

Teaching the Bible to Children

Recently there has been interest in compiling a Biblical curriculum for the children in the Church of the Eternal God. CEG does not currently have the monetary or staff resources available to create a brand new curriculum. Also, there is little need to create a new curriculum, because there are excellent resources already available. Below are examples of ideas that parents can implement in the teaching of the Bible to their children. This is teaching that can be done in the home environment.

Biblical guidelines give parents the tools to give children a foundation on which to base principles, beliefs and morals as they grow into adulthood. The principles become integrated in every facet of a child's life. Just as you nurture your child's physical and mental development, spiritual growth must be approached in a deliberate manner.

A necessary beginning is to teach your children to respect and obey you; by doing this you are teaching them to develop a similar relationship with God. As a parent, you must understand that, to your children, you play this vital role. In the early years, you represent the most that they can understand about the power of God.

Working with your child to value structured "quiet times" during the week will in turn help hold his attention during Bible lessons. These structured "quiet times" also help children learn about quiet time during church services. As the child grows to maturity he will have developed the art of "meditation."

their children the basics about God and His Way of Life. Never forget that children are most impressionable at their youngest age.

At what age should we start teaching the Scriptures to our children? God's Word should be an important and natural part of life from very early childhood on. We expect small children to grow up learning songs, stories, the names of colors and the sounds animals make. Why not take advantage of the incredible, sponge-like learning capacity of a small child and start planting the most important seed of all—God's instructions—within them?

Here are some strategies in teaching the Bible itself. The Bible is a large book, and to introduce its study to our children we must first present it in small, manageable portions according to their age level. Decide what subjects you wish to cover and think about how to present them in a user-friendly way. You may choose to cover a topic over several sessions. Focus on presenting important Biblical teachings that they can use throughout their lives. Examples could include the Creation, the Exodus, the Ten Commandments, the life of David, Jesus Christ, lessons from the various "heroes" of the Bible, and as they get older proofs of God's existence and history of the New Testament Church.

How much time should we spend per session? Find the balance in setting a time period that is neither unreasonably long, nor so short that it gives the impression God's Word is a low priority in our day. For instance, how long can a preschooler sit to watch a television show or hear a story read to them? How long can an elementary-age child sit to listen to a teacher read a book?

Before launching into your teaching session, take a few minutes to do your "homework." Preview the lesson and compile your ideas.

Here are some ideas and recommendations to help set up your Bible curriculum. Certainly there are many other ideas that you, the parent, will have.



Many parents wait longer than they should to begin teaching their children about God.

They assume that small children are not ready until a point well beyond when they could—and should—have started teaching

1. READING THE BIBLE

There are many good materials to read, but ultimately there is no substitute for the Bible itself. You cannot go wrong by starting in Genesis and reading on through the Bible. Alternate methods are also fine. For young children, consider skipping over long lists such as genealogies, or briefly summarizing them. You may also want to paraphrase some passages, putting them into your own words in simple language your child can understand, instead of reading the text as written. Your reading will become much more effective as you add your own comments to the passages you read. Ask questions to make them think (this is very important). Tell a little story that gets a point across. Act out the scenario. Anything you add along these lines is well worth the effort.

Whenever your child learns to read, present him or her with a Bible of his or her own. In order for our children to learn the Bible and become familiar and comfortable with handling it, they need to have one! It should be a true Bible (NKJV), not a pseudo-Bible or children's story-book-type volume. It should contain all the same scriptures a regular Bible has. Thumb tabs are also very helpful for children to find books faster.

As the child becomes a more proficient reader, the publications of the Church of the Eternal God will serve as helpful study aids for parents, Bible Atlas's, Bible dictionaries and other reference materials can be introduced to the youth. In turn, parents can summarize important concepts in terms appropriate to their children's learning level.

2. MEMORY WORK

Memorizing is a normal part of life for a child—from the alphabet to nursery rhymes to state capitals. It should be a normal part of life to memorize the most important information of all—God's Words. Memorizing specific scriptures and learning what they mean can be fun.

A child is ready to start memory work by the age of three. Start by choosing short verses to learn. This will build your child's confidence. Teach them one phrase or word from the verse at a time. Say a word (or phrase) then point to your child to supply the next word.

Show your child where the verse is found in

the Bible. Mark their Bible with a special color to identify verses they have memorized. Say the book, chapter and verse before and after the Scripture. Recite the verse several times a day in your child's presence so that it becomes familiar to them. Do not simplify the verses. It is important to teach God's Word as it is recorded. Clarify any words they don't understand.

It is not wrong to offer an age-appropriate reward. Make the rewards immediate if possible. Rewards could include small treats, prizes, stars on a chart, a trip to the store, or special time with mom or dad. Having them share their accomplishment by reciting it to someone else (grandparents, teacher, etc.) is very beneficial, too. Children like to feel they have accomplished something.

3. PICTURES AND ARTWORK

As the saying goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Some Bible resource books (Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, etc.) contain good diagrams or pictures. A word of caution regarding pictures, however: A child's mind is very impressionable and a picture can stick in the mind for a long time. This also goes for adults. *We should avoid using pictures such as those that depict God the Father, Jesus Christ, Satan the Devil, Angels and men with long hair (except for Nazarites).*

4. PROPS

Props are a great teaching aid. A complete interactive felt or flannel board teaching system used to teach and tell both Old and New Testament Bible stories is an excellent tool for illustration. This makes the Bible story come to life and lets the child interact and become part of the story—giving the child a chance to use his senses of hearing, (listening to the story being read or told) seeing and touching. You can easily create a felt board by simply gluing a large piece of felt to a rectangular piece of cardboard. Have the children draw or color pictures of Bible characters and props onto heavy paper or poster board, cut them out, and then place Velcro adhesive on the back of each piece. The kids will love it! Also, you can purchase the felt board projects at your local Bible Book Store, but be sure to remove items that are inappropriate.

5. MAKE A TIME LINE

Starting with the beginning of the Bible you may want to consider having your child start a time line of the sequence of the major events you are reading about through the Bible. You could provide a short roll of paper to make a continuous time line that can be rolled up later on. Children could draw and color pictures they have created on this time line.

6. TEACHING A CHILD TO PRAY

The beginning of the child's prayer life is essentially an activity. A mother might ask the question: "When shall I begin to teach my little child to pray?" This question should be met by another: "When do you intend to start teaching your little child a language?" If father and mother kneel down by the child's bed long before he can notice consciously what is happening, the child grows up in the midst of this event: "Mom and dad speaking to Someone whom they respect and love and cannot see." Let your child see you praying. Children learn by example.

Our children and grandchildren need to understand that we, as Christian parents, talk to God in prayer on a regular basis. Asking a blessing at mealtime, prayer of anointing for illness and prayers given at Church services provide important examples about our relationship with God. These illustrations become a way of life.

7. SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Using other Bible materials from the Internet can be very helpful, as long as they adhere to the correct doctrines and truth. For example, Y.E.S. Bible lessons founded by Herbert W. Armstrong can be viewed from the Herbert W. Armstrong Searchable Library: www.herbert-w-armstrong.org/indexYouthL.html

The following guidelines are from the Youth Opportunities United, Pastor's Manual, Y.E.S. Curriculum Guidelines, 1985:

"The Youth Bible Lessons are designed to teach children the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the Bible. Lessons for levels one through seven focus on the Old Testament, while lessons for levels eight and nine concentrate on the New Testament.

"For each level, you will note that only certain select biblical events and details have been mentioned, since it is impossible to include all of them in 14 lessons. The intent is to help children to *gradually* understand certain concepts and principles taught in the Bible. Therefore, the beginning lessons of each level deal with concrete facts and principles such as obedience and respect, while the later lessons deal with abstract concepts such as the why, how, and reasons behind a given event.

"The lessons have been written based on the aptitude of the average US child. Some children from certain states and countries will be above average, and may wish to advance one level due to the difference in academics. *Generally, the advancement of two levels is prohibited due to the maturity level and the principles being taught.* The 'advanced' child may read the lesson very easily, but may not necessarily understand the concepts of a particular lesson. By the same token, a below-average student may wish to drop back a level if he or she finds the material too difficult..."

Make this a *pleasant* time for the child. By making it special, we are showing we place special value on God's Word and the privilege of studying it. Pick an area with a table if possible, where the setting and atmosphere are clearly "study time" and minimize distractions. Clear the table of clutter. Leave the television off. If the phone tends to ring during study time, turn it down and use an answering machine. Be sure to begin each study session with a brief prayer together, asking for God's help in understanding His Word.



Also, *The Bible Story* by Basil Wolverton, Volumes I-VI, can be viewed at these websites: www.herbert-warmstrong.org/indexYouth.html, or www.coghomeschool.org/site/cog_archives/books/Bsbindex.htm.

SHORT OUTLINE FOR BIBLE CURRICULUM

- I. Pre-Kindergarten through Third Grade. This curriculum is cumulative in the sense that as a child progresses through the grade levels, he is responsible to know all material learned in previous levels.
 - A. Reading the Bible starting in Genesis
 - B. Bible Memory Work
 1. Days of Creation—Genesis 1 & 2
 2. God's Holy Days—Leviticus 23
 3. Books of the Old Testament
 4. Books of the New Testament
 5. Ten Commandments (Full version of Exodus 20)
 6. The twelve Tribes of Israel (Genesis 49)
 7. Psalms 1—The Way of the Righteous and the End of the Ungodly
 8. Psalms 23—The Lord is My Shepherd
 9. Matthew 6:9-13—The Lords Prayer
 10. I Corinthians 13:1-6
 11. I Corinthians 13:7-13
 12. Matthew 5:1-10—The Beatitudes
 13. Matthew 5:11-20
 14. II Timothy 3:1-5—Perilous Times
 15. Psalms 100—A song of Praise
 16. Proverbs 3:1-10—Guidance for the Young
 17. Proverbs 3:11-30
 18. Proverbs 3:31-35
 - C. Youth Bible Lessons K-9 found on this website: www.herbert-warmstrong.org/indexYouthL.html
- II. Fourth Grade: The Book of Genesis
- III. Fifth Grade: Exodus to Solomon
- IV. Sixth Grade: Solomon to the beginning of the New Testament
- V. Seventh Grade: The Gospels
- VI. Eighth Grade: The Book of Acts and Church History

This is an ongoing curriculum, and it is just a sampling of what could be taught.

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