



How to
Teach the Bible
to Your Kids

This workbook belongs to:

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Dear Fellow Parent,

This workbook provides specific ways to teach the Bible to our kids. If you feel inadequate, you're not alone. Many of us didn't grow up in homes with parents who taught us the Bible. Be encouraged by the opportunity you have to now begin a legacy of teaching the love for the Scriptures in your family lineage. There's nothing more important than teaching our children the power of the gospel.

We're responsible for teaching our kids to love God and learn his commandments (Deut. 6:4-9). The Barna Group illustrates this responsibility. Their research reveals that 94% of people who follow Jesus made the decision before age 18. That's why, throughout this workbook, you'll see the word "keep" as a primary theme. As parents, we keep—or retain possession of—the primary responsibility for teaching our kids the Bible.

As you navigate through this workbook, you'll find three sections: **Keep in Mind**, **Keep in Heart**, and **Keep in Practice**. The idea is that as our children mature, we help them move from understanding the facts about the Bible (Keep in Mind), to expressing the truths of the Bible in their character and behavior (Keep in Heart), to living out the Bible in their everyday life (Keep in Practice). By God's grace, may we find ourselves in "no greater joy than this: to hear that [our] children are walking in truth" (3 John 4).

— Josh + Christi Straub

Keep in Mind

Learning facts about the Bible

1. Teaching our children about the Bible can feel like an overwhelming task. Don't let it. Keep in mind, when Moses tells us to teach our children, he begins by saying, "Listen, Israel" (Deut. 6:4). Here, he's not just speaking to parents. Moses is addressing the entire church. **We were not meant to teach our children alone.** Though we "keep" primary responsibility of teaching our children the Bible, we also surround ourselves with the church (Sunday School teachers, family members, etc.) for support. Make a list of the other people in your life that can also teach the Bible to your children:

2. Secondly, Moses wasn't telling us to add anything to our days.

Instead, he told us to use the built-in times of the day God already gave us—when our children wake, during mealtimes, drive times, and at bedtime. Write down the time most convenient for you to teach the Bible to your kids. Which time would be the most difficult? What are some creative ways you can better use these times for teaching the Bible (i.e. getting rid of screens, starting bedtime 15 minutes earlier, getting backpacks ready the night before, etc.)?

3. As we make a plan for teaching our children the Bible, keep in mind that not all children learn the same way. Developmentally, our kids are also unlikely to be on the same emotional or spiritual level.

Understanding each child individually helps us know how we can best teach the Bible. We want our kids to be interested in what they learn. If learning the Bible is boring for them, it won't be pleasant for anyone. Keep it fun!

For example, make a list below of each of your children's names. Beside each name, write down the best way you could help that particular child memorize the 66 books of the Bible. The following are a few ideas:

- Repetitively write the books in order.
- Write a song or rap about the books of the Bible and record a music video.
- Create a game or puzzle: for example, write all 66 books with markers and construction paper, cut them out, and then place them in order.
- Find a song online reciting the 66 books and listen to it before bed or during drive time.

4. The reason we begin with facts about the Bible is because our children developmentally learn this way. As preschoolers, teaching them the books of the Bible, singing songs about it, and telling them stories from the Bible is a great way to start instilling in them knowledge of it. Look for Bible songs online that teach the books of the Bible. Find a children’s Bible storybook. Then, begin by using one of the four keys times of the day to teach. For instance, your day could include any of the following:

- Singing songs (“Read your Bible and pray everyday and you grow, grow, grow;” or “The B.I.B.L.E.,” etc.) as you get ready in the morning.
- Reciting the books of the Bible, or practicing Bible verse memorization, while driving to the grocery store or school.
- Talking to your kids at dinnertime about your favorite Bible passages, or how the Bible is impacting your own life right now.
- Telling Bible stories as you tuck them into bed.

Based on these suggestions and previous exercises, **write down a daily personal plan for teaching the Bible to your kids.** Start small. If one of these times of the day is all you have right now, then start there. Don’t plan so much that you can’t keep up. The self-imposed guilt will be enough to make you quit.

5. No matter the age of our kids, these facts about the Bible are important to **keep in mind:**

- The Bible is not a guide for living a moral life. Instead, it is the infallible Word of God (2 Pet. 1:19-21) to help sinful humans find redemption in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:23-24).
- Our children will learn fictional stories in school. In fact, they may even come to question the Bible. However, everything written in the Bible is true and God-breathed (1 Tim. 3:16).
- The Bible is alive and active! More than a fable, the Bible judges our thoughts and ideas (Heb. 4:12).
- Read these passages: Psalm 19:7; Psalm 12:6; Proverbs 30:5; John 1:14. What other *facts* about the Bible do these passages communicate?

The goal in teaching the Bible to our children is to help them move the facts and truths of the Bible to personal life application.

As you complete the workbook, consider how you can begin applying the **Keep in Practice** section as your child is developmentally ready. Some children will be ready for this sooner than others.

Keep in Heart

Learning *truths* about the Bible

1. As parents, one of the best ways to instill the love of the Bible in our kids is to show them how we read, pray through, and learn from it. Never be shy about sharing with your child what God is teaching you from His Word. Our children aren't born knowing that our basis for right and wrong is the Bible. We have to show them.

Use dinnertime or bedtime to help your children see how a decision you recently made was based on a particular truth from the Bible. When our children make the connection between our actions and the truth of the Bible, they begin to see the Bible lived out before them in the hearts of others.

Write down a few recent decisions you made that tie to a truth in the Bible. For example, you chose not to gossip about someone (Eph. 4:29); you took an extra shift at work because your family needed the money (Prov. 6:6); you complimented your spouse (Prov. 16:24); you took dinner to a family in need (Gal. 5:13). Use dinner or bedtime, as you review highlights of your day, to communicate these decisions and their biblical connections to your children.

2. From an early age, **our children learn through story.** A good children’s Bible illustrates many of these stories. Reading these stories aloud together as a family is helpful for some kids. However, some children, especially in preschool age, may grow bored. In this case, one of the best ways to teach our little ones these stories is to tell them ourselves.

Begin by reading a particular story from the Bible. Then, act it out. Use voice inflection to distinguish between characters. Move your hands. Use props from around the house. Bring your children into the story as characters. **Read Mark 4:35-40.** Write down the key lesson from the story. Next, write down how you could communicate the key lesson to your children, age-appropriately, from facts of this story.

Here are examples of other stories you can begin to tell your children from the Bible.

Finish the grid below by adding five more stories you would like to begin teaching your children. Come up with creative, age-appropriate titles that will help them remember the story.

TOPIC	BIBLE PASSAGE
God Created the Earth and the Trees, the Oceans and Your Knees	Genesis 1
Noah’s Ark (and his Crazy Awesome Belief in God)	Genesis 6-9
Shepherd Boy David or Giant Goliath: The Epic Battle	1 Samuel 17
Daniel in the Lion’s Den—With Whom?	Daniel 6
Jesus Is Born!	Luke 2:8-18
Jesus Walks on Water	Matthew 14:22-33
Jesus Feeds 5,000	John 6:1-15
Jesus Heals a Blind Man	Mark 8:22-26

3. Another way to move biblical truths from the mind to the heart of your child is to use devotional cards that **teach biblical truths and character traits**. You can purchase cards or create your own. For instance, read Proverbs 26:11. What truth is this verse communicating?

As you read this verse with your children during one of the key times of the day, ask them what it means for a dog to return to its vomit. Write down how you can use this verse on a regular basis to help your children learn their lessons and not repeat mistakes (i.e. memorize the verse together, make a craft with the verse and hang it on the refrigerator, recite the verse each time they don't share a toy with their siblings, etc.).

Do what works best for your family. You can choose a biblical trait (faithfulness, gentleness, hard work, joy, etc.) each week and make it the "biblical truth of the week" in your home. Have your children memorize the verse, make crafts, perform skits, and live out that trait for the week with their siblings and friends.

For each of the Bible passages below, write the biblical trait or truth you can teach your child.

Biblical Trait

Mark 10:25 _____

Proverbs 30:17 _____

Genesis 9:14-15 _____

James 1:5 _____

Matthew 23:24 _____

4. Finally, tie your discipline into teaching the Bible. The word discipline means “to train.” When your children misbehave, use biblical values—like the ones you learn or decide to use from above—as anchor points “to train” your children. In addition to the passages we can point our children to about obeying Mom and Dad (Eph. 6:1-3; Prov. 30:17), what are some other biblical truths you want to highly value in your home (i.e. telling the truth, treating others with kindness, holding the tongue, etc.)?

Write down the top values you already instill in your home on a regular basis. What verse can you write next to it “to train” your child in the Word? For example, we use Philippians 2:3. When we’re not sharing, this verse becomes the basis for our discipline and conversation.

Keep in Practice

Living out the Bible

1. Set a weekly family Bible time. This is a time each week where you gather your family to talk about a biblical truth, listen to a story, and pray together. Again, be creative. Some families might choose Sunday evenings to schedule their family Bible time, discuss what they learned in church that morning, explain one way they’ll apply it that week, and then have prayer time together for the week ahead. You could also use this time to tell a Bible story from the previous section and ask your kids how they can apply the biblical truth that week.

Regardless of the structure, schedule it at a time most convenient for your family. Approximately one hour before bedtime works well. You can try to set a family Bible time more often than this; however, don’t overcommit yourself or your family. If you apply the other sections of this workbook into your everyday rhythm, the weekly family Bible time will be a nice complement for teaching your kids the Bible. What day and time are you going to set for your weekly family Bible time? Will you follow the lessons and sermon series of your church? Will you create your own each week? Write down a plan for your first four weeks.

For preschoolers, you may need to resort to one of the activities previously discussed for your family Bible time. As they age, use the Bible date exercise described on the next page.

Remember, teaching the Bible to our kids will vary with each child. The weekly family Bible time is meant as a time to unite as a family, talk about what you're learning and pray together. Your children are likely to be on different spiritual, intellectual, and emotional levels, especially if you have children with a wide age range. In these cases, it is advantageous to hold a personal study (a Bible date) with each child. **This one-on-one approach provides your child the opportunity for asking personal questions or revealing struggles as it relates to living out the Bible** (real life stuff they wouldn't want to share with their siblings in the room).

2. Establish a Bible date with each child. If possible, make this a weekly date where you and your child can make memories. We go for pancakes on the weekend, a tradition our son loves. You can schedule a date to an ice cream shop or even get ice cream and do it at home. Regardless of the tradition you create, make this time a memory for your child they can cherish forever. What day/time and place can you set for your Bible date with each child?

Next, find a journal you can use for your time together. **Creating a journal of times spent together gives you a keepsake your children will be able to look back on to see their spiritual journey.** As a parent, you can also use a journal Bible, writing down prayers you pray for your children as you journey with them. This Bible can also be given to them as a gift on their wedding day or as they go off to college. Which ideas most resonate with you about this time together? Write down two ways you want to make it extra special.

Is there particular book of the Bible or a story your children want to learn more about? If your child is a new believer in the faith, you may want to choose the book of John to read together. **Use your Bible date to read together the passage you choose.** Again, don't feel pressure to cover a set amount of verses. Work through the Scripture at the pace your child can understand and relate to it. Write down three passages or books of the Bible you want to begin studying with each child.

Ask questions about the biblical context as you read the passage.

Stay engaged in it. For instance, let's say your reading is the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. Ask questions as you read the passage that draw your child into the story and its historical context. Keep it interesting. Ask questions like, What do you believe the Samaritan woman was feeling when Jesus talked to her? and What lesson do you think she took away from her time with Jesus?

What are some questions you can ask your child from this story?

Ask questions about how your child can live out this passage as you read it together. In other words, what biblical truth can we take from this passage today? How can we apply it to how we live this week? Don't overcomplicate this by listing five things we have to apply this week. Focus on one takeaway your child can live out. Using John 4:1-26, what is the one lesson you can apply in your life this week?

If you haven't picked up on it by now, teaching our kids the Bible is as much about the time we spend with them as it is about the actual reading. Don't force more than your kids can consume each week. Also, don't put unnecessary guilt on yourself for not covering a specific number of chapters or verses. Your time together will quickly fizzle out this way. Instead, **hone in on building your relationship with your child. Talk to your child about your own relationship with God.**

Refer to section 1 of **Keep in Heart**. Write down a few stories you can share with your child about your own relationship with God they may not already know. For instance, do they know how you came into a personal relationship with Jesus? Do they know about your own spiritual disciplines and how you *live out* your faith?

As you navigate through your time together with your child, **ask questions about their spiritual journey.** You can ask questions like these: What is God teaching you this week? Are you burdened for someone (a sick friend, a sibling, etc.)? What are you most grateful for this week (1 Thess. 5:18)? How are you experiencing the joy of your salvation (Psalm 51:12)? What are you struggling with right now? What does the Bible say about this struggle (Psalm 46:1)? Do you have sin for which you need to confess and repent (1 John 1:9)? What one way can you live out the Bible this week to become more like Jesus?

Write down a few other questions you could ask about your child's growing faith.

Finally, use your journal to remember your time together. Again, be creative with how you use the journal. Here are a few ideas for what you can write down in your journal each week:

- The one lesson you want to apply from this week's passage.
- The one verse that most impacted your time together.
- The one way you will choose to live out your lesson for that week.
- A prayer for the week.
- You can even go in the following week and journal something God did following the previous Bible date.

3. Live out the Bible with your kids. You can tie this into the weekly family Bible time. Essentially, the primary question you're answering here is, "How are we living out the Bible together as a family?"

Let's say for instance your pastor is preaching a sermon series from the book of James. Reading James 1:27 this week, your family decides to go rake leaves together at the home of a widow in your local church. Set realistic goals about how much you'll serve as a family. Begin with one service project every three months.

Make of list of other activities and ways you can live out your faith in your local area as a family.

Endnotes:

"Evangelism is Most Effective Among Kids," Barna Group, October 11, 2004, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/196-evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids#.VZxGF-1Viko>

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Josh serves as Marriage and Family Strategist for LifeWay Christian Resources. Together, Josh and Christi also cofounded The Connexion Group, a company designed to empower and equip families to live, love, and lead well. They host the Dr. Josh + Christi podcast and a weekly Facebook Live broadcast. Josh is the author of *Safe House: How Emotional Safety is the Key to Raising Kids Who Live, Love, and Lead Well*, and together they are the authors and producers of the video curriculum *The Screen-Balanced Family*. When not working, you can find them either playing trains with their son, Landon, or having tea parties with daughter Kennedy. (And trying really hard to put the phones away.)

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