



# A Guide to Hybrid Sunday School

Tips and Ideas for Engaging  
**Youth**

*(Middle School and High School)*



## INTRODUCTION

Youth ministry has never changed at a faster pace than it is changing right now. But what hasn't changed—and will never change—is our goal to bring God's Word to teens and families.

This guide is designed to help you use the curriculum you know and trust as your youth ministry adjusts to a new normal. We've provided tips and ideas to help you adapt the lessons for teaching and engaging teens—whether you're meeting with them online, meeting in person, sending lessons to them, or taking a hybrid approach.

## CONTENTS

### TEACHING—A HYBRID APPROACH

- Prepare to Teach
  - EXPLORE LIFELINKS
  - FOR EACH QUARTER
  - FOR EACH LESSON
  - GENERAL BEST PRACTICES
- Teach the Lesson
  - BEFORE THE LESSON STARTS
  - DURING THE LESSON

### EQUIPPING FAMILIES

- Help Families Prepare for Virtual Ministry
- Provide an Online Community/Hangout
- Create Connections

### IDEAS FOR USING REAL LIFE DOWNLOADED IN A VIRTUAL SETTING

- Using RLD While You Meet
- Using RLD During the Week



## TEACHING—A HYBRID APPROACH

When we use the term “hybrid teaching,” we’re referring to combining virtual tools—tools that enable you to communicate and interact online with teens—with physical site options.

Check out this article on [teaching virtually](#). You’ll find technical suggestions as well as tips to keep your students engaged online!\*

Even when your ministry is ready to return to your church building, some of your families won’t feel comfortable coming back right away. Consider offering—or continuing to offer—an at-home Sunday school option. Providing lessons and resources for youth at home is a great way to invest in and connect with the families you serve!

We’re also creating bonus curriculum content (coming soon) that is free to you as a current customer. It will be full of resources to help you engage the children and families you serve.

## Prepare to Teach

### EXPLORE LIFELINKS

LifeLINKS’s teaching resources are available in print and in digital bundles. We encourage you to explore all of the files—including [Real Life Downloaded](#)—and see what works best for your ministry.

#### LifeLINKS Middle School Resources at a Glance

- *Middle School Teacher’s Guide*
- *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids* (posters, games, 3-D puzzles, and more)
- *The Rock* student book
- Middle School [Real Life Downloaded](#) (downloadable options for Steps 1 and 4)

#### LifeLINKS High School Resources at a Glance

- *High School Teacher’s Guide*
- *Blueprint* magazine
- High School [Real Life Downloaded](#) (downloadable options for Steps 1 and 4)



## FOR EACH QUARTER

- Decide which portions of a lesson will work best for teaching in your current reality. We've provided suggestions below. Remember that activities that call for pairs or groups of teens will be more difficult to use online.
- Decide which online meeting application will work best for your group—Zoom, Skype, or another platform. Or consider using an age-appropriate program to create a persistent virtual space where students can chat and share with each other.
- Set a time limit and a meeting time for each lesson. Include time to socialize before and after the lesson.
- Send information to your students and their families. Clearly communicate meeting times and how to contact you or other leaders. Consider creating automatic reminders to be texted or e-mailed.
- Decide how you will get activity packs to youth (physical pickup/drop-off, download links, or both).
- If you don't know already, survey your teens and their parents (separately) to find out what is their preferred method for receiving regular communications from you (phone, text, e-mail, social media, etc.).

## FOR EACH LESSON

- Prepare your heart with prayer and then read Understanding the Bible and the teacher devotion from the teacher's guide.
- Familiarize yourself with the lesson focus, Bible Basis (Scripture passage), and memory verse.
- Check out [Real Life Downloaded](#). These downloadable options for Steps 1 and 4 use relevant subjects (pop culture, trending topics, and fascinating events) that are going on in your students' world today. The activities will help them understand how God's Word relates to their lives.
- Prepare and organize your materials and digital files so you can access them easily while you teach. If you plan on using the "Share Screen" function on Zoom (or something similar), make sure you have the necessary files ready to be shared.
- Practice any activities ahead of time so you are comfortable presenting them on screen.

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- Send separate reminders out to parents and teens about the time of the lesson and any materials that may be needed for the lesson.
- Consider creating a PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation for the lesson. You might get ideas from the sample PowerPoint presentation and guidelines in our bonus curriculum content (coming soon)!

\*The Ministry Spark website has many articles and tips that you might find helpful as you reopen your church and navigate the new and exciting world of online resources that you can use to reach your students. This site is not created by 21st Century Christian and, as such, we do not endorse all of the content you may find there.



## GENERAL BEST PRACTICES

- **Time.** Keep your time shorter than you normally would in a physical classroom. While you might be able to engage for an hour and a half in a youth classroom, it's much harder to do so in a video call. Instead, use a shorter time to connect with students and spend more time on the Bible portion of the lesson.
- **Text.** Highlight the main points of the lesson without trying to read all the text. A lot of information is provided in each lesson, but students won't be as focused during video calls. Just focus on and highlight the main points in the time you have.
- **Group Size.** Although most video call apps can accommodate a large number of participants, consider doing lessons with several smaller groups. Doing this will give all students a chance to share their thoughts, interact with their peers, and feel heard.
- **Connect with teens.** Connect with your teens throughout the week—whether by a phone call, e-mail, or a text message, students will feel seen and known when you reach out to them.

## Teach the Lesson

### BEFORE THE LESSON STARTS

- Begin your lesson stream 5 to 10 minutes ahead of the scheduled start so the students have time to join and be sure their connection is working.
- Use upbeat songs and a countdown video to build anticipation. Or use PowerPoint or Google Slides to display a welcome message. We've created playlists of songs that match the unit themes will be available in our bonus curriculum content (coming soon)!
- Adapt the Before Class Option from your teacher's guide.
- Share the link where students can download *The Rock* or *Blueprint* Bible study pages for this week's lesson.
- Remind students to have their Bibles and something to write on and with.

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## DURING THE LESSON

### Step 1: Connecting with God's Word

Connecting with God's Word gives your teens time to share about themselves and their lives while building relationships. These conversations will flow naturally into Step 2.

- Allow time to connect before starting the Bible lesson. This is a good time to talk through "Seeing God Throughout the Week."
- You could use Real Life Downloaded for this step. This free downloadable resource brings trending topics into Sunday school. Find a new version each week at [Real Life Downloaded](#). Check out the *Ideas for Using Real Life Downloaded in a Virtual Setting Online* at the end of this guide.
- If the game/activity that starts this part of the lesson doesn't adapt well to a virtual space, simply greet the students and go directly to the discussion questions.

### Step 2: Studying God's Word

During this part of the lesson, your group will dive into a portion of God's Word and then discuss it together. Teens work on understanding what they've read and begin to connect it to their lives.

- Using PowerPoint or Google Slides, create a slide of the Bible study pages found in *The Rock* or *Blueprint*. Show the slides as you work through the study.
- For Middle School, you can also create slides of the teaching aids used in this section. Use the slides as part of your study.
- Some parts of the Bible studies suggest working in pairs or small groups. Adapt these to working as one group.

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## Step 3: Interacting with God's Word

This time of exploring the Bible at their own level helps teens understand and incorporate God's Word into their day-to-day lives.

- Choose only one activity for this part of the lesson. Adapt the activity so it works for your situation and group of students.
- Share your screen if the activity uses an article from either *The Rock* or *Blueprint*.
- Create PowerPoint or Google slides of *The Rock* or *Blueprint* articles you are using.



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## Step 4: Applying God's Word

Teens choose the best way to live out their faith in their everyday experiences so they can be doers of the Word, not just hearers.

- Be sure to allow time for this part of the lesson. If you adapt an activity, be sure to include a way for students to make a plan for taking the lesson into their week.
- If you use [Real Life Downloaded](#) in Step 1 of a lesson, use the coordinating Step 4 now. These lessons have been written for use in either a physical classroom or online.
- The “Seeing God throughout the Week” challenge in the teacher’s guide can work for you and other youth leaders to text, e-mail, or chat about to teens during the week. Encourage students to share with you what they are doing to meet the challenge.
- Remind teens to use the daily devotions found in *The Rock* or *Blueprint*.
- Use the prayer suggestions in your teacher’s guide to close the lesson with prayer.



## EQUIPPING FAMILIES

### Help Families Prepare for Virtual Ministry

For many teens, even those with phones of their own, their parents are still the gatekeepers of online access. Whatever your youth ministry's virtual teaching looks like (Zoom sessions, Facebook Live streams, or prerecorded videos), you will need to let parents know what to expect and what is expected of them.

- Where and when can they access the lessons?
- How can they keep their child caught up if they miss a week?

Remember to check in with each family to see what their needs are. If families have barriers to Internet access, find out what those are and work with the families to find solutions for their teens to be included in the lessons.

### Provide an Online Community/Hangout

Think about using age-appropriate social media tools or other free chat programs to create a persistent place that your students can hang out and chat together as a group. Be sure to check ages allowed and security features of the tool.

### Create Connections

Here are some resources you might use:

- A personal note to the teen
- Ministry announcements
- Student book pages
- For Middle School, include some of the *Creative Teaching Aids* (posters, game boards, etc.)
- For High School, send home the entire *Blueprint* magazine

Decide when and how you will provide the activity packs to teens and their families.

- Once per quarter? Once a month? Every week?
- Will they be physical or a digital download?
- Will families need to pick them up from the church building?
- Can volunteers deliver them in person?
- Are you able to mail them to families?

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These answers will be specific to the needs of your ministry and are likely to change as the needs of your ministry change.

## Engage Families at Home

- Continue communicating with your families! Text or e-mail parents about what you studied so they can discuss the lesson with them.
- If you don't include copies of the take-home papers in activity packs, use the contents to create special mailings for kids.
- Encourage families to find and use Bibles and study books that will help their child grow in understanding God's Word. Here are some resources we recommend:
  - [The Action Bible](#)
  - [The Action Study Bible](#) (available in NIV® and [ESV®](#))
  - [The Big Picture](#)
  - [Inspiration to Ink: The Big Picture of How We Got the Bible](#)
  - [Amazed by Jesus: The Big Picture of the Life of Christ Vol 1](#)
  - [Amazed by Jesus: The Big Picture of the Life of Christ Vol 2](#)
- This is a great time to start a daily family devotional. We recommend:
  - [The Jesus Resolution](#)
  - [Living the Jesus Resolution](#)



## IDEAS FOR USING REAL LIFE DOWNLOADED IN A VIRTUAL SETTING

Maybe you have been using Real Life Downloaded (RLD) in an online setting like Zoom or Google hangouts or a video stream. Maybe you're using RLD as part of a phone conference session. Are you showing the videos? Are you physically mailing or emailing the adult version to people to read?

Whether you use RLD to prepare your group before you meet or to extend the learning into the week, here are a couple of additional ideas for using these weekly products to enrich your virtual class—both in your group time as well as during the week.

### Using RLD While You Meet

Whether you're meeting in small in-person groups or online, these tips will help you get the most out of RLD.

- **Weekly Check-in**  
Before you start the lesson, allow at least a few minutes for a weekly check-in to help the group feel connected with each other.
- **What Stuck with Me**  
As part of your check-in time give students time to share what stuck with them throughout the week about the previous lesson. It's okay if they say they can't remember.
- **Would You Rather**  
Read through the lesson ahead of time. Come up with a "Would You Rather" question that ties into the lesson. These should be either/or questions such as: Would you rather eat pizza for lunch or have a PBJ? Give students time to respond to the question before moving into Step 1.
- **Guess Who**  
Turn a sharing time part of the lesson into a trivia time! Before the lesson, text or email to students ask them to send back their answers. For example: Tell about a time that you have been disappointed because you're had to stay home. Have them respond with their answers. Share the answers during your group time and let students guess who sent in each answer. You might get creative with some unique prizes for participants.

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- **Breakout Rooms**

If you're using a tool like Zoom and your group is comfortable with the technology, try sending small groups to different rooms (like [Zoom Rooms](#)) for a short discussion time. Then bring everyone back together to summarize the discussion before moving on with the next part of the lesson.



## Using RLD During the Week

These ideas can be used to prepare your students before you meet or afterward to help keep the lesson going.

- **Switch-Up Step 4**  
Using a closed website or social media group, have students send in photos, videos, original art, and original memes of how they are applying the lesson throughout the week.
- **Through the Week**  
Create a text group or another social media group. Send out questions or discussion starters about the lesson. Invite students to respond to each other. Remind them that all answers are valid!
- **Thought for the Day**  
Send out a Bible thought or verse—you could simply alternate between the Bible basis, memory verse, and lesson focus—a couple times a week to your group.

This [article](#), while focused on children’s ministry, offers several suggestions you might add to your own personal teaching-virtually-tool set.\*

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