

History Timeline

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There are more people in our congregations than we'd like to admit who struggle with believing in a creation of six 24-hour days. Worldly influences often lead us into temptation, and sadly, the world's promotion of evolution with its millions of years is a strong influence to view Adam and Eve as closer to myth than to true history.

As a pastor who teaches 7th and 8th grade catechism class, I'm constantly looking for ways that I can prepare our students with the tools they need to face worldly influences like evolution. Here is one idea to help our young people embrace Scripture's historical accounts as actual history and not just stories.

Grade: For grades 7-8, modify as needed for grades 5, 6, 9, 10.

Class: Religion and/or history.

Task: Students create a long (30–100 foot or longer) world history timeline in the school hallway with both biblical and secular events. While covering all of history (creation to present), the lives of five people are highlighted: Abraham, Moses, David, Ezra, and Jesus.

World History Recorded in Scripture

For 7th and 8th grade catechism class, I plan to have my students create a large world history timeline filling an entire long hallway. We will initially focus on world history as recorded in Scripture from creation through 100 AD. Before students add any people or events, the lives of five people will be highlighted on the timeline: Abraham, Moses, David, Ezra, and Jesus. Students will then add other people and events.

Each student will learn a basic structure for the history of salvation as tied to the lives of these five people. Students should learn to use

their fingers as a memory gimmick for approximate dates: Their pinky finger is Abraham (2,000 BC), ring finger Moses (1,500 BC), middle finger David (1,000 BC), index finger Ezra (500 BC), and thumb Jesus (0).

The purpose of this project is that students learn to appreciate the historical reality of people and events recorded in the Bible. Secondly, they will learn five key dates using the five-finger method. Thirdly, they will learn to place each Bible lesson and Bible book between the correct fingers, giving a timeline to salvation history. These five dates are key to knowing Bible history, and this is a simple way to remember it for life.

Each student will add to the timeline five historical events from the Bible, and each of those five events should be from different centuries. Some events may have a general or approximate year (i.e. David and Goliath – 1000 BC). Other events will require a guessed date (i.e. Cain and Abel) based on what we believe about the Bible. I will also challenge the class to research a few events such as the destruction of Judah/Jerusalem by Babylon, the destruction of Israel by Assyria, the Tower of Babel, the life of Job, the writing of Revelation, etc. Before they can add some of these timeline items, they need to give scriptural evidence to support it.

World History Recorded in Secular Sources

This project bleeds into the next project where students will add to the timeline a number of historical events not found in the Bible. We would also extend the timeline so that it goes to present day. This connection to their present day lives helps demonstrate that Bible history is world history. The people and events in Scripture are as real as people living today and events happening today. Connecting Bible history to present day reality is important in guarding the next generation from the temptation of evolution. This is one way to help them see that Adam and Eve are just as real as Alexander the Great and Abraham Lincoln. With this approach, we are working to remove the fairytale mentality some may have about Genesis, and connect the events recorded in Scripture to present day reality.

Each student will add five different world history dates that are not found in the Bible. We would probably have biblical events be on the top side of the timeline while non-biblical events are on the bottom. Before the students can add a secular event, they must prove that their date is the most accurate guess that we have. I will also tell them that they can't pick an event that someone else chose, and they can't pick any two events from the same century. With around fifty 7th and 8th graders in my class, there will be plenty of data on the timeline. One final request is that at least one of the five secular events must have occurred before 100 AD. In my case, as pastor at a Lutheran elementary school, I will work in conjunction with the 7th and 8th grade teachers to focus on historical events that they are studying that semester. They could use this timeline to teach their history classes so that world history and biblical history are always seen as one. As they study different historical events they could go out into the hallway and show the students when it happened and add events whenever they choose. It could be tied in with student reports on biblical or secular history. Another option would be to have students research events which are covered in biblical history and also in secular history.

It would be great to have this timeline in the hall while parents and grandparents are in the school for an open house, Grandparents' Day, or for the school play. They too need to be reminded of the historicity of the Bible so that the lessons from Scripture are not seen as myth, but as historical reality. This is also a good reminder to the parents that in a Lutheran school, religion class is not simply one topic during the day, but is intertwined in every aspect of education.

A large hallway-filling project like this can be fun for the students. While they learn to see the people and events recorded in Scripture as true reality, they will better understand how God revealed and carried out his plan of salvation along the same timeline in which we live.

Daniel Olson serves as pastor at St. Paul's in Onalaska Wisconsin. Pastor Olson originally submitted these classroom ideas as part of his coursework for Creation Apologetics 102, an online course offered to pastors, teachers, and laity by Martin Luther College.