

Questions to Ask When Selecting Curriculum and Resources

(It is always necessary to consider age-appropriateness of any resource to curriculum, keeping in mind that children think concretely. Abstract and figurative concepts will be misunderstood, and need to be unlearned and relearned. Research indicates that most teenagers under 15 are also limited in their capacity to think in terms other than the concrete.)

1. What image of God is portrayed? In the stories? In the songs? In the comments? Is the God portrayed a personal God? A sentimental God? A distant God? A God of justice? A loving and forgiving God? What kind of God does your congregation want portrayed?
2. How is Jesus pictured? A teacher of wise sayings and parables or a miracle worker or magician? How many stories/sessions focus on his life? On his teachings? On miracles? Does the curriculum introduce the Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ of faith? Are students aided in understanding Jesus' teachings and life in a manner relevant to life in the 21st century?
3. What concepts of the Bible is assumed? Which versions are recommended? Is there an emphasis on the historical settings? On the personal meaning of scripture? Do the stories and lessons depict the Bible as a inerrant or as a treasure in earthen vessels? Is there an effort to help students see the Bible's relevance for life today? Is the Bible introduced as a series of books containing history, parables, fables, poetry, hymns, teachings and noting that it was written during prescientific eras. Is the Bible used as "answer book" or as a book which "questions one's answers" as much as "answers one's questions?"
4. How does the curriculum (or resource) help students think about and act upon concepts of love, acceptance, forgiveness, inclusiveness, faithfulness, reconciliation?
5. How are people imaged? How are good and evil depicted? How do the writers treat issues such as the crucifixion, resurrection, salvation, the work of the Holy Spirit?

The process of thinking theologically when choosing curriculum and resources requires persons selecting to "listen and learn" what the writers are saying. It is helpful to have a variety of people review the material and discern from their points of view the biblical and theological interpretations communicated. Ask yourselves how will this (resource or curriculum) influence the lives of children or youth or adults now and in the years to come? Will it enable and encourage persons to think theologically when facing life's most challenging issues?

Thanks for these questions to
Richard A. Howard, Staff Member, Design for Leadership
(Distance Learning Program in Religious Education)
Defiance College, 701 N Clinton St, Defiance, OH 42512