



Bible Education
For Public School Students

DURING SCHOOL HOURS



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Students need THE WORD OF GOD

It's not hard to see what's happening in our nation. Fear, division and strife rule the day. And Christians, who hold the remedy to society's ailments, feel always on the defensive, shut out of the cultural conversation. **The life-giving Word of God is reaching fewer and fewer ears and eyes, especially among our next generation.** The inverse correlation between the following statistics is not surprising to Bible-believing Christians.

All time highs among youth:

Anxiety
Depression
Suicide

All time lows among youth:

Bible Literacy
Church Attendance
Professions of Faith



THE U.S. SUPREME COURT

"We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being. When the State encourages religious instruction or cooperates with religious authorities by adjusting the schedule of public events to sectarian needs, it then follows the best of our traditions, for it then respects the religious nature of our people and accommodates the public services to their spiritual needs."

JUSTICE WILLIAM O. DOUGLAS

Zorach v. Clauson (1952)

The untapped OPPORTUNITY

Decades ago, around the time when the Bible and prayer were being removed from public education, a window of opportunity was opened. The U.S. Supreme Court decision *Zorach v. Clauson* determined that teaching the Bible during the public school day was constitutional and therefore legal in all 50 states under three conditions:

- 1 OFF SCHOOL PROPERTY**
Program must be held off site of school premises.
- 2 PRIVATELY FUNDED**
No government funds can be used for this program.
- 3 PARENT PERMITTED**
Parental permission is required for child's participation.

For over 70 years, this opportunity, legally known as "released time religious instruction," has remained almost completely unknown to the Christian church. The few programs that do exist tend to operate informally and on a small scale. LifeWise Academy wants to change that by providing a replicable model that can be implemented by any community nationwide.



The LifeWise **SECRET SAUCE**

LifeWise has been building and refining an innovative ministry approach with an uncompromising commitment to two values:



GOSPEL-CENTERED

Keeping the gospel at the center of the program is our only hope for genuinely changing the hearts of the next generation. While many Bible education programs focus exclusively on moral instructions as Biblical principles, LifeWise is intentionally explicit with the gospel message of Jesus' death for sin and resurrection. It is this gospel message, planted in hearts and watered, that sprouts, grows and bears fruit.



EXCELLENCE

Maintaining the highest standards of excellence in all areas is necessary for the success of our mission. Too often, Christian ministries gain a reputation for executing their missions with mediocrity. However, LifeWise must compete in the marketplace of the many programs and activities surrounding the life of a public school. Therefore, we are diligent to demonstrate excellence in every area, knowing that we represent the King.




Our STORY

LifeWise Academy was inspired by a Bible education program founded in 2012 in Van Wert, OH, which boasted a shocking 95% participation rate among local elementary school students. The LifeWise founder and CEO, Joel Penton, envisioned a replicable, scalable approach that would equip communities with the “plug n’ play” tools to launch and sustain effective Bible education programs.

Since launching its first two programs in 2019, LifeWise has quickly grown to serve more than 300 schools nationwide. Every week, tens of thousands of public school students attend LifeWise classes to learn the Bible.

Because classes are during school hours, local communities are seeing very high participation rates in LifeWise as compared to before and after school ministry opportunities, often exceeding well over 50% eligible students.



*“Is this a church?
I’ve never been inside a church.”*

JARROD

LifeWise Student

*“LifeWise is the best part of the day!
I wish we could come every day!”*

REBECCA

LifeWise Student

A PROVEN MODEL

The LifeWise “plug n’ play” model empowers communities in all contexts with the resources and tools to launch and maintain effective programs. Each LifeWise program operates with a standard set of policies and curriculum that is easily adapted to local needs. The LifeWise Support Center, based in Columbus, OH, assists with systems, resources, training and support to ensure the quality and sustainability of new and existing local programs.



See Video Highlights from
LifeWise New Albany



CASE STUDY: SUBURBAN

Among the first suburban programs was LifeWise New Albany. This highly affluent and diverse community worked closely with school officials to implement a logistical plan and messaging that would be well-received by school staff and parents. Students at New Albany Primary School are permitted to opt out of library/tech time to attend LifeWise. **New Albany's enrollment has already exceeded 350 and continues to grow steadily!**



“My husband and I shared LifeWise with our friends. They enrolled their son in LifeWise classes and now are attending church for the first time ever!”

JESSICA, NEW ALBANY PARENT



CASE STUDY: URBAN

Launching its first pilot program in Columbus City Schools in 2021, the number of schools and students served has continued to grow each year. The Whitehall program, in particular, saw explosive growth throughout their first school year. **Enrollment rose from a mere 18 students in October to more than 260 by May!**



“As a former Columbus City Schools educator, I know LifeWise is creating a life-changing opportunity in the lives of so many of our students.”

VINCE, CITYWIDE DIRECTOR

See Video Highlights from
LifeWise Columbus City



CASE STUDY: RURAL

In the rural community of Defiance, students are bussed less than a mile from Defiance Elementary School to the local YMCA. The program serves two classrooms at a time, five times a day, five days per week. After just one year of operating, **LifeWise Defiance enrollment exceeded 850 students of the 1,000-member student body.**

“We are running five classes a day, five days per week, and nearly 1,000 students are hearing the gospel every week!”

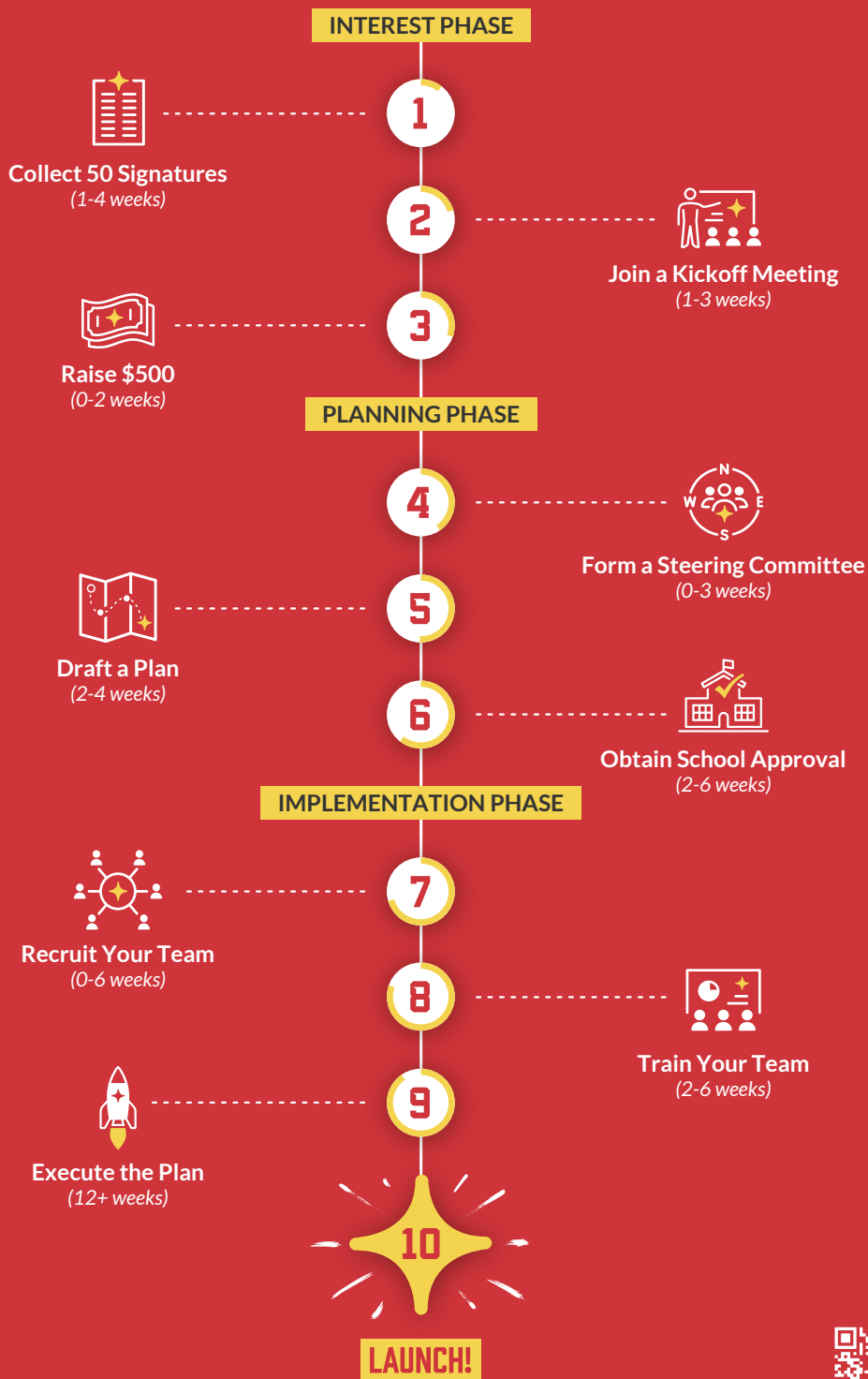
PHIL, DEFIANCE DIRECTOR



See Video Highlights from
LifeWise Defiance



THE 10 STEPS TO LAUNCH A LIFEWISE



Inside our CURRICULUM

The LifeWise curriculum, powered by The Gospel Project, takes students on a journey through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation with an intentional focus on three areas:



HEAD

We focus first on simply knowing what the Bible says.



HEART

We examine how the Bible story points to the big picture of the gospel.



HANDS

We explore ways the gospel transforms our character.



FAQ



Q: How does LifeWise compare with before and after school programs?

A: LifeWise is complementary to existing before and after school programs. The primary distinctive feature of LifeWise is that it operates during the school day, thereby engaging the students who are most unlikely to attend before- and after-school programs due to transportation, extracurricular and other issues.

Q: Does LifeWise interfere with classes during the school day?

A: No, while classes are held during the school day, they do not interfere with children's mandatory courses or extracurricular activities. The class schedule is set by school personnel in consultation with LifeWise representatives. Usually, LifeWise classes are scheduled as part of the "specials" rotation or for times when other elective courses are offered.

Q: How are LifeWise programs staffed?

A: A local Steering Committee first coordinates program details with school officials and then identifies a Program Director and Board to lead the program long-term. The Director and Board recruit and hire qualified teachers with resources and coaching from the LifeWise Support Center. A number of volunteers are enlisted as well to assist with transporting students and helping in the classroom.

Q: How much does it cost to operate a local program?

A: The cost varies from program to program based on paid staff, facility, transportation, curriculum/membership fees, supplies and other miscellaneous costs. Our numbers indicate a program can operate within the cost range of \$100-\$300 per student per year depending mainly on local decisions regarding paid staff, facility and transportation.

Q: How are the donations raised to support the program?

A: The LifeWise Support Center provides proven strategies, training and materials to local LifeWise leaders to effectively raise the necessary funds so that there is no cost to schools or participating families.

Q: How do churches with differing beliefs and practices partner together to provide LifeWise to local students?

A: The LifeWise Statement of Faith and Team Member Conduct are designed to focus on the core tenets of the Christian faith, particularly the gospel. A special effort is made to avoid teaching an official position on secondary issues.

Q: What are the options for LifeWise classroom facilities?

A: Students either walk under the supervision of volunteer chaperones or are driven by bus or van to the off-site LifeWise classroom. There are four primary types of LifeWise facilities:

1. Existing Space - Rental or donated use of a church or other business.
2. Renovation - Purchase existing property, like a home, and remodel as necessary.
3. New Build - Construction using a LifeWise model design or unique local design.
4. Modular - Using a LifeWise semi-permanent modular building or unique local design.



You can be THE DIFFERENCE

Imagine every one of the 50 million public school students in this nation having the opportunity to learn the Word of God as part of their school day. Imagine how different this nation would look if we were able to invest the gospel into the hearts of the next generation.

WHAT STANDS IN THE WAY OF THAT REALITY?

- ✦ Not the law. Released time is well established.
- ✦ Not the lack of a proven concept. LifeWise is gaining traction in a variety of contexts.
- ✦ Not a lack of interest among families. Wherever LifeWise is offered, large numbers of students are enrolling and families are being changed.

The primary obstacle is a **lack of knowledge**. Very few people know about this opportunity, but LifeWise wants to change that and we need your help. Please consider how you can help share this opportunity with your community. Your voice may be the catalyst to bring the gospel to your local public school students. God willing, this will spark a local and nationwide movement that will reclaim the hearts and minds of rising generations.



Join the
MOVEMENT

Find your school to get started!



lifewise.org/interest