



# THE BEST BOOK TO READ TO YOUR KIDS

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There's a book you can read to your children that will make your job as a parent a lot easier. This book will teach them lessons in character, how to distinguish right from wrong; about gratitude, respect and perseverance. And that's in the opening chapters! Parents have been reading this book to their children for a very long time. It's one reason it's a perpetual best-seller.

This book, of course, is the Bible, and you don't have to be religious to read it. And your kids don't have to be religious to enjoy it and get a whole lot out of it. Decency, kindness, charity, selflessness and sacrifice—they're all right there.

Consider the story of David and Goliath.

Nine feet tall, clad in armor, Goliath is the most fearsome warrior of his day. How could he not be? He's nine feet tall, for goodness sake! Who wants to go against a giant like that?

No Israelite, that's for sure... except for one. A skinny shepherd boy named David. This boy has three things going for him—courage, a sling shot and faith that God is with him. As he strides out onto the battlefield to face Goliath in single combat, he holds the future of the Israelite nation, not to mention his own life, in his hands.

Wrapped up in all of this tension and drama are valuable lessons that any child can profit from. David refuses to be intimidated by a bully. He's willing to act; to show resolve even in the face of his own self-doubt. His actions paint a portrait of true heroism in the face of true danger. Isn't that the kind of strength we want our children to emulate—to be able defend themselves and, later, their families, and their country?

Or how about the story of the brothers, Cain and Abel? Abel, the shepherd, looks at his lot and he's filled with gratitude for his blessings. He offers as a gift to God the very best of his flock. Cain, the farmer, is selfish, unsatisfied with what he has, and he offers only a paltry gift of grain. When God favors Abel's present, Cain allows jealousy to overwhelm him. God speaks to Cain and tells him, "I know you're feeling angry, but you can overcome those feelings and master them."

Cain doesn't listen, doesn't control his jealousy, and kills Abel. When God asks Cain: "Where is Abel your brother?" Cain lies and says, "I do not know," and then: "Am I my brother's keeper?" "Yes," should have been Cain's answer to his own question.

We are responsible for ourselves and we have an obligation to others. We all have emotions

and passions. But God has given us the tools to master those emotions. And master them we must if we are live a productive and ethical life. Most important of all, life is a gift from God. We have no right to take it away from the innocent. Murder is evil. All these lessons are contained in this one story.

The stories of David and Goliath and Cain and Abel are only two examples of the many invaluable lessons the Bible offers to children. Think of a lesson and there's a Bible story to teach it: about family dynamics, friendship, forgiveness, leadership, humility; about what is important and what is not.

The Bible also teaches children—more effectively than any book ever—that they are not the center of the universe. They are accountable to their parents and to God. Children who internalize this lesson are much more likely to be kinder and more mindful of how they behave than those who do not. The Bible discourages narcissism.

Of course, the Bible is not merely a children's book; it's a library of wisdom for everyone. Here's how Abraham Lincoln, who was not a church-goer, but who was steeped in the Bible, described it.

“In regard to this Great book . . . it is the best gift God has given to man. But for it we could not know right from wrong. And all things most desirable for man's welfare . . . are to be found portrayed in it.”

As Lincoln suggests the Bible is the moral foundation on which Western Civilization is built and a point of shared reference. Up until the 1960's, you could cite a Bible story and most people knew exactly what you were talking about. Everyone from Shakespeare to Dickens to Franklin Roosevelt made great use of Bible stories to communicate their themes. We're losing that connection. And that is a terrible shame. And a profound cultural loss.

If you don't have *some* Biblical literacy, you can't fully appreciate the powerful words of Martin Luther King, for example. Only if you know the story of Moses can you fully appreciate King's poetic vision of having seen “the promised land.”

Of the Bible, Yale theologian George Lindbeck famously said, “there was a time when every educated person, no matter how professedly unbelieving or secular, knew the actual text from Genesis to Revelation.”

Our goal should be to get back to that kind of Biblical literacy. And its starts with our children. Your children.

Read them a Bible story tonight. Who knows? You might learn a few things, too.

I'm Johnnie Moore for Prager University.