

# The Spiritual Practice of Reading the Bible Together

*“Given the encouragement and freedom to engage the Bible at their own pace and as they are able, children can learn to be ‘at home’ with the Bible, can share in the stories of the church, claim the Bible as their own, and participate in an exciting adventure of interpreting.”*

— A. Roger Gobbel and Gertrude G. Gobbel, *The Bible: A Child’s Playground*. p.16.

Alongside prayer, reading the Bible is foundational spiritual practice for a Christian family. To read the Bible as a spiritual practice is to read it in search of God’s word to you. The Bible tells the story of God’s unfolding purpose and love. It is a continuing story of creation, revelation and relationship. It is our story. Reading the Bible or Bible storybooks as a family provides a way for each family member to ponder the reading on her or his own level.

What you read from the Bible together depends upon the ages of your children. With young children start with simple Bible storybooks. As children are able to attend to longer stories, look for children’s Bible storybooks that suit their attention span.

By the time children are eleven or twelve, you can probably read a Bible translation, such as the New Revised Standard Version, together. Invite your children to find the selection, honing their Bible skills. Here is one set of guidelines to use in selecting Bible storybooks or Bibles for young children:

- Is the book attractive, or do you think it will be attractive to your child?
- Do the illustrations help interpret the story accurately, or do they include misleading details? (For example, one Bible storybook for children shows the shepherds and the magi at the manger in Bethlehem at the same time.)
- Read the story or a sample story. Is it told so the integrity of the story is intact, or will your child have to unlearn the story at an older age?
- Will the paper and binding stand the wear and tear of a child’s use?
- If it is a Bible storybook, is the selection of stories appropriate to the age of the child?

