with others. (See a complete description of these styles in Appendix A). Those old-time lessons only worked well for kids who learned best with words—so some of us missed out.

Because *Walk With Me* sessions are designed to teach *all* of God's children, you will find activities that appeal to these many different learning styles in every unit.

These sessions have also been carefully tested and reviewed to make sure they're appropriate for the age level and the life experience of today's kids. (For age-level characteristics see Appendix B.)



1

HELLO

2

KNOW

3

GROW

4

SHOW

Easy-to-Use

In a perfect world every teacher might be able and willing to spend hours preparing to teach each Sunday. But, guess what—that's not usually the case!

Because we know that teachers are also mothers, fathers, employees, students, community leaders, room parents, club leaders, playground monitors, bakers, house cleaners, car pool drivers—

in other words, busy—we've made *Walk With Me* sessions easy to follow and easy to teach. Every session is laid out in four easy steps, each with a goal, a time estimate, and a list of materials:

- The *Hello* step gives suggestions for fun, interactive things to do as kids arrive, activities that will hook their attention and make them want to learn more.
- The *Know* step involves presenting the Bible story or passage to the children.
- The *Grow* step includes activities that help the children recognize what the Bible story or passage means for their own faith and life.
- The *Show* step includes activities that provide ways for children to respond to what they've learned by acting and serving.

A typical *Walk With Me* Session is designed to fill 45 minutes each week. And we recommend that you plan to allow a minimum of that much class time. But we've included plenty of options to make it easier for teachers to “fit” the activities to their kids—and tips and suggestions for shortening or lengthening the session.

You'll discover that *Walk With Me* sessions are truly teacher-friendly.

**More Fun to Give**

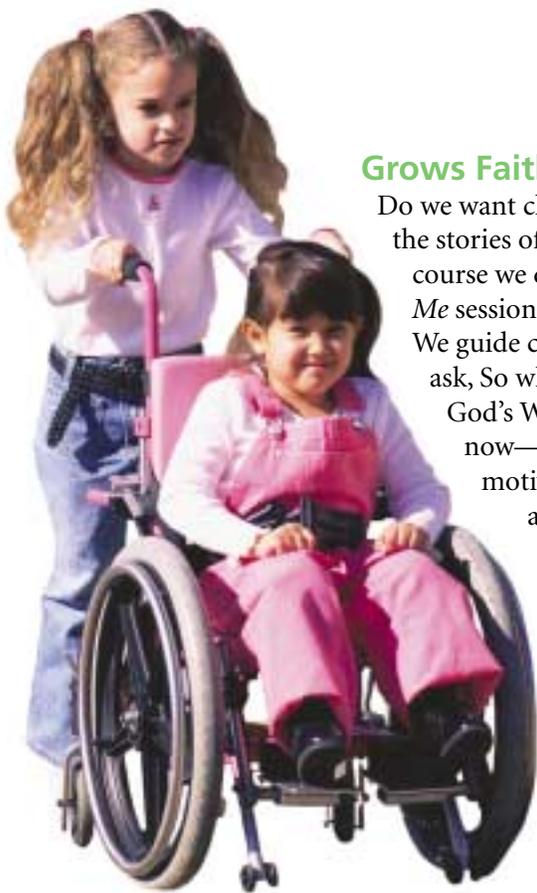
Walk With Me units ask leaders to actively consider service projects that reach out to those away from the classroom. As people of the Reformed faith, we have always realized that the Word of God must impact all of our lives. Now, more than ever, the leader is called upon to model this in concrete ways with his or her kids. That can be a challenge. You'll want to assist your leaders in any physical ways possible—such as transportation and communication with parents. But also focus on the end result to give that encouraging boost.

One group decided to prepare a Thanksgiving box of food for a needy family as their service project. The first week they planned what to put in the box, the second week they collected the food and made cards, and the third week they delivered the food with the help of two parents.

Here were some of the responses:

- It was like going on a field trip.
- It *is* more fun to give than receive—except I still like to get presents on my birthday.

—Carol Reinsma, *WWM* author and editor,
Colorado Springs, Colorado



Grows Faith

Do we want children to know the stories of the Bible? Of course we do. But *Walk With Me* sessions don't stop there. We guide children to always ask, So what? What does God's Word mean for me now—today? And we motivate children to act on what they discover in God's stories.

Sessions are designed to touch the hearts of both leaders and kids and to encourage them to live out their faith. Leaders are

encouraged to model faith for the children in their groups—and also to learn from the faith children model for them.

Teachers Are Treasures Too

Shortly after leukemia sent our ten-year-old daughter into the arms of Jesus, I went through a small box of treasures she'd saved over the years. Most things I'd seen before, but I noticed something new—something she hadn't shared with me, but tucked away to savor. It was a note from her church school teacher.

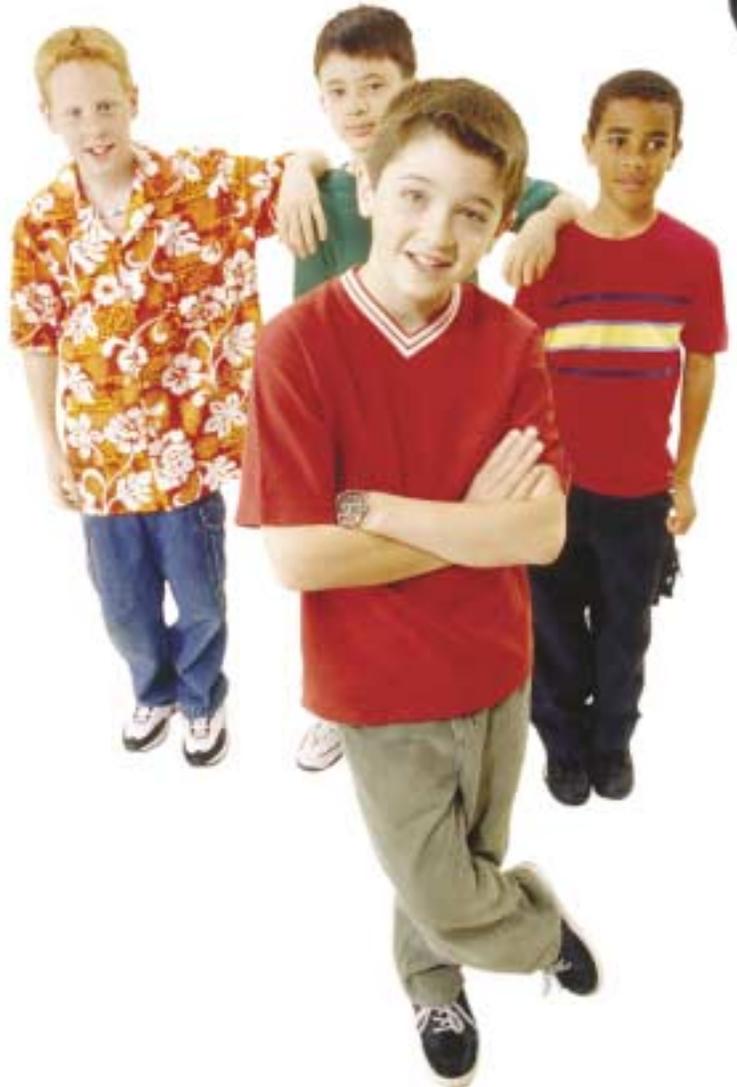
“Dear Shelly, I just want you to know how much I love you and tell you again that Jesus loves you so much more.”

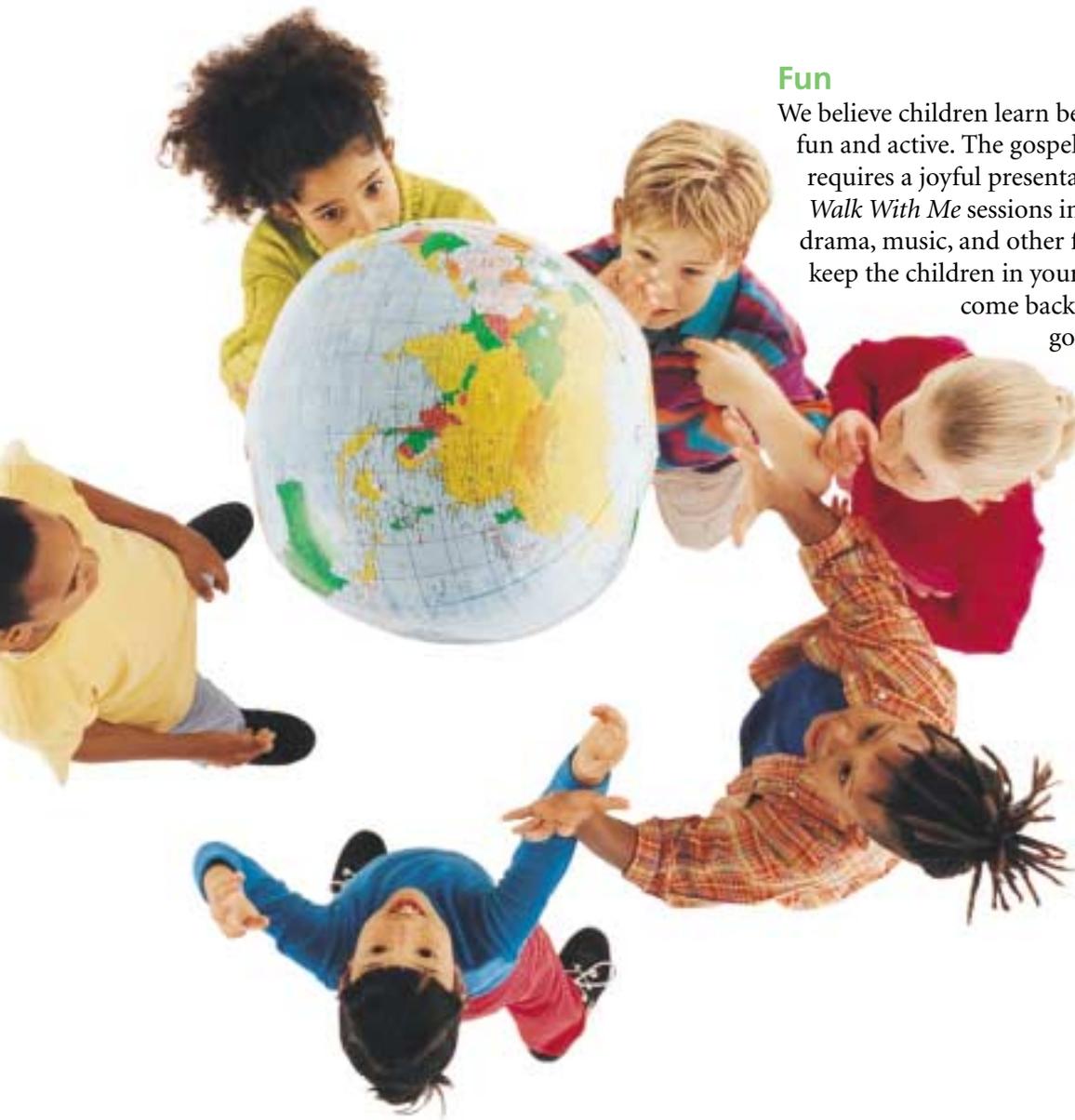
I closed the note, ever grateful for teachers who take time to care.

—Sheri Haan, *WWM* author and editor, Suttons Bay, Michigan

Builds Community

In our increasingly fractured and frantic society, kids need a safe place. It's our hope and prayer that *Walk With Me* promotes the kind of community-building that will make Sunday school that kind of place. The curriculum encourages leaders and children to become a small group together—to care for each other, to hold each other accountable for learning and growing, to encourage one another, and to have fun together. In each small group in your program, everyone—both children of the church and children of the community who have joined you—should feel accepted, loved, and safe.





Fun

We believe children learn best when sessions are fun and active. The gospel is good news that requires a joyful presentation and response. So *Walk With Me* sessions include lots of games, drama, music, and other fun activities that will keep the children in your program eager to come back for more. It's our goal—and we hope it becomes yours—to make Sunday school a time kids don't want to miss!

Celebrates Diversity

We place a strong value on recognizing and celebrating the diversity of God's family—old and young, male and female, people from a variety of races, cultures, nations, and continents. Because we want children who become part of the *Walk With Me* family to get a sense of how exciting our differences can be, we've selected writers and consultants for this curriculum from a variety of races and cultures. Kids will be challenged often to see truths and hear stories in ways that may be new to them—and through their learning to grow in a love of and appreciation for all parts of God's family.

How is *Walk With Me* organized?

Good question. And to get a really good picture of the curriculum and how it all fits together, you'll want to unfold the big chart that came with this handbook and take a careful look. But here are some basics.

We've organized the curriculum by grade levels as follows:

- **Preschool:** a one-year curriculum of sequential Bible stories
- **Kindergarten–Grade 1:** two years of units built around simple themes like *God Loves Me* and *God Takes Care of Me*
- **Grades 2-3:** two years of sequential Bible stories—Old and New Testament
- **Grades 4 and 5:** two years of sequential Bible stories—Old and New Testament
- **Grades 6-8:** a three-year curriculum—one year on life-related themes, one year introducing teens to the church and their place in it, and one year based on a simple presentation of Reformed/Presbyterian doctrine (*Q&A: A Summary of Biblical Teachings*)

We've divided this curriculum (except for the preschool level) into four-week units instead of thirteen-week quarters. Why? For several reasons. Smaller units

- make it easier for you to design a curriculum that fits the exact number of weeks that you plan to meet.
- work better with kids who can't come every Sunday. Since each unit is organized around a theme that comes back for four Sundays, kids who miss a week or two still learn the common theme and feel part of the group.
- allow us to provide more variety for the children. And, as you'll discover on pages 15-17, we've provided a number of different types of children's resources to keep older kids interested and motivated.
- allow for the possibility of having teachers commit to teaching a unit at a time instead of a quarter or a year. If recruiting teachers is a problem for you, this can help!

We've also provided special units for Christmas (two sessions), Easter (two sessions), and the summer (two five-session units). In these units, all the kids in your church school—from preschool through middle school—will be focusing on the same story. In one handy book you'll find everything your leaders need to teach the unit, create children's resources, lead in singing, prepare a drama or other way of storytelling, plan a program, and so on. Order one copy of the guide for each leader in your group. (You won't need to order children's resources for these units!) You'll find more information about how to prepare for and use these special units on pages 24-27.



Why We Made a Mess . . .

Wondering why we didn't follow the typical pattern of neat, two-year cycles throughout *Walk With Me*? Because we think kids—and the way they learn—are more important than tidy categories!

- We decided to regroup levels at the lower end of the curriculum in a way that respects their age-level characteristics and skill levels. A one-year preschool curriculum is followed by the Kindergarten-Grade 1 level (no reading expected or required), and then the Grades 2-3 and 4-5 levels.
- The top level of the curriculum is lopsided too! We grouped grades 6-8 together because that's what many day schools do. Middle school is a growing concept—one that respects learning levels and age-level characteristics—that we wanted to recognize in the church. But we've included lots of tips to help leaders adapt these sessions so that they fit kids in grade 6 as well as challenge kids in grade 8.

What materials does *Walk With Me* provide at each level?

Preschool

Everything the leader needs to teach this level of the curriculum comes in a box!

In this box leaders will find Old and New Testament stories, Christmas and Easter stories, patterns, action rhymes, songs, a CD, posters, and a complete set of children's take-home cards.

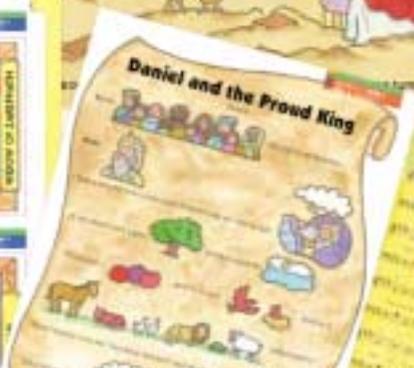
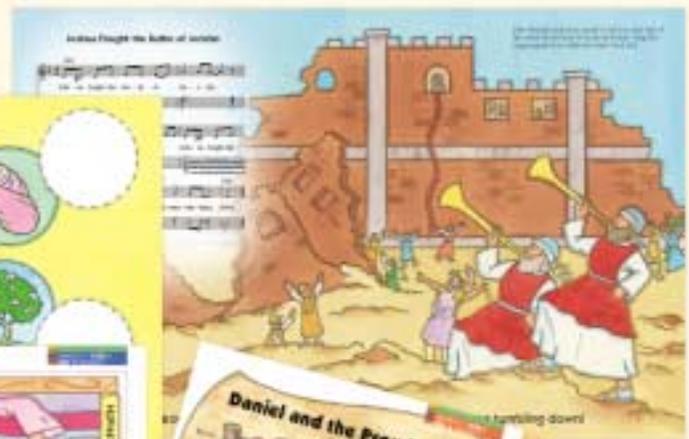
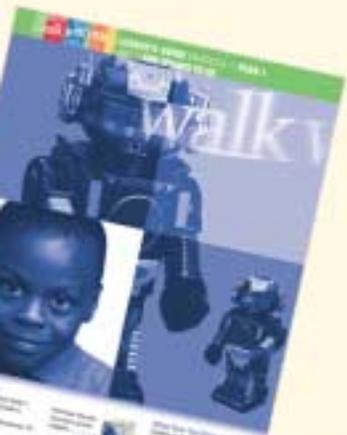
You should also order a set of children's take-home cards for each child in your group.



Kindergarten-Grade 1

Each of the two years of the curriculum at this level is divided into nine four-session units. For each unit you will need the following:

- **Leader's guide.** This bright, colorful guide comes with leader's resources (stapled in the middle), complete session plans for four weeks, music, and reproducible handouts. Order one guide for each leader at this level.
- **CD.** You'll need one CD for each year at this level of *Walk With Me*. On the CD you'll find all the music for the year, along with some stories, games, and other resources. Order a CD for each leader at this level.
- **Children's resources.** For each unit, children will get four colorful take-home papers and two pages of stickers. These resources will help involve families in the learning and growing that goes on in church. Order one set for each child.



Grades 2-3

At this level, variety becomes important. So you'll find lots of different formats for the children's resources and lots of options and tips in the leader's resources.

For each unit (nine four-session units in each of the two years), you'll need the following:

- **Leader's guide.** This bright, colorful guide comes with leader's resources (stapled in the middle), complete session plans for four weeks, music, and reproducible handouts. Order one guide for each leader at this level.
- **CD.** You'll need one CD for each year at this level of *Walk With Me*. On the CD you'll find all the music for the year, along with stories, raps, poems, and other resources. Order a CD for each leader at this level.
- **Children's resources** come in many unique formats designed especially for individual units. Each unit has one of the following interesting formats:
 - Posters
 - Comic books
 - Take-home papers
 - Trivia or game cards
 - Magazines
 - And more.

Order one set of children's resources for each child.



Grades 4-5

At this level the resources are again varied. They're also a bit more challenging than those in the previous level. You'll find a lot of emphasis on learning from other cultures and other peoples, on seeing God's story through different eyes.

For each unit (nine four-session units in each of the two years), you'll need the following:

- **Leader's guide.** This bright, colorful guide comes with leader's resources (stapled in the middle), complete session plans for four weeks, music, and reproducible handouts. Order one guide for each leader at this level.
- **CD.** You'll need one CD for each year at this level of *Walk With Me*. On the CD you'll find all the music for the year, along with stories, raps, poems, and other resources. Order a CD for each leader at this level.
- **Children's resources** come in many unique formats designed especially for individual units. Each unit has one of the following interesting formats:
 - Posters
 - Comic books
 - Take-home papers
 - Trivia or game cards
 - Broadsheets
 - Magazines
 - And more.

Order one set of children's resources for each child.



Grades 6-8

This level includes three years of curriculum for a total of twenty-seven units! We've added even more take-home formats at this level to keep the group interested and looking forward to your sessions. Although we don't include leader resources or a CD for this level, you'll find that the leader's guide for each unit is packed with reproducible pages and lots of fun and challenging activities for young teens.

- **Leader's guide.** This bright, colorful guide contains complete session plans for four weeks and a variety of helpful reproducible handouts. Order one guide for each leader at this level.
- **Student Resources.** Young teens will stay interested and motivated by the wide variety of resources we offer at this level. In each unit you'll find one of the following interesting formats:
 - Broadsheets
 - Handouts
 - Magazines
 - Take-home papers
 - Devotional book (Be sure to order one devotional book for each student for year 2 of the middle school curriculum!)
 - Prayer journals
 - And more.

Order one set of resources for each young teen in your group.



What's Happening?

Several *Walk With Me* units require an odd use of common household items. No matter how well you stock your supply room, it is impossible for you to keep a lemon or a bit of ammonia that may be needed for a one-time activity! But your leaders will discover that collecting the items is worth the effort.

A couple of boys (who normally seemed too nonchalant to want to visit with a teacher) were in a test group for *Walk With Me*. Each week they began stopping by the classroom on their way to singing before the group session time. They'd check out the table to see what might be there. Then they'd ask, "What are we doing today?"

Several children who were in a test group the previous year also knew unusual activities sometimes happened with this curriculum. Out of curiosity they would stop by after the session time to see what they'd missed. One girl said, "I'm just curious to see what you're doing. 'Cause I know it might be strange."

Reassure your leaders that the silver lining of digging through their household goods appears when they encounter a child who wants to come back again and again because he or she has to find out what is happening!

—Carol Reinsma, *WWM* author and editor, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Congratulations! You've said yes to one of the toughest—and most rewarding—jobs in the church: leading a children's education program. And you've chosen an excellent curriculum—*Walk With Me*.

Now what?

You've probably got lots of questions about everything from ordering curriculum to setting up a supply closet. And you've come to the right place. This book provides answers for those questions and many more—everything you need to know to get your Sunday school off to a great start.

You'll find helps for

- recruiting teachers and keeping them.
- using the gifts of parents and other adults and teens in your program.
- attracting kids from the community and making them part of your community.
- making the most of *Walk With Me*.

You'll also find lots of helpful resources: charts, letters, workshops—all the things you'll need to be a successful and well-equipped leader.