

Episode 383 –How To Choose the Best Teacher Planner

00:00 Choosing the Right Teacher Planner

Linda Kardamis (00:00)

There are so many teacher planners out there. How do you know which one is right for you? Well, that's what we're diving into in today's episode. Welcome back to the Teach 4 the Heart podcast where we tackle teaching challenges from a biblical perspective. This episode is brought to you in partnership with the Herzog Foundation. I'm here today with Sarah Humes, one of our Teach 4 the Heart team members and Teach 4 the Heart Plus mentors. Sarah, thanks for joining us today.

Sarah Humes (00:22)

Thank you so much for having me.

Linda Kardamis (00:24)

And we are so excited to talk about planners, which is something that here at Teach 4 the Heart, we have a special place in our heart for, because of course we have our own teacher planner called Pray and Plan. But this episode is designed to help you choose the best planner for you, whether it's Pray and Plan or not. So we're just gonna kind of guide you through some questions to help you consider and find the planner that's right for you. Are you ready to dive into this, Sarah?

Sarah Humes (00:49)

I'm super excited to dive into this.

Linda Kardamis (00:52)

So the first question that we think you should ask yourself when deciding a planner is what do you want to use the planner for? And in particular, the biggest question I like to ask people first is do you wanna do lesson planning in it, right? So some of you are like, yes, I want a paper lesson planner. When I was teaching, I did my lesson plans on the computer. So I didn't need my planner to have lesson plans. I just wanted a planner for my daily to-dos. So that's the question, do you want lesson planning?

Do you want to do's or do you want both? Sarah, anything people should be considering as they think about this?

Sarah Humes (01:28)

Well, and I think it's okay to have like, if you're like me, I'm someone who I like to do them both digitally and on paper. Like I kind of wanted to have like the more formal side digitally, but then I like to have it

sketched out so I can have it with me on, you know, like the bare bones, like, okay, we're gonna do this and this. And so I liked having that on paper just to keep me on track.

Linda Kardamis (01:52)

Yeah, that's a really good point. So some people might be like, I'm doing this on the computer, but I still want something on paper. And that's really the key. What do you want on paper? What do you want to have with you? ~ And that's really important. In particular with our praying plan, we have two versions with lesson plans and two versions with that, right? So we have here the deluxe and mini do not have any space for lesson plans. So if you want lesson plans, these are not the right one for you, right? ~ So that's important to know.

And then we have two versions that do have lesson plans. And in particular, our ultimate is absolutely everything. It's got lesson plans and to-dos. And then the lesson planner has lesson plans and no to-dos. So it's just very important, whether you're getting pre and plan or a different plan, or to just think through, do I want it to do lesson planning? Do I want it to do to-dos? Do I want it to do both?

And then is there anything else? Is there anything else that's really important for me? What do I want to track? And we'll get into some more features, but I think those are the big ones to consider right off the bat.

Sarah Humes (02:53)

Yes.

Linda Kardamis (02:55)

So once you've thought through, do I want lesson plans or not on paper, right? Do I want to do's on paper or is that separate? I think another thing to consider is what size of planner you want, okay? And there's a whole spectrum here. Some people are planner enthusiasts and they say the more space, the more everything, I don't care how big it is, Sarah, that's you.

Sarah Humes (03:19)

That's me. Yes.

Linda Kardamis (03:19)

We're looking for something like our ultimate, right? Or,

and there's other teacher planners that are also very big, have everything. It's like, okay, we have space for everything. It's got the tabs. It's got, you know, just everything all in one place. But other people might look at this one and go, that is too big. I don't want to lug around a big planner. You might be looking for something smaller and compact, like our mini. This is my favorite. I'm like, I just, I don't need all that. I just want something small and compact. So there's no.

right or wrong, but it's important to consider. I want something I can just grab and it's super light, or do I want all the features and I don't care that it's bigger and takes up more space? Sarah, I know you fall on the planner enthusiast side.

Sarah Humes (04:01)

I do,

and there's so much a part of me that wants to be someone who can be a mini person. Like I would love for the, cause you know, I do build my muscles, carry my ultimate everywhere I go. Like I even take it on vacation with me. But I know that I'm not a mini person and I have to accept that about myself. I just have to realize that I run out of room in the ultimate. Okay. Like.

Even though there's so much room, like I have to sometimes put Post-its over my notes in the ultimate because I want all the room.

Linda Kardamis (04:37)

And like that's so that's just important to know yourself and also just to think through like yeah What do I want that the smaller size is convenient? But if you need more space then and you want to have the space then it's worth it to have a bigger planner So it really is all just just trade-off and another good thing just just to keep in mind is You're never married to a certain planner forever, right? It's a one-year planner. So you do want to think it through and make a good decision

Sarah Humes (04:49)

Yes.

05:00 Digital vs. Physical Planners

Linda Kardamis (05:00)

But at the same time, we've had so many people say, you know, I did the mini, I want more space this year, I'm doing the deluxe. Or, you know, I did the lesson planner, I wanna go back to the ultimate this year. So it's something you can obviously go back and forth into. So side note before we get to question number three, I wanna talk for just a second about digital planners. So digital planners is almost like a whole nother category, but we have to talk about it now, because if you're like, okay, I actually don't want a physical planner. I wanna do my planning.

Sarah Humes (05:13)

Yes.

Linda Kardamis (05:29)

I want it all digital. Just a couple thoughts here. Obviously this is just once again totally up to you and what you want. I think that we do have a digital Pre-Im Plan, meaning it is like hyperlinked and it's used for note taking software or planner software. I think this is a great option if you already use a tablet a lot and you love it.

So if you're like, take all my notes on my tablet and I bring it everywhere and I use it for all these other things, I wanna do my planning in it too. with, I'm not talking about like lesson plans on Excel. I'm talking about using like this type of planner digitally. If you are already using that, I think it's a great fit. And we have the digital version and there's lots of digital planners out there. ~ But if you don't love digital planning,

I don't know if I'd necessarily recommend it unless it's something you're just really excited to try because there is something about pen and paper that I think is always valuable. I think it's also kind of making a comeback. So I guess I'm just saying if you feel like you like pen and paper, I wouldn't push yourself towards digital. But if you know you love digital and that's part of what you do, that can be a really cool option to be able to kind of marry it onto something like a tablet. So Sarah, I don't know if you have any advice or thoughts on the digital formats.

Sarah Humes (06:49)

Yeah, I mean, if you're not already a techie person, you're going to have to learn the application too. Like I'm familiar with Notability. I use Notability a lot, especially for my church notes, things like that, which is one of the software that we recommend. ~ but I will say that I don't love using our planner in it. Like I think it's fun. Honestly, my favorite thing to do with our planner inside of Notability is to color the pictures.

Linda Kardamis (06:56)

bright.

Sarah Humes (07:17)

I think that coloring in pictures is so much fun in there, but day to day I use my physical planner. So.

Linda Kardamis (07:24)

Yeah.

Yeah. So it really is up to you. If you're like, love digital planners. We have an awesome one. There's awesome ones out there, but it's just so different than a physical one where you can tab through the pages and open it on your desk. So just kind of consider that before choosing a digital one. Is that what you want or is it something you want to try this year? Or like, don't feel bad if you're like, no, I just want to stick with the physical.

Sarah Humes (07:35)

Yes.

Yeah, people

know themselves. They know if they are familiar with that. And digital planning is fun, but I just prefer the pen and paper. I just love feeling it in front of me.

Linda Kardamis (07:57)

Yeah. So let's review. We said first question, what do you want to use the planner for? Do you want it to have lesson planning pages? Do you want it to have to do's? What are you want to use it for? Question two, do you want bigger all the features, all the space? Do you want something smaller, more compact? Question number three, what is your budget? And are you looking for a high quality planner or honestly something low quality? And my thought here is there, once again, there's no right or wrong. When I was teaching, I will be honest.

I did not get a big fancy planner. I was very young. We did not have much budget. I didn't care about the fancy features. So I just got like a \$12 Walmart planner. There was even a couple years, ~ this wasn't when I was teaching, but where I just literally got a notebook. It was literally just like ~ a \$1 Steno line notebook and I just did my to-dos in there. So like that is totally an option if that's what you want.

08:26 Budget Considerations for Planners

~ But if you're like no, I want something that is premium. I want something beautiful I want something with all the features and something I'm gonna enjoy using all year and I want it to be high quality ~ Then and I have the budget for it. That's different like you're looking for kind of two different things there And so it's good to just sit down and say, okay, what is my budget? What is the range of what I'm looking for? ~ And and what do I want?

because there are the whole gamut. You can find a really cheap \$12 planner at Walmart that you can just write down a few things, or you can get these really beautiful, high quality planners here. Sarah, I wanna get your thoughts and then I'm gonna talk a little bit about why Pre and Plan is not on the budget end and why it's priced at a more premium price.

Sarah Humes (09:36)

Yeah, I mean, for me personally, even before we were selling Pray and Plan, I was always like, that was my priority because we know that, I mean, when we started selling Pray and Plan here, I was the team member who was geeking out over this because it's just, it is what makes me happy. I love sitting down and prioritizing what I'm going to do. And this is a part of my routine.

You know, and so it just makes me so happy and this is worth it for me to prioritize. I love the fact that it stays together all year, even through what I put it through, because I'm not particularly easy on my planners, but you know, I love the fact that all the different kinds of pens I use are bleeding through, which you can't always say that with some of the other planners, you know, and there happen times.

where I've had to use a lesser quality one. And I mean, it's been okay, but it hasn't made me as happy as having something that's pretty and spacious and having the little perks that we get from a nice planner.

Linda Kardamis (10:53)

Yeah, so it really does come down to like you get what you pay for I think when you look at teacher planners and the whole range of prices from very inexpensive to to honestly premium premium prices for a planner. And so it really it really just does depend on your budget and what you're looking for. But Sarah mentioned a few reasons sometimes people ask us like why is pre and plan so expensive. And just so you know the range on pre and plan for the physical ones is between \$39.95 and \$59.95 and our printer was

wonderful this year. I thought for sure we'd have to raise the prices, but they worked with us and found a new they actually got a new press and a new, new paper vendor and they were able to keep the price roughly the same. So we didn't have to raise prices this year. So anyhow, it's not a cheap planner, but I you guys to know, like we are really working hard to keep the price in a reasonable range. And it really is for the reasons Sarah says, we are printer is printed locally here in Ohio with a local printer in the US. They use quality

materials. The cover is laminated. ~ The coil is ~ so interesting. Sometimes people think it's not a good coil because it's actually plastic instead of metal. It looks very nice. This one's a beautiful silver this year. But the reason for that is because it is actually really, really durable and it doesn't bend and get messed up. So it has beautiful pockets, these tab pages. And man, could go on a whole thing about how this is made. I was shocked.

at the intricacies of printing it. It is quite a process. I will just say that. These get sent out to a vendor to be laminated. These get sent out to a vendor to be cut. They hand coil the spiral. It is crazy all that goes into producing these books, but they do a really, really good job.

Sarah Humes (12:36)

Just the fact that it's hand coiled blows my mind. Like hand,

or you know, that just, what?

Linda Kardamis (12:42)

It blows

my mind too. This one might be on the machine, but like basically these books are so big, the bigger ones that they, doesn't work right on the machine. It wasn't working right. So they're like, we'll hand coil them. I think they hand co-olate the tabs too. So like the tabs have to be hand inserted into the correct spots. So, I mean, it is, it's not simple and they're not cheap to produce. ~ So that's why they're premium, but they are really, you get that premium quality, that great quality paper.

Sarah Humes (12:57)

Yes.

Yeah.

Linda Kardamis (13:12)

They're gonna be durable. They're gonna last and we've been doing this enough years that we've kind of identified the problems and solved and solved the ones that you know, maybe our first edition or second edition had we also work with ~ the design also has at least in our planner and I know a lot of the premium planners has Really thought through right you've got you've got graphic designers and teachers all involved We've thought through and had multiple multiple multiple conversations about literally every single element in this planner

And then the last few years, we've actually hired a local artist to design custom artwork for the coloring pages and for the different design elements inside. And that's just really fun too. So there's just a lot of thought and intentionality that goes into that, but you're not gonna get in the \$12 Walmart planner. But once again, it depends on what you want.

Sarah Humes (14:02)

Yeah, you know, I love just what you said there about, I feel so excited about how the planner has evolved over the years. Like when I think about the first year, it was so cute. And, you know, I remember looking at it I was like, ~ this is so pretty. But we had the feedback of, you know, from men who were like, ~ we want this planner too. This is pretty girly, you know? And so we've worked intentionally on making sure that the planner is

geared towards everybody. And then the coils, like how much better the coils are and just all the feedback. Like it makes me excited as someone who works here to know how hard we have like put the feedback that our customers give us into our planner. And I don't know, that just makes me excited because when you look at the planner and you're like, this is a change we made. Like even the tabs, do you remember that first year?

Linda Kardamis (14:59)

Mm-hmm.

Sarah Humes (15:00)

Everyone's like, hey, we could use, we could really use some tabs in here. And we added that because our customers wanted it. And it just makes me so happy to know that we have a product that our customers love too. And I don't know, that just makes me so happy from the inside out.

Linda Kardamis (15:15)

Yeah, Pre and Plan definitely has had so much customer feedback. We do that every single year. I would see like what can we improve. This year we added, we made our pocket double-sided. So you now have kind of two pocket folders instead of one in all the larger editions. So yeah, we're always looking for what's that next update that's gonna be there. And yeah, in the early years it was completely all on feedback and design. Yeah, that's really cool. So that's question number three. What is your budget? Are you going high quality, low quality, middle of the road?

What are you looking for? And then our fourth question is just what other features or benefits are important to you? And what do you care about and what don't you care about? Is design important or not? ~ it important? I know one of our key features in Pray and Plan is is full of scripture ~ as the name implies there's space for prayer. And so we really wanted to intentionally marry your day-to-day.

15:44 Features and Personalization in Planners

to do's with your spiritual walk. So is that something that's important to you? Is that something that you're looking for? Do you want habit trackers? Do you want blank space? Does the design matter? Do you want your lesson plans a certain way? What is important to you? Obviously, you want to then find a planner that has those features, or at least the top one. So I would almost ask yourself, what are my non-negotiables? Which ones really matter? And then which ones are just nice to have, but I don't have to, these other things are more important.

Sarah, what matters to you when you're looking for a planner?

Sarah Humes (17:38)

Well, I mean, now that I've used the praying plan, I don't know that I could go back to something that doesn't have room for prayer. I love during my Monday, when I'm setting up my Mondays, I love picking people to pray for and writing their names down. And one of the other things that I've really grown to love is I do customer service here at Teach 4 the Heart. And if someone emails us and they're just having a rough time,

I will actually write our customers names down in our planner and pray for them throughout the week. And I love that every day when I open up my planner, their name is right there. And it's just a physical reminder of there are teachers out there who need prayed for their classrooms being prayed for. And so I don't think that I could go back to something that doesn't have space for prayer. And how many times have we talked about just the fact that you open, open it up and they're scriptureed there.

on those busy mornings when you're like, I haven't really had time to dig into God's Word the way I've wanted to. You know, we all have those days. I wish we didn't, but we do. And there's God's Word there just to anchor your soul to who He is, what He wants us to do. I just, you know, living for Him.

It's who I am and getting to use something to plan my life around him, there's no other way for me. It just makes me excited. And so I love this. I don't know that I could ever go back to something that isn't built on being faith-based.

Linda Kardamis (19:20)

Yeah, I absolutely love that. And that was really the vision behind Pray and Plan, right? There are other great teacher planners out there. We could name them. You know what they are if you're a plan a person. people kept asking us, can you make a teacher one for Christian teachers? so that really is what makes Pray and Plan unique. Yes, it's beautiful. It has great design, all the elements we tried to put in there. we said, OK, can we integrate that faith element? Can it be front and center, beautiful?

encouraging Bible verses, prayer prompts, ~ quotes. And I love that too. I think that is what makes Pray and Plan really, really special. So yeah. So as you guys are thinking though, honestly, your list will look different. I hope, I love it if Pray and Plan is a good fit for you, if Pray and Bible verses are important. But yeah, just thinking through, what do I want? Do I really care about tabs or is that just nice to have? Do I really care?

Sarah Humes (19:58)

Yeah.

Linda Kardamis (20:16)

about whether it has a folder or a pocket, or is that a nice to have? So you're kinda getting your what is must have and then your nice to have. Last thing I wanna talk about real quick under this part is a printable planner. So if, for some people, you have in your mind how you wanna use your planner and there just is not a planner that exists, that is exactly like that. I think this is particularly true if you wanna marry types.

I want it to be a teacher planner, but I also wanna do my meal planning. I want meal planning pages from so and so, and I want house detail. You kind of like, wanna make my own kind of custom thing from multiple different sources. So if you wanna do something like that, what I recommend is getting printable planners. So we have this for pray and plan, and a lot of other people do too, where you can then print off your own pages and hole punch them and make your own book.

Right. And then you can kind of add in whatever you want to take out what you don't move pages around. Some there's even some places that you can go if you're like, I really want it spiral bound. You can lay it out yourself. Go take it and they'll spiral bind it. It's not going to end up being much cheaper than buying one out. Right. That's why I really just recommend this mostly if you're like, I really want to customize it myself. That can be a really good option.

Of course, our international friends, also recommend the principal because it is just crazy expensive to ship Sarah. It's like 20 to \$50. Normally we're like 50. Sometimes Canada is okay, depending on where you live, but it it gets really insanely expensive. So that's another place where a principal option is a really a really good way to go.

Sarah Humes (21:37)

Yes.

It is.

Yes, and we do a lot of...

Yes,

yeah, and we do a lot of researching too, trying to find the best deals for postage, but it's still, it is still expensive.

Linda Kardamis (22:06)

Yeah, you get customs

and all kinds of a mess as soon as you try to go internationally. So yeah, that printable option is really good for customizing or anyone that's overseas. So I hope this is helpful for you. Once again, I'll just review the questions. What do you want to use the planner for? Do you want a larger, more spacious planner or something more compact? Number three, what's your budget? Are you looking high quality, low quality?

Sarah Humes (22:10)

Yes.

22:28 Final Thoughts on Planner Selection

Linda Kardamis (22:28)

And then number four, what features are must haves and which ones are just kind of nice to have. And I hope that'll help you choose the best planner for you. And if you do wanna check out Pray and Plan, it's at teach4theheart.com/planner. And if you, I know we threw out a bunch of things about the different.

I didn't go into detail on which option is best, but there is a quiz there that will help walk you through it. And it'll kind of ask the same questions. It'll ask, do you want lesson planning or not? Do you want large or small? It'll guide you through and tell you exactly which one, if you're interested in pray and plan, is the right one based on those things. Sarah, do you have any final advice or tips as we wrap this episode up?

Sarah Humes (23:07)

I have one thought that I just I always want to remind people that people think that this is a planner that only teachers can use. But I personally think, especially for like the deluxe or the mini, ~ but I'm not even in the classroom anymore and I'm using the ultimate all the time every single page. you can recommend this planner to anyone who prioritizes their faith in in their life.

I highly recommend it. Sometimes the prayer prompts I might not have students to pray for, but I do have people in my life that need prayer. And so I just pray for them. And I encourage you to check it out. It's just, ~ it's perfect no matter who you are.

Linda Kardamis (23:50)

Yeah, that's a great reminder. My daughter and her friends love the mini, like they're students, they're middle school students and they love using this as their school planner. So it's, yeah, it really does work in a variety of situations. Well, thank you guys so much for listening. Once again, you can find out all about Pray and Plan at [teach4theheart.com/ planner](https://teach4theheart.com/planner). We are officially open for pre-orders for next year, 2026, 2027. It always feels so crazy to say that here when we do a new planner.

Sarah Humes (23:54)

Yes.

Linda Kardamis (24:17)

but it's coming up before we know it. So you can grab your planner, get some pre-order bonuses if you order here quickly. It will be available, Lord willing, for a few months, but at some point we do sell out. Last year we sold out pretty early. We sold out in July. So make sure you don't wait too long ~ to grab your planner if it's the one that you want. Well, thank you guys so much. I look forward to speaking with you again soon. This episode has been brought to you in partnership with the Herzog Foundation. All views and opinions are our own and don't necessarily reflect those.

of the Herzog Foundation. I'll see you soon. In the meantime, teach you remember God is at work in you and through you, and he's using you to make a difference. Keep your eyes on him and teach 4 the heart