

Teaching the Bible to Your Children

Article

“Study the Scriptures diligently,” Christ said in John 5:39, “these are the very scriptures that testify about me.” (NIV)

Every historical narrative, every prophecy, every law, every theological argument contained in the Bible is a link in the chain of God’s development of His plan of salvation for humanity. The Bible is the whole story—God’s story and message for humanity.

Someone who was asked to give only one reason for why he or she believes the Bible is the whole Truth might reply, “Because it is the only book that accurately describes reality and how to deal with it.” In philosophy classes in universities, philosophies are taught, often quite logically and neatly, but they can be pushed into self-contradiction. Not one of these innumerable systems for “living wisely” is in fact liveable. The Bible, and Christianity, is. Even non-Christians cannot help admitting that the Golden Rule is infallibly honorable, that forgiveness somehow leads to the most perfect exercise of justice, and that the central gospel truth of Christ’s sacrifice has changed the world as nothing else ever has or could. The complexity of human life—the tangle of sins and emotions and desires and relationships—is only fully explained and dealt with by the Bible. There is nothing more important to teach our children as we prepare them to deal with life in this world.



And the Bible itself is clear that it is the responsibility of parents to teach their children the Scriptures. “Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deut. 6:7 NIV).

This Biblical mandate also describes the most effective method for fulfilling the duty it commands parents to undertake. The best way to teach children about the Bible is to talk about it. Bring up connections between the passages you have read and the issues the world or your family is currently facing. Answer the questions the children ask and ask them some yourself. You might be surprised by the ready grasp children have of spiritual truths. You might find that they figure out with astonishing understanding the meaning of a passage of Scripture that has puzzled you and many other adults.

It can also be helpful to set aside some time for memorizing Bible verses with your children. Committing scriptural passages to memory is the most certain way to ensure access to their guidance in every crucial experience in life. Often the moments that require us to make the most serious decisions occur at times when we may not have a Bible ready to hand. So choosing Scriptures for our children to commit to memory is a meaningful and practical task. Requiring our children to put effort into memorizing Scripture like they would into training for a favorite sport, or learning a leading part in a play, or studying for the SAT, reinforces for them just how important the Bible is and how much a deep and intellectually instructed knowledge of God’s Word is necessary in their life.

But precisely because biblical knowledge is necessary for life—true, genuine, eternal life—we must impress on our children the importance of living it out. Children will not make a connection with past occurrences and moral principles unless they see the import they have for their daily life. When reading the Bible with our children, we must show them not only how all the biblical stories connect to form one cohesive narrative of God’s salvation, but also how this salvation has changed our lives. Children tend to imitate what their parents do rather than merely act on what they have said. To grow in godly grace and provide a genuine example to their children of what a life lived according to the Bible should look like, parents must spend time in the Word themselves, over and above family devotions with their children.

