

## The Bible in the Classroom and Home

Children need direct access to the Bible right from the start! The Bible is foundational to who we are as people of God and is critical to faith formation. As adults we have the privilege of nurturing faith and helping children recognize God's presence in their lives. Too often we try to explain the Bible to children in childlike ways but through adult lenses. Instead, let's discover the Bible together and allow them to encounter God's word and claim it in their own way.

We needn't be worried that the child is not old enough to understand the Bible. Children bring all that they have learned and experienced in their short lives to any situation. They actively construct their own understanding and make sense of it at any given stage of development. Each time a child hears a Bible story, it's a new adventure. Let's hope they will have many, many encounters with that same story, made fresh and new each time—right through adulthood! To withhold the Bible from children until they understand it is to deny their spiritual nature as a full partner in the body of Christ and to ignore their active role in the on-going story of salvation.

Here are just 10 considerations and practical suggestions to help you create an environment where children will develop patterns of engaging the Bible. They will grow in confidence to freely respond and articulate, in their own way, the informing and shaping influence of the Bible in their day-to-day activities.



1. Let your children see *you* reading from *your* Bible. In Sunday school and at home, children will come to understand the personal and intimate nature of regular Bible engagement as they see your ease in engaging the Bible.



2. Create a sacred space at home or in the classroom where “Bible talk” is a natural time in the rhythms of routine. That sacred space might even be in the car!



3. Take time to celebrate 'presentation of new Bibles'. Some congregations give the family the Bible before it is presented to the child. The family is responsible for passing the Bible to friends and family to add a personal note in the margin while highlighting a favorite passage.



4. Allow children to wonder. Build upon their natural inclination to embrace mystery. Let their imagination and awe shape the questions you ask. They don't need to know the list Old Testament Kings. Let them create the story behind the story. But, “what would it be like...?” “I wonder if...” “What would you do...?”



5. Let scripture speak to your guest even before they enter your home or church. Ask children to paint, draw, and write their favorite scripture or Bible story...

-on flower pots

-inexpensive bathroom tiles to be used as garden markers or flower bed borders

-on strips of colorful (donated) fabric attached in clusters to various exterior areas of the buildings



6. Be creative and open to opportunities to let scripture be the gift
  - ask the confirmation class to make “witness rocks” for the college or career bound. The directions will tell you to how roll tiny pieces of paper with Scripture on it in a home-made rock recipe. See the directions elsewhere at this site.
  - always include a scripture reference in birthday cards and other greetings
  - turn to scripture in tough and confusing times
  - let children pick as scripture passage or story to be posted on the "fridge" or the church website each week. Accompanying artwork is welcome!



7. Unleash all sorts of artistic expression and media to capture the Biblical imagination. Don't shy away from classical art and icons or even skateboard art.



8. Let children tell and retell the stories in the Bible to others in worship, family gatherings, in newsletters or video creations. Let different generations tell one another about their love of God's word and its influence in their lives.



9. Take field trips. Where do you see God's word in the sanctuary, in a cemetery, on a rollercoaster, at dusk in the forest?



10. Help children navigate the Bible by using this simple little song to the tune of *Three Blind Mice*. 🎵

🎵 Book, chapter, verse. Book, chapter, verse.  
Fol-low the path. Fol-low the path.  
The Bible i-is God's word for YOU.  
So open it up...but here's a clue...  
From large to small will lead you through...  
Book, chapter, verse. Book, chapter, verse.  
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Consider making a huge Bible with poster board, foam board, or lightweight lumber. Paint the interior to look like pages in a Bible or insert large sheets of newsprint (flipchart paper) upon which a scripture passage is written. Don't forget to include the Book, chapter, verse. Let children teach the congregation the song as someone with a large pointer illustrates the sequence. Have fun with it by using people of varying heights/generations to lead the song.

Vary the idea for a retreat. Ask each person to write their favorite scripture passage (include Book, chapter, verse.) using a yellow highlighter. Turn off the lights and as you sing “So open it up...” turn on a black light and the words will illuminate. Test the highlighters before hand. Some work better than others.