



STUDY GUIDE

THE BEST BOOK TO READ TO YOUR KIDS

KEY TERMS: character
wisdom

religious
moral foundation

heroism
Biblical literacy

| NOTE-TAKING COLUMN: Complete this section <u>during</u> the video. Include definitions and key terms. | CUE COLUMN: Complete this section <u>after</u> the video. |
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| <p>What is the most important lesson contained in the story of Cain and Abel?</p> <p>Who is the Bible a library of wisdom for?</p> <p>What was President Abraham Lincoln's reasoning for his claim that the Bible is the best gift God has given to man?</p> | <p>What can the Bible teach children?</p> <p>How can being Biblically literate benefit a society?</p> |

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Towards the beginning of the video, Rev. Moore notes that, “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.” Why is the fact that anyone, religious or not, can find value in reading the Bible so important? Do you think that many people avoid reading the Bible because they think it is only for religious people? If yes, why do you think that some people have the misconception that the Bible is only for religious people? If no, why else do you think that some people avoid reading the Bible?
- Later in the video, Rev. Moore points out the tremendous value of the Bible by stating, “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.” What, specifically, do you think the relationship is between accountability and behavior? Explain. Why do you think that it is so important to learn these lessons, especially from the Bible? Explain.
- Following up this last point, Rev. Moore shares with us that, “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. All things most desirable for man’s welfare . . . are to be found portrayed in it.’” What do you think President Lincoln meant by the phrase ‘All things most desirable for man’s welfare?’ Do you agree with President Lincoln that the Bible is the ‘best gift God has given to man? Why or why not?
- Rev. Moore goes on to explain that, “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.” In what ways is having a ‘shared point of reference,’ especially an ethical and moral reference, so important for a society? Explain. In addition to not being able to understand literature and other important references, such as Dr. King’s speeches, to a deeper degree, why is the loss of Biblical literacy a ‘profound cultural loss?’ Explain.
- Towards the end of the video, Rev. Moore quotes George Lindbeck and concludes that, ”... 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.” Do you agree with Rev. Moore that a major, shared goal of our society should be to regain at least a basic Biblical literacy? Why or why not? In addition to learning important lessons, what other ways might parents reading the Bible with their children, whether any of them are religious or not, be beneficial for that family? Explain.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Biblical Literacy Legislation

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Bible classes in public schools? Why Christian lawmakers are pushing a wave of new bills,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What would the Bible literacy bills being legislated in some states allow for? What would the elective classes focus on? What reasoning do some of the lawmakers give for wanting to pass such legislation? Who is Aaron McWilliams, and what is his perspective on the matter? What do opponents of the bills argue? Who is Rachel Laser, and what is her opinion on the issue? What does the nonprofit organization Wallbuilders emphasize? Who is David Barton, and what does he have to say on the matter of Biblical literacy? Who is Dennis Kruse, and what is his position on posting the U.S. national motto in schools?
- Do you agree with Rep. McWilliams that the Bible is ‘an integral part of our society?’ Why or why not? In the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the ‘establishment clause’ states: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...” meaning that the government cannot make a law that favors any one particular religion to the exclusion of any other religion, as well as people being able to practice whichever religion that they want to practice. When asked for further clarification of this clause, Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter to the Danbury Baptists describing an intent that included ‘a wall of separation between church and state.’ Thus, the notion of separation of church and state comes from a letter, a personal opinion- not from the U.S. Constitution, which is federal law. Thus, since ‘the separation of church and state’ is not Constitutional law, then optional, elective classes to study a particular religious text couldn’t possibly be unconstitutional- the primary argument that opponents of the Biblical literacy legislation invoke. Why do you think that Biblical literacy opponents, such as Rachel Laser, attempt to use such a fallacious and factually incorrect argument? In the article, Ms. Laser claims that the elective ‘Bible as Literature’ classes would be “...likely to convey a religious message and preference.” What are the two major problems with her claim, in terms of being a valid argument, and especially in the context of the Biblical literacy laws being Constitutional or not? Explain.
- • In the article, both Ms. Laser and Ms. Tyler proffer arguments with the underlying assumption that a school merely offering a Biblical literacy class as an elective is automatically tantamount to endorsing and teaching Christianity- a particular religion. Why do you think that some people confuse and/or conflate simply reading and studying the Bible with necessarily advocating for a particular religion- in other words why do you think that some people have difficulty in separating learning from proselytizing in terms of reading the Bible? Do you think that Biblical literacy should be just as important as math or science for educated people? Why or why not? Do you think that students should have the option to more deeply study the Bible in school? Why or why not? How would studying the Bible in school differ from studying the Bible at home or in a house of worship? Do you think that how the Bible is being studied and in what context makes a difference or not in terms of being religious? Explain.



QUIZ

THE BEST BOOK TO READ TO YOUR KIDS

1. **The Bible will teach your children lessons in _____.**
 - a. effective bullying techniques
 - b. gratitude, respect and perseverance
 - c. self-gratification and reliance on others
 - d. None of the above.

2. **In the story of David and Goliath, what did David have going for him?**
 - a. Courage
 - b. A sling-shot
 - c. Faith that God was with him.
 - d. All of the above.

3. **We are responsible for ourselves and we have an obligation to others.**
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. **What is one of the important lessons that the Bible effectively teaches children?**
 - a. That they cannot master their emotions.
 - b. That parents are to always be feared.
 - c. That they are not the center of the universe.
 - d. That they should learn to hate people who are not like them.

5. **The Bible is a library of wisdom for _____.**
 - a. children only
 - b. religious people only
 - c. educated people only
 - d. everyone



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2019/01/23/in-god-we-trust-bible-public-school-christian-lawmakers/2614567002/>

Bible classes in public schools? Why Christian lawmakers are pushing a wave of new bills

Erin Richards, USA TODAY Published 6:00 a.m. ET Jan. 23, 2019 | Updated 5:45 p.m. ET Jan. 23, 2019



Textbooks rest under the seats of Angell Caudill's Biblical History class at Reynolds High School in Winston-Salem, N.C., on Oct. 23, 1997. (Photo: CHUCK BURTON, Associated Press)

A wave of “Bible literacy” bills emerging in state legislatures would allow more students in public high schools to study the Old and New Testaments.

Proposals from lawmakers in at least six states would require or encourage public schools to offer elective classes on the Bible's literary and historical significance. That's a more narrow focus than what's typically covered in courses on world religions.

Some of the lawmakers – and leaders of Christian groups supporting the bills – say they want to restore traditional values in schools and give students a chance to study the religious text deeply.

"The Bible is an integral part of our society and deserves a place in the classroom," said Republican state Rep. Aaron McWilliams of North Dakota, a co-sponsor of a bill that would require the state's public high schools to offer an elective on Bible studies.

Opponents say the measures come perilously close to violating the constitutional line between church and state – and, in practice, might overstep it. They say the proposals are part of a coordinated effort by evangelical political groups pushing model legislation in several states.



The "In God We Trust" phrase can be seen in the windows of the front doors at Milan High School in Milan, Tenn., in August. Groups that pushed bills to post the national motto in schools are now pushing legislation to require elective Bible classes. (Photo: HENRY TAYLOR/The Jackson Sun)

"State legislators should not be fooled that these bills are anything more than part of a scheme to impose Christian beliefs on public schoolchildren," said Rachel Laser, president and CEO of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Done right, the bills are legal

This year, Bible literacy bills have been introduced in Florida, Indiana, Missouri, North Dakota, Virginia and West Virginia, according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

At least three Bible literacy bills were considered in 2018 – in Alabama, Iowa and West Virginia – but none passed, according to the ACLU. Tennessee passed a related but slightly different bill.

The year before, Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin signed into law a Bible studies bill. It created guidelines for public high schools to offer electives on the literature of the Bible and Hebrew Scriptures.

Laser said the Bible studies classes are likely to convey a religious message and preference. That would violate the First Amendment, which guarantees that the government won't act in a way that prefers one religion over another and that people can practice whatever religion they wish.

In short, there's a line in public schools between teaching about a religion and proselytizing. Lawmakers bringing the proposals say the classes can be taught in a way that doesn't overstep that line.

Conservative Christian groups involved

The proposals are getting more attention because they're linked to a common source: an initiative called Project Blitz coordinated by conservative Christian political groups.

Those groups include the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, which aims to protect religious liberties; the National Legal Foundation, a Christian public-interest law firm; and the nonprofit WallBuilders, which emphasizes the "moral, religious and constitutional foundation upon which America was built," according to its website. WallBuilders' name is a biblical reference to grass-roots work and does not refer to the debate over the border wall between the USA and Mexico.

Critics say the groups are trying to reshape America by cementing pro-Christian messages in public schools.

"They have put out a more than 100-page playbook that lays out very plainly their strategy into tiers of bills that they want to pass, and the last tier is promoting a particular religious point of view for legislation," said Amanda Tyler, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, which advocates for keeping government out of matters pertaining to faith.

The ACLU provided a copy of the 2018 version of the playbook, called the "Report and Analysis on Religious Freedom Measures Affecting Prayer and Faith in America." Model legislation and talking points within it advocate for preserving the country's Judeo-Christian heritage and enshrining conservative values in public policy. For instance, the groups say marriage and child adoption should be practiced only by heterosexual, married couples.

As for the Bible literacy proposals, Tyler of the Baptist Joint Committee said that lawmakers who have busy legislative calendars may sign on to bills that look innocuous but may further a troubling agenda.

"Anything that might send a message to our children that you have to be a Christian to be a full American is extremely problematic," she said.

David Barton, a Christian political activist and the founder of WallBuilders, said that's a mischaracterization of the bills.

"Bible literacy is a good thing to have," he said. "For me, the issue is that many schools don't (offer Bible studies courses) because they think they can't legally. We are saying, 'Well, yes, you can.'"

Requests for comment to the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation were not returned.

'In God We Trust' legislation

The same coordinated initiative helped push bills in 12 states last year that called for public schools to post the national motto, "In God We Trust," ACLU leaders said.

Six states passed those bills into law. This year, similar bills have been introduced in Alaska, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Mississippi, Nebraska, New York and South Carolina, according to the ACLU.

'In God We Trust' must now be prominently displayed in every public school in the state of Tennessee. Angela Gosnell, Knoxville News Sentinel

The Indiana bill from state Sen. Dennis Kruse, R-Auburn, calls for the national motto to be posted in public schools and for high schools to add a biblical studies component to world religion classes.

Kruse said he was not aware of Project Blitz and didn't talk to lawmakers in other states before introducing his proposal.

"I think it's good to remind people of our national motto and that God is who we really place our trust in," Kruse said. "This is how we came about as a country."