

RBP EDITORS ON THE

Philosophy OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



■ Valerie Wilson is the editorial director for Regular Baptist Press

Covering the Course

VALERIE WILSON

Picture yourself in a great Olympic stadium. It's the final day of the summer games, and you're on hand to witness the conclusion of the final—and some say, the greatest—Olympic event: the decathlon. All eyes are trained on the entrance to the stadium. Which runner will enter first? Who will come next? You watch as that first runner enters. Excitement builds, and you join the cheering crowd. Will he be the first runner to cross the

finish line? Another runner is coming close behind him. Who will complete the course and win the medal? The roar is deafening as the crowd shows its support for the athletes as they complete the course, the *curricula*.

Imagine this same event, but this time you are unsure where to watch the conclusion of the race. You have no idea what course the runners will follow; in fact, they make up their routes as they go along. Some run only along flat, easy paths; others go up and down hills; some take shortcuts. "It doesn't work that way," you think to yourself. "No race could be conducted that way." And you are right. For the race to make sense, the runners need the *curricula*.

In a very real sense, the learners in a church's educational program are runners in a race. The effectiveness of the race depends to a great extent on the *curricula* the runners (learners) and coaches (teachers) use. As you may have guessed by now, the term for printed educational materials, "curriculum," has its roots in the Latin word for racecourse, *curricula*. In the educational sense, "curriculum" is a course of study; it is the ground we must cover to reach our goal. When we speak of "curriculum materials," we are talking about the printed resources a teacher uses to help his or her learners achieve specific educational goals.

Printed curriculum materials assist the teacher in teaching the Bible. They are not a replacement for the Bible. They provide the plan for teaching the

Bible. Just as a runner needs a set plan, so teachers and learners need a well-thought-out plan for covering God's Word. Curriculum materials, therefore, have some noticeable benefits.

- **Curriculum materials provide systematic coverage of Bible books and subjects appropriate to each age level.** The Bible is an adult book, but parts of it can be understood by children. Curriculum designers carefully match the Biblical passages with the age of the learners. (Some curriculum materials, called "uniform lessons," attempt to teach the same Biblical passage to all age groups. This approach to curriculum eliminates whole sections of Scripture because they are too difficult for young children; thus it deprives adults from studying "the whole counsel of God.")
- **Curriculum materials divide the Word of God into manageable portions for sequential study.** Rather than making a teacher decide how much material to cover and in what order, curriculum design provides this help. This "sequential study" is easily viewed on a publisher's scope-and-sequence chart. (Note that the great benefit of using only one publisher for curriculum materials is to stay on that publisher's "track," rather than jumping here and there without a plan.)
- **Curriculum materials identify Biblical truths that are applicable**

for each age group. When do you teach the books of the Bible? the pretribulational, premillennial return of Christ? church polity? Baptist distinctives? moral purity? kindness and sharing? These truths and a host of others are introduced at the appropriate time for the age of the learners

• **Curriculum materials assist the teacher in choosing and using appropriate teaching methods.**

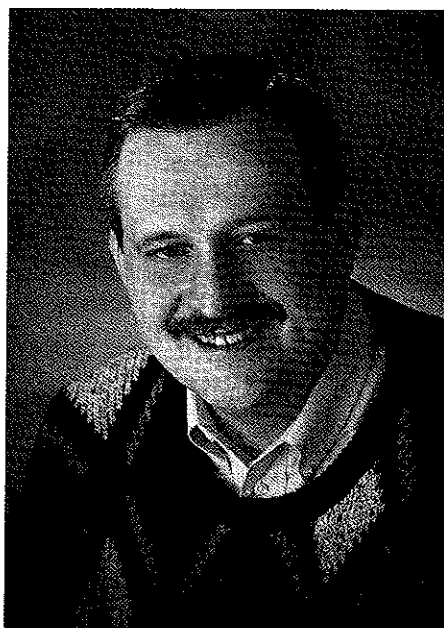
Lecture doesn't work with 2s and 3s, and story play doesn't work with adults; but in between those extremes are a host of methods that work well with each age group. Those methods are built into well-prepared materials

• **Curriculum materials provide varied and attractive visual aids.**

Most teachers would be hard-pressed to find on their own the wealth of material that is available in a teaching packet, such as reproducible hand-outs, or in a transparency packet

Regular Baptist Press was formed in 1950 to provide fundamental Baptist and Bible-believing churches with the *curricula*, the track, for their learners to cover. Now in our 50th year of publishing curriculum materials that help you Build Lives by the Book, RBP maintains its characteristic distinctive emphases: (1) fundamental doctrine; (2) strong Biblical content; (3) Baptist distinctives; (4) evangelistic outreach; and (5) personal and ecclesiastical separation

As you consider the "runners" in your church, what kind of course have you provided? Is it as structured as an Olympic decathlon, or as hit-and-miss as each teacher deciding his or her own course? We invite you to consider using Regular Baptist Press curriculum materials throughout your Sunday School so that your learners "cover the course" laid out for them "till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13) What a finish line that will be!



■ Mel Walker is the editor of student ministries materials for Regular Baptist Press

Youth Ministry: It Takes a Church

MEL WALKER

In 1996, Hillary Rodham Clinton published a book that, even though becoming #1 on the *New York Times* Best-Seller List, caused quite a controversy in Christian circles. Her work, *It Takes a Village*, spawned many discussions and arguments about whether or not it is society's job to help raise children. I unequivocally believe the Bible teaches that the ultimate responsibility to raise children lies with the parents. (See Proverbs 22:6) However, it *does* take a church to impact the next generation.

God has ordained the local church as His plan for this age. His Word is clear that God can and does use the church to influence lives for eternity. I am so thankful for the influence that my home church had in my life

during my formative and growing years. As a veteran youth worker, I have also seen how the Lord has used many other local churches to impact the lives of young people.

The new millennium has given us a great opportunity. There is an avalanche headed our way—an avalanche of teenagers. Current demographics point out that the number of teenagers in America is growing significantly each year. Based upon birth rate, the number of students graduating from high school will continue to grow at record numbers for the next several years. The Millennial Generation is here. Many authors are saying that this new generation may well have more of an impact on our culture than any previous generational group, more influence than the Baby Boomers or Generation-X before them.

Yes, it does take a church to impact the next generation. So what can churches do to reach and minister to this large and needy generation?

A Biblical model can give us a pattern for our churches to follow. It is the example of the apostle Paul's ministry to Timothy, as outlined for us in 2 Timothy 3:10-17. This passage concludes with Paul's objective for his ministry in his young student's life—and for our lives as well. Verse 17 puts it this way: "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped for every good work." This verse echoes what Paul also told the Ephesian believers in Ephesians 4:12-16. The Biblical objective for local-church youth ministry is clearly presented in these parallel thoughts in the Pauline epistles. God's goal for our students (and Paul's goal for his students) is that they become spiritually mature ("perfect") and thoroughly capable of doing the work of ministry.

How then can a local church today accomplish this Biblical objective in