

ENGAGING THE BIBLE TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

You want to help your kids read and interact with Scripture. We want to help you do it! Here are a few ideas to start, or restart, engaging the Bible with your family:

- Take an honest look at the Bibles in your home, and make sure each person has a copy they can use—a translation that is age-appropriate, perhaps even a study Bible. For preteens and teenagers, you might want to look for a translation that is user-friendly, but retains the chapter-verse structure and footnotes. Help them learn to use it—how to look things up, what all the numbers mean (so many numbers! It’s all weird to them). If the Bible is also new to you, this is a great opportunity to learn something together.
- Read a paraphrase like *The Message*. It is at times surprising, at times funny, even shocking. Kids pay attention! Note there are no verses marked in this translation. Or find a graphic novel adaptation like *The Action Bible* if you have kids who are into that genre.
- Consider reading aloud together. Don’t feel like it has to be a “devotion” with a lesson of some sort. You might simply read a chapter or a section (maybe a parable or a story) and then just close the book—letting the story speak for itself, without explanation. Other times you may want to ask a few simple questions, like “What did you hear?” or “What does that make you wonder about?” Don’t feel like you have to have any answers to these wonderments.
- Start or end the day with a psalm. A simple, brief rhythm.
- Read *lectio divina* style, or “sacred reading,” which is a practice of reading a passage slowly and then repeating it several times, pausing for silence in between, and inviting those present to listen for words, phrases, or images that stick out. This might be really strange at first if your family has never done anything like it. That’s fine. Give it a try!
- Read separately and then come together to talk about it. For example, you might read through a book of the Bible over the course of a month or two. Maybe you pick a section to read during the week independently, and everyone writes down a handful of questions the stories raise. Then compare questions! The point is not that you need all the answers, just that your kids see and hear you engaging the text in some way—that it’s valuable and is a source of life and of challenge.

- Pick a verse or short passage to memorize as a family—for a week, a month, or a season.
- After worship on weeks when kids are in the whole service, ask about it afterward, maybe even go back and read the passage again together. What was confusing? What stuck out? Show them where it is in the Bible so they can find it on their own. Read it again midweek as a family.
- You knew it was coming ... Maybe make use of a Bible app. If they have a smartphone or other device, download the app and show them how to use it. There are tons of options for canceling all notifications OR for getting daily passages, following reading plans, etc. This might interest some kids. Don't be afraid to occasionally text a verse to your kids as an encouragement or prayer—you can do this straight from the Bible app. You may also want to explore apps like "Common Prayer" or "Pray as You Go" which offer daily liturgy with short morning, midday, and evening prayers. The downside of apps: more screen time, which you may be trying to avoid, and less learning how to navigate a print Bible, which may be a skill you hope they develop.

Keep in mind that as your kids enter adolescence, they are re-encountering stories they've heard (and may have internalized) with new eyes and with rewiring brains. This can be disconcerting. They may not have read the "whole" story before, or in some cases, they may not realize the story is so very brief in the text!

These are great opportunities to normalize that the Bible is weird, it's unnerving, and it's beautiful. Like our own family stories, there are dark moments and high spots, and we're invited to open up the photo album and explore.