

Teaching Our Children The Bible

Franklin Church of Christ
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AM Worship

Introduction:

“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word” (**Psalm 119:9**). No matter how old they are, we want our children to know the Bible. As parents, we recognize that God’s word contains the words of eternal life. However, at times, we look at the Book and then we look at our kids—we wonder, how do we get all this information into their little heads? What steps can we take? What activities should we do? When should we start? How hard should we push? These are important questions. These questions ought to be and can be answered. In this lesson, we will look at how to teach our children the Bible. We will discuss two Biblical principles of learning that we must follow. In so doing, we will also explore some practical suggestions to help teach our children. These suggestions are just that, suggestions. This lesson is designed to help those who are trying to figure out what to do. From my practical suggestions, feel free to pick and choose to your heart’s content. If something will not work in your home, fine. If some suggestion sparks your own creative teaching juices and helps you come up with better ideas, great. Whatever the case, I hope you take this one point—we parents must do something to teach our children the Bible.

Discussion:

- I. A few quick observations from **Deuteronomy 6:1-9**.
 - A. This passage was what God expected out of His Old Covenant people. How much more does He expect this from us under a better covenant based on better promises (**Hebrews 8:6**)?
 - B. Before we can teach our children, we must be personally devoted to God and place value upon knowing God’s word (**vss. 5-6**). If we do not love the Lord with all our heart, soul and strength and value knowing what He says, we will never be able to teach our children to love the Lord and value what He says.
 - C. We can teach our children (**vs. 7**). God did not establish the government to be the main teaching institution to children. He did not even establish the church to be the main teaching institution of children. He established families to teach children. He has given parents authority in our homes. He has given us the scriptures. He has empowered us with size and influence over little babies to raise them up to adulthood.
 - D. Teaching our children will take time (**vss. 7-9**). There are numerous activities in our world vying for our time. We must take the time to teach our children. We must be diligent about it. When our children turn six years old, we devote 8 to 10 hours of every weekday to “reading, ‘riting and ‘rithmetic.” How much time do we devote to teaching them God’s word? Do not get me wrong, reading, writing, math, history, science, art, etc. are all good subjects. But they will not help our children through eternity. “Time is money,” they say. Maybe we will have to sacrifice some money to teach our children. We must consider it an investment in our children’s eternities.
- II. Bible Principle #1: Use the Bible—**II Timothy 3:14-17**.
 - A. **II Timothy 3:14-17** says scripture is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness. It accomplishes all these things for adults and for kids.
 - B. What do I mean when I say, “Use the Bible”?
 1. When I say, “Use the Bible,” I mean when telling your children Bible stories, use the Bible. “VeggieTales” and “Pop-up books” are fun to read. But, if that is the extent of your Bible teaching, your children will not know the scriptures as Timothy did. Read from the Bible. Let them know as children that we can learn from other books and other books are fun to read. But only the Bible is our standard for teaching and there is no substitute. You can make Bible reading exciting for your children. It depends on how you do it. Next time you are reading a Bible story to your children, do not read in a boring monotone. Do not read it quickly as if you are trying to race to get it over with. Read dramatically. Do voices for the different characters. Let the kids see that you are excited about it and they will be too. As your children get older, do not allow them to simply fare on devotional books targeted at teens. Make them spend time with the Word of God.
 2. When I say, “Use the Bible,” I mean instruct your children in how to behave by reading the Bible passages to them. If your children lie, correct them by reading **Revelation 21:8** and

Ephesians 4:25. When they show respect to you and obey you, praise and encourage them by reading **Ephesians 6:1-3**. When they ask you a question, take them to the verse that answers it and read it to them. For instance, when they ask you where “granddaddy” is, do not say, “He’s in heaven.” Take them to **Luke 16:19-31** and read to them about Lazarus and the rich man. Take them to **I Thessalonians 4:13-18** and read to them about the resurrection. Based on these passages, tell them about Hades, Paradise, Torment, the Great Chasm and the Judgment Day resurrection. I know that some of you are looking at your four, five or six year old children and saying, “That is the dumbest thing I have ever heard Edwin. My child is too young to understand those passages.” If they are old enough to ask a Bible question, they are old enough to hear the Bible answer. Many of them are too young to understand. But they still need to hear the real answer, not some easy answer that we will have to unteach them when they are old enough to understand. Further, they need to see you go to the Bible for the answers. That will teach them to do the same.

3. When I say, “Use the Bible,” I mean have your children memorize scripture. Timothy knew the scriptures from childhood (**II Timothy 3:15**). If your children are old enough to speak, they are old enough to memorize. This should not become a test of wills and it must not become an issue of “Memorize this verse or I will spank you.” This is not to be a competition. Nor should it be a status symbol for parents. Remember this, the point is not whether they will recite verses to visiting preachers to impress them. The point is getting them to hide the word in their hearts (**Psalms 119:11**). If you have to work on one verse for a whole year until they can say it on their own, fine. That is one more verse than they would know if you did not do anything. But allow me to assure you, your children can probably memorize faster than you can. Simply read verses to them and have them repeat them back to you. As they get older, they will be able to work on it on their own. You can make this exciting and fun for them. Set up charts with stickers to demonstrate what they have memorized. Have a notebook in which you write on a page what they have memorized for easier review later. When they get it right, give them hugs and kisses. When they get it wrong, give them positive encouragement and more hugs and kisses. If it is a long passage, have a special reward for them when they have learned it. If they do not understand the verse, so what. They know it. As they get older, understanding will come. If some of the words are hard to pronounce, so what. This is not a test of verbal acuity. It is simply getting the verse in that little heart. As their speech gets better the pronunciation will come.

III. Bible Principle #2: Start with the milk and move to solid food—**II Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-14**.

- A. When your children are first born, you do not feed them steak. They need milk. However, as they are given milk they grow, develop and mature and they become able to handle meat. The growth rate is different for different children. The same is true with teaching your children the Bible. They start with the milk. You do not expect your four-year-old or your fourteen-year-old to understand all the weighty matters of God’s Word. However, you do expect your fourteen-year-old to understand more than the four-year-old.
- B. Most people have a general concept of this. That is why they rely so heavily on simplified Bible stories and do not start them on hearing the actual Bible until they are much older. However, that is not the answer. While there are some passages that are just difficult (**II Peter 3:16**). The issue of milk and meat is not so much learning easy passages and then learning hard ones. Rather, it is reading all the passages and learning the surface issues and then reading them again and again and again and getting deeper and deeper and deeper. Remember, your children are developing. You cannot expect them to be adults in understanding. However, do not allow them to remain children in mentality (**I Corinthians 14:20**).
- C. For sake of having a framework, let’s divide child education into five stages. This is a somewhat simplified and surface approach, but it is a place to start. Consider these stages and suggestions for teaching throughout each stage.
 1. The Infant Stage:
 - a. By infant, I am referring to the period from birth to the time when they start talking. Everyone knows that infants cannot learn anything. So there is no need to even try teaching them the Bible during this stage. Right? Wrong. I am amazed at how many

parents say this when you talk about teaching the Bible. And yet, the first thing every parent ever does with a child is start teaching him stuff.

- b. Do you remember when you first held that little bundle of joy? What did you say? You probably did what I did. See if this sounds familiar, “Hi Tessa, do you know who I am? I’m your daddy.” “Hi Ethan, you know what? I love you. Do you love me?” Now, did my five-minute-old children have any understanding of what it meant to have a daddy or to love someone? Of course not. Yet there I was trying to teach that stuff to them.
- c. In this stage, you will not be able to have conversations about the Bible with your kids. You will not get any feedback from them. But you can still read them Bible stories. You can talk to them about God’s love and your love for God. You can sing songs. Will they understand? Absolutely not. But they will hear it and that is what you want.

2. The Parrot Stage:

- a. Sometime between ages one and two, your children learn to talk. What do they say? They say what they hear from you. They will become parrots. They repeat everything you say. I will never forget the time Marita and I were in the car and from the back seat we heard a little girl’s voice say, “Come on people, get outta the way.” It lasts from about age two through age five.
- b. This is the perfect time to start getting your kids to memorize scripture. Just have them repeat what they hear you say. This is the perfect time to get your children to start learning lists. Have them learn the books of the Bible, the judges, the kings, the fruit of the spirit, the apostles, the plagues and much more. We know they can learn them. Through working with kids in Bible drills, I have learned that they have a phenomenal ability to learn. Can they pronounce all the words accurately? No, but so what. Most adults cannot pronounce all the words properly. Do they understand what those lists represent? No, but so what. They know the lists. When they get older and are trying to understand the Bible history, they will not also have to learn all the facts. The facts will already be in their minds.
- c. Read the Bible stories to them and read them from the Bible. Start with shorter readings and train your children to sit down and listen for longer and longer periods of time. Then ask them simple fact questions. For example, “Who was Jesus’ mother?” or “Who killed Goliath?” When they do not know, do not get mad, give them the answers. Then ask again in a few minutes.
- d. Allow me to explain what you are doing here. You should not really be worried with whether or not they understand all of this—they won’t and they can’t at this stage. They do not have the mental capacity to understand it. What you are doing is setting up a filing system. You are labeling file drawers in their mind. As they grow, they will naturally gain the ability to understand and piece information together to form a sound knowledge and understanding of the Bible. But you have now given them a leg up. For instance, when your children are older and trying to understand what the plagues were all about, they will already know what the plagues were. They will already have a file drawer marked “10 plagues” in their mind, now they can easily fill that drawer with understanding and further information.

3. The Grammar Stage:

- a. Classically, when children began their formal education, they were taken through three stages. I have adopted these stages of “Classical Education” to describe the rest of our children’s training. The first stage is the “Grammar stage”. Today, we typically think of grammar in the context of English and sentence structure. However, in its most basic meaning, “Grammar” refers to the basics of any field of study. This stage of your child’s biblical training will last roughly from age six through age nine, about four years. This is the building block stage. In the parrot years you filled them with lists and facts. Now you can start putting them together somewhat into a framework.
- b. The beginning of these years are a little different than the later years. At age six, they are probably just learning to read and write. If they do not know how to read and write yet, continue reading to them. But then, instead of just having them answer a few fact questions, start having them tell you, in their own words, what happened in the story. As

- they learn to read, you will start having them do more and more of the reading on their own, with their own Bibles. A good Bible to use for them is a New King James Bible. As they learn to write, have them read the stories and then write them down in their own words. Keep their writings in a notebook to refer back to.
- c. As they get into these years, start working on timelines. Have them make their own timeline of Bible events, placing pictures of the stories in the proper location on their own timeline. Have them start working with Bible maps. At first have them find where different stories occurred on a map. Then have them work on memorizing Bible geography and filling out outlined maps. You will be amazed at what they can learn.
 - d. One thing you must not overlook in this stage is teaching them how to find passages in the Bible. As they learn how to read, work with them on learning how to navigate through God's book. Take them past just knowing the songs. Teach them how to find a passage quickly. Do drills with them. Call out a passage and time them. If you have two in this age, have them compete to see who can get their first.
4. The Logic Stage:
- a. As your children get into their preteens, they begin to develop more reasoning skills. They can begin to think through things and make connections between different facts and how they go together to produce a sound logical argumentation. They can begin to examine what people say and whether or not it makes sense or if it is contradictory. At this point, they go into what is called the Logic stage. This stage will also last about four years, from age 10 through age 13.
 - b. Now that they have the major building blocks down, knowing who, what, when and where, they can start putting the big picture together. They can start connecting ideas. This is when they start reading a passage that says what will happen when the people ask for a king (**Deuteronomy 17:14ff**) and they will make the connection with the kings they have learned and the stories they have read about those kings. For instance, reading **vs. 17** will automatically call to mind David's actions with Bathsheba and Solomon with his many wives. In addition, they will see the significance of God saying what would happen before it happened.
 - c. This is when they will read passages and make connections with what happens in their own lives saying things like, "This is just like what happened at school today. I should have done what this verse says." They can begin to answer questions like the following, "What does **Ephesians 4:25** say about cheating on a test at school?" A four-year-old could never answer that question, because a four-year-old would never recognize cheating as a form of lying. But a thirteen-year-old should be able to, unless he has not been challenged to think past a four-year-old level.
 - d. In this stage, they can answer why questions. They no longer address just, "Who was Jesus' mother?" but also, "Why was Mary surprised when the angel told her she would have a son?" They can answer questions like, "How would you have felt if you were Mary?" "How would you have felt if you had been Joseph?" "Why do you think God chose a poor carpenter's family to bring up His Son?"
 - e. So, as they continue reading their Bible through, instead of having them write down what the passage says in their own words, have them write down what the passage says about how they should live. Does the passage address any issues that came up today or might come up tomorrow? What would they have done if they were the Bible character?
 - f. During this time, start teaching your children how to use reference materials. Teach them how to use a concordance to look things up in the Bible and study topics. Teach them how to use commentaries and distinguish between good reasoning and bad reasoning found within them. Teach them to judge every other thing they read by the Bible. Teach them how to use lexicons to discover the meanings of Bible words and how they affect what is said in different contexts. When they ask you a question, direct them to look up the answer in their Bible first and see what it says.
 - g. Since this is when children really begin to connect ideas and begin to connect what they read and hear with what they are doing, we are not surprised to find that this is the age when children typically become Christians. When they become Christians, you need to

step up their biblical education. If they are old enough to become Christians, they are old enough to work harder at serving God. When you go to group Bible studies, prayer meetings or singings, do not allow them to go play with the little kids. They are Christians now, they need to be involved in this group worship too.

5. The Rhetoric Stage:

- a. Now that your children have the building blocks down and have focused on why things have happened in the Bible, they can start presenting their own ideas in writing and in speaking. This stage is the rhetoric stage. Rhetoric is the ability to use language effectively. We know we have taught our children well, when they can teach others. Before they get out of your homes, start working with them on teaching others. This stage begins at about 14 and continues until they leave your home.
- b. No doubt, the Bible is the greatest book of all times. As such, its message is ever deepening. I do not want to suggest that by the time your child is 14 she will know all the facts found in the Bible, will have made all the connections to be made and know why all things happened. She will ever study those things. But at this age, your children can take what they have learned and learn to express it to others, in private and in public settings.
- c. In the logic stage, they figured out how verses connected to one another to make sound arguments about the teaching of Christ. Now you should take time to work with them on expressing those ideas in writing and verbally. Give them assignments to determine what the Bible says about money, work, dress or some other topic. Then have them make a written or oral presentation to you. Have them give a written assignment to an elder, evangelist or Bible class teacher to review for soundness and clarity.
- d. Have them outline some of Paul's letters, determining what the theme of the book was and expressing why they believe that is the theme. I know what many of you are thinking. You are thinking that this has only come to my mind because I am a preacher and want to turn all of our kids into preachers. But, that is not true, and yet, it is. I do not want all of our children to be full-time evangelists. I do want all of them to become evangelists at school and at work. I want all of them to be able to give an answer to those who ask them of the hope that lies within them (**I Peter 3:15**). Having said that, let me encourage you to have your teenage boys learn how to preach a sermon. Do not wait for the church to have a training class. Have them write a sermon and, if nothing else, present it to you at home.
- e. Have them work through some already written personal evangelism materials, practicing teaching you to become a Christian. Have them practice with their friends in Bible class. Encourage them to study with friends from school. Get them involved in teaching younger siblings and younger Bible classes. Have them write their own materials to use in personal Bible studies or in classes.

Conclusion:

“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word” (**Psalm 119:9**). Teaching our children the Bible is imperative, especially in this time when the messages they are getting all around us are so unbiblical. I hope some of my practical suggestions and framework have also been helpful. Whatever you think about any of the particular suggestions, I hope you will take this with you—do something to teach your children the Bible. Use the scriptures and help them grow from milk to meat. Do not let them leave your home without knowing God's word.